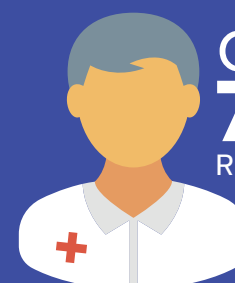




## SUICIDE FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM

The summer months kept the **FirstLink Follow-Up Team** very busy. Since June 2019, the team has made over **4,000** outgoing calls to people who have either been recently discharged from a hospital or clinic or internally referred from the 2-1-1 and NSPL phone lines. This means that we received over **750** referrals from partner hospitals and clinics throughout the state. The team has also expanded to include Sanford locations in Moorhead and Bismarck as well as Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health. The Follow-Up Team is continuing to work hard to ensure that people receive the resources and support they need.

OVER  
**4,000**  
CALLS



OVER  
**750**  
REFERRALS

## COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR:

**Connecting People to Substance Use Treatment and Recovery Support Services**

*Wow, it's hard to believe the **Community Navigator** pilot project has been operating for a full year already! We've hit so many milestones, and I'm excited to report that the program continues to grow steadily with calls from providers, concerned family members, and people seeking help for themselves. In fact, we hit our 250th referral in September, and that is only a fraction of the people we are capable of reaching.*

We celebrated the program's anniversary in September at our first **Lifesaver Luncheon**, recognizing the unified efforts our community partners have made to help connect people impacted by drugs and alcohol. Several of our partner providers joined us, as did many other stakeholders. Our speakers, **Monica McConkey** and **Mary Beth Traynor**, each brought a unique perspective that resonated deeply and affirmed our commitment to substance use prevention,

intervention, treatment, and recovery. When not in the office providing support and linking people to resources, I am out in the community, speaking with health and human services providers about the Community Navigator program. Over the summer I contacted dozens of public office holders throughout Cass and Clay Counties, telling them about the program and asking for support. After all, the Community Navigator program was conceived out of the Mayors' Blue Ribbon Commission on Addiction, so it seems reasonable to ask our local public administrators to support the ongoing efforts of this pilot project.

When I stepped into this role last year, I set an intention for myself: Answer the Call. It is my intention to be there for people, offering them hope and help for recovery. I ask you all to do the same. If you or someone you care about is misusing alcohol or drugs, please call us. As in life, recovery is not without its challenges. But none of us are alone. FirstLink is here for you 24 hours a day.



## YEAR END WISH LIST

Match for Giving Hearts Day:  
**\$5,000**

Laptop computer for  
community training:  
**\$950**

Automatic letter folder for  
mass mailings:  
**\$600**

Additional computer monitors  
for two database staff:  
**\$450**

Several ergonomic keyboards  
and mice for staff:  
**\$200**

Wireless projector to use for  
community training:  
**\$200**

New tablecloth with FirstLink  
logo for booths:  
**\$200**

Branded canopy for outdoor  
summer booths:  
**\$175**

Pizza for staff appreciation  
day:  
**\$75**



## A letter from Executive Director CINDY MILLER



How can Thanksgiving already be right around the corner? With snow arriving early this year, I am reminded how close we are to **Giving Tree of Hope**, the new year, and **Giving Hearts Day**. 2020 will be a very exciting year for FirstLink, as we celebrate our 50th anniversary of supporting the community! We are looking forward to some great events and we will be sharing pictures from the past 50 years on social media. We encourage you to share yours, too!

Currently, we are lucky to be one of the recipients of the **Target Circle** fundraiser for nonprofits. Please cast your votes for FirstLink and encourage your family and friends to do the same. We serve the entire state of North Dakota and parts of Minnesota, 24 hours a day. Remember that anyone can get help and hope by calling or texting us.

We are also gearing up for Giving Tree of Hope, which will be held on December 17th, and Giving Hearts Day on February 13th.

I want to thank all of you for your support of FirstLink and for helping us help those who are struggling with behavioral health concerns, financial crises, suicidal thoughts, and addictions!

If you can support us with a year-end donation, it will be greatly appreciated. You are all such a blessing!

*Cindy Miller*

## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Looking back, 2019 has been a truly incredible year; however, we are also taking this time to look toward the future. 2020 will bring **FirstLink's** 50th year of supporting our community, and with it, several exciting changes. Keep an eye on our social media for announcements!

