

PARENT

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PHOTO ON LEFT: The Martinsburg Initiative's March Madness Event at Martinsburg High School featured drills and skills with Olympian and Martinsburg native Vickie Bullett.





BY TMI STAFF

**ABOVE:** Darian Amsler, newest Lead Mentor at TMI

**“HAVING A HEART FOR EVERY STUDENT TO FEEL SEEN AND VALIDATED, THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE IN A MENTORING CAPACITY FELT LIKE A NATURAL NEXT STEP FOR ME.”**

In his role as Lead Mentor, Darian will focus on helping students build and strengthen personal resiliency, emotional regulation, and decision-making skills, all of which are critical protective factors in preventing substance use and empowering youth to thrive. His experience, passion, and steady presence will play an important part in advancing TMI’s mission to build resilience in our community’s young people.

# MEET DARIAN

We’re excited to welcome Darian Amsler to the team as our newest Lead Mentor at The Martinsburg Initiative!

*Before joining TMI, Darian served as the NextGen Director at Crossroads Church in Martinsburg for four years. Over the past 20+ years, he has worked alongside public schools in a variety of roles, from substitute teaching to volunteering, consistently demonstrating a deep commitment to supporting students. Serving in a mentoring capacity felt like a natural next step, allowing him to continue investing directly in young people’s lives in a meaningful and lasting way.*

One accomplishment Darian is especially proud of is partnering with local schools in Martinsburg to assist with indoor and outdoor renovation projects, enhancing learning and engagement spaces for students. His hands-on commitment to improving environments where students learn and grow speaks to his servant-leadership mindset. Outside of his professional work, Darian is a self-proclaimed sports fanatic, loves a good cup of coffee, and will never pass up free Chick-fil-A.

*Please join us in welcoming Darian to the TMI team! We’re grateful to have him on this journey with us.*

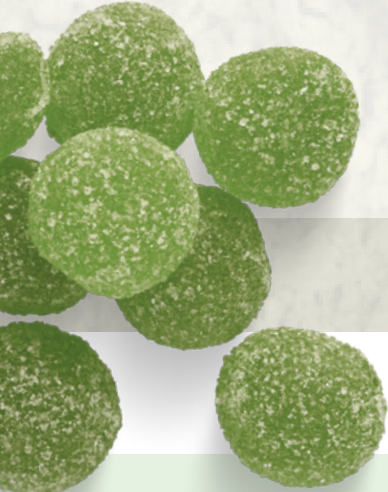


# UNDERSTANDING

# 7-OH

## *What Communities Should Know*

BY TMI STAFF



*A growing number of products on the market contain 7-Hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), a powerful psychoactive compound that occurs naturally in very small amounts in the plant Kratom, which is native to Southeast Asia.*

### *What is 7-OH?*

While natural plants contain only trace levels of this compound, many products sold today contain highly concentrated forms of 7-OH produced in laboratories. These products are often marketed or mislabeled as natural kratom products and promoted as helping with focus, pain, or anxiety.



## *Where Are 7-OH Products Sold?*

*7-OH products are widely available online and in retail locations such as gas stations and vape shops.*

They may appear as chewable or dissolvable tablets, gummies, oils, vape pens, or liquid “shots.” The packaging often resembles energy drinks or candy, which can create the misleading impression that these products are safe or natural alternatives to prescription medications.



## *What are the risks?*

*The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved 7-OH for medical use, and its safety has not been established.*

Reported risks associated with kratom or 7-OH products include liver toxicity, seizures, breathing problems, and the potential for substance use disorder. Regular use can also lead to dependence and withdrawal symptoms similar to those seen with opioids. Short-term effects may include nausea, increased heart rate, and difficulty breathing.

*Although 7-OH use is still relatively uncommon, nearly one million youth and young adults report having used kratom at some point.*

## *How Common is Use?*

Increasing awareness is important because many 7-OH products are mislabeled and sold without clear information about their contents.



## *What can communities do?*

*Community coalitions and prevention partners can play an important role in addressing emerging substances like 7-OH.*

This includes educating the public about the risks, strengthening youth refusal skills, working with retailers and business groups to enforce age restrictions, and informing policymakers about responsible product marketing and access.



## *What to do in an emergency.*

*In an emergency involving a suspected overdose, Naloxone may help reverse opioid-like effects.*

Call 911 immediately if someone is unresponsive or needs urgent medical attention. You can also contact Poison Control (1-800-222-1222) or visit [poisonhelp.org](http://poisonhelp.org) for guidance. Additional information is available from the FDA and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO).