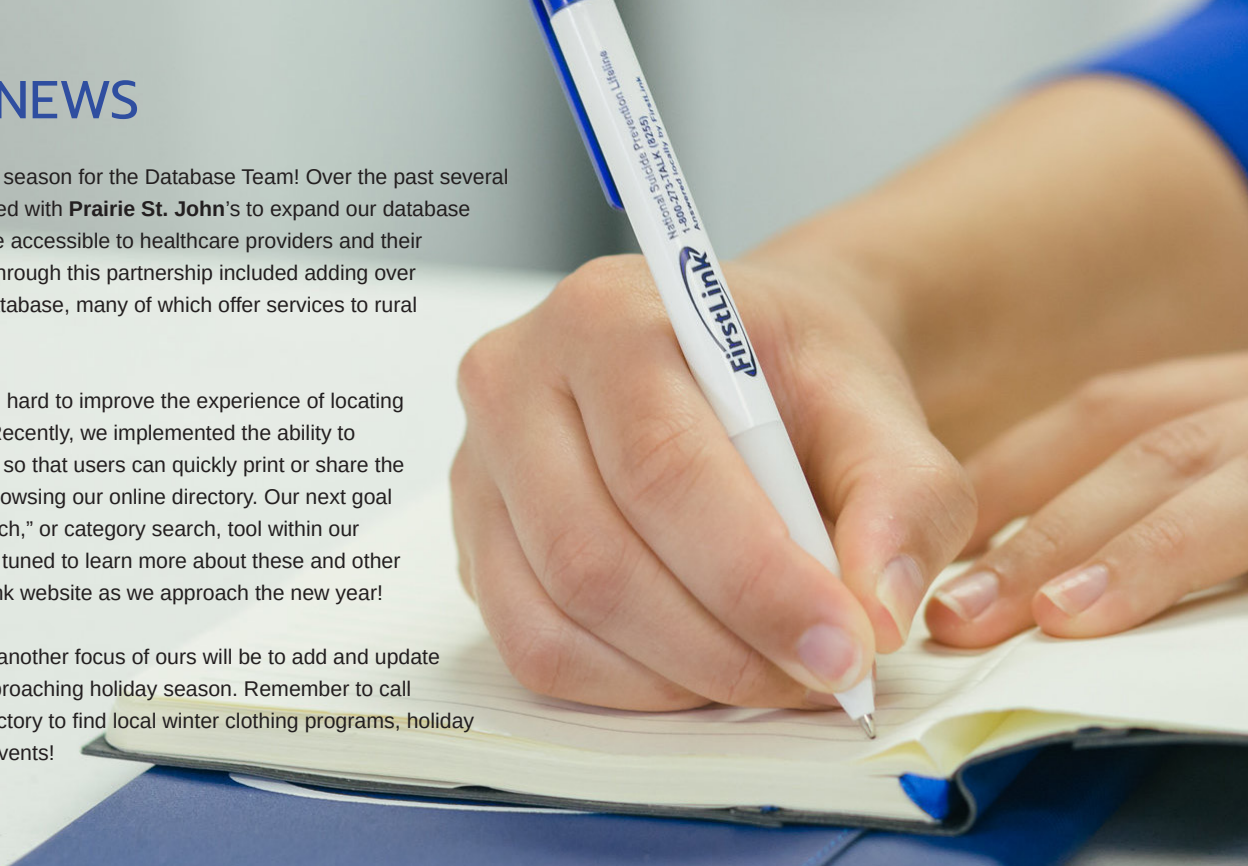


# DATABASE NEWS

Summer 2019 was an eventful season for the Database Team! Over the past several months, **FirstLink** has partnered with **Prairie St. John's** to expand our database of resources and become more accessible to healthcare providers and their clients. The work we've done through this partnership included adding over 50 agencies to the FirstLink database, many of which offer services to rural areas across the state.

Our Database Team is working hard to improve the experience of locating resources using our website. Recently, we implemented the ability to create a PDF of search results so that users can quickly print or share the services they've found while browsing our online directory. Our next goal is to enhance our "guided search," or category search, tool within our online resource directory. Stay tuned to learn more about these and other exciting changes to the FirstLink website as we approach the new year!

For the remainder of the year, another focus of ours will be to add and update services offered during the approaching holiday season. Remember to call FirstLink or use our online directory to find local winter clothing programs, holiday meal baskets, and family fun events!



## 2019 COMMUNITY TRAINING RECAP

Here at **FirstLink**, we offer a variety of programs that support people struggling with mental health, substance use, and thoughts of suicide. We also recognize that in order to create caring communities, we need to educate those who support people living with these conditions. So far, 2019 has been one of the most successful years for our community training program. We started off 2019 by working with Fargo Coffee to provide a community suicide awareness event that was attended by more than 40 people. In February, we offered our first 2-1-1 University training to help educate people about our database of community resources.

We have traveled across the state to provide community trainings. In May and June, FirstLink partnered with the **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** to offer Mental Health First Aid trainings in Minot, Bismarck, and Fargo. For the third straight summer, we worked with the **North Dakota Emergency Medical Services Association** to provide Mental Health First Aid for Fire and EMS across North Dakota. EMTs, paramedics, and firefighters

in Bismarck, Jamestown, and Langdon all received training through this partnership.

We also worked with **ReThink Mental Health Fargo-Moorhead** to launch a free, one-hour Suicide Risk Assessment training. This training provides basic information on suicide prevention and introduces participants to the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale. Since May, we have trained more than 130 people to use this valuable suicide prevention tool.

To increase our presence in local schools, we have begun training educators and administrators to help students dealing with mental health concerns. FirstLink staff provided an 8-hour Youth Mental Health First Aid training to counselors and staff at Bismarck Public Schools in February. This fall, FirstLink worked with the Red River Valley Educational Cooperative to provide two Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings to staff from twelve different schools in northeastern North Dakota. We are excited to keep growing our community training program in 2020!

## SUCCESS STORIES

“It was great to talk to you, I wish I would have had this conversation about my addiction and thoughts of suicide 12 years ago.”

“Thank you for the ASIST workshop. I have to tell you that I put the training to use on Friday with success!”





P.O. Box 447  
Fargo, ND 58107-0447

## Love Letters

We are also launching a new initiative, **Love Letters**, to commemorate our 50 years of support to the community. Love Letters are messages to loved ones who are no longer with us as a result of suicide. Our goal for these letters is to help friends and family heal after the death of a loved one, as well as provide people who are struggling with thoughts of suicide a source of light and hope. If you have lost a loved one to suicide and would like to participate in the initiative, I encourage you to submit a Love Letter.

SUBMIT LOVE LETTER TO  
[info@myfirstlink.org](mailto:info@myfirstlink.org)