## **RESOURCES**

- [\*Kratom 101: What You Need to Know\*](#)
- [\*Preventing The Next Wave of the Opioid Epidemic: What You Need to Know About 7-OH\*](#)



BY TMI STAFF

**ABOVE: Laura LaBerge, School Support Specialist**

Originally from Michigan, Laura also holds dual citizenship in both Canada and the United States (as her last name might hint!) and formerly lived in Florida. Her diverse background brings a unique perspective and depth of experience to our team.

# MEET LAURA

*We're excited to introduce Laura LaBerge, MSW, LGSW, who is joining The Martinsburg Initiative as a School Support Specialist at Opequon Elementary School!*

Her professional path reflects a lifelong passion for social work – something she credits to her mother, whom she lovingly describes as the “Eleanor Roosevelt of the neighborhood.”

Before joining TMI, Laura worked with West Virginia University, specializing in foster care. Her professional path reflects a lifelong passion for social work – something she credits to her mother, whom she lovingly describes as the “Eleanor Roosevelt of the neighborhood.” Inspired by her mother’s fierce advocacy and servant leadership, Laura embraced social work as both a calling and a natural next step.

Laura shared that she was inspired to join The Martinsburg Initiative after seeing the meaningful, community-centered work being done across Martinsburg. Now stepping into her role at Opequon, she is eager to begin making an impact, starting with each individual student and family she connects with. Through relationship-building, advocacy, and support, she will help advance TMI's mission to prevent substance use and strengthen youth resilience.

One accomplishment Laura is especially proud of is serving on former Governor Jeb Bush's hurricane task force in Florida during a time when devastating storms struck both sides of the state. When insurance companies considered pulling out, the task force enforced a "No Leave" policy to protect residents – a powerful example of Laura's commitment to standing up for communities in moments of crisis.

**AND HERE'S A FUN SURPRISE: LAURA ONCE WORKED IN THE STUDENT WORK PROGRAM AT WALT DISNEY WORLD AS MINNIE MOUSE HERSELF! TALK ABOUT RESILIENCE AND RANGE!**

Laura shares that she is grateful to be here and looks forward to being part of the team. Please join us in warmly welcoming her to The Martinsburg Initiative!



BY TMI STAFF

# HEAR FROM DANIELLE!

*School Support Specialist at Charles Town Middle School*

Danielle Baker serves as the School Support Specialist at Charles Town Middle School, where she works closely with students to provide guidance, encouragement, and practical support. She joined The Martinsburg Initiative in the fall of 2023 and recently expanded her role to also work with the Jefferson-Berkeley Alliance (JBA) team at the Charles Town Initiative and The Jefferson Initiative in Jefferson County. Danielle says she has loved making the move to Jefferson County and is proud to now be part of the team representing JBA and the county's prevention efforts.

For Danielle, the most meaningful part of her role is the relationships she builds with students. She enjoys helping students recognize their own potential and celebrating their achievements—no matter how big or small.



**ABOVE:** Danielle Baker, School Support Specialist at Charles Town Middle School

**WHETHER IT'S A STUDENT STOPPING HER IN THE HALLWAY FOR A HIGH FIVE OR KNOCKING ON HER DOOR TO SHARE A SUCCESS, THOSE MOMENTS MEAN A LOT. "IT'S NOT JUST THE VICTORY CELEBRATION," DANIELLE SAYS.**

**“IT’S THE FACT THAT THEY DECIDED I WAS WORTH TELLING, THAT THEY TRUST ME ENOUGH TO SHARE THAT MOMENT.” SHE ALSO VALUES THE TIMES WHEN STUDENTS SEEK HER OUT FOR EXTRA SUPPORT, KNOWING THAT THEY FEEL SAFE ENOUGH TO SHARE THEIR STRUGGLES.**

Danielle’s daily work centers on supporting students one-on-one, helping them set and work toward personal goals. She also provides crisis support and case management when needed. This year has been a little different, as Danielle transitioned from a community already familiar with TMI’s work to one where she is helping introduce and grow the program. In addition to her school-based work, she collaborates with local partners and participates in community events to build awareness of JBA. She has also completed Crisis Intervention Team training to assist with colleague-led trainings and provides support to other organizations, including meeting with students at the Boys & Girls Club.

Danielle has celebrated several successes over the past year. In October, she passed her licensure exam and officially became a Licensed Social Worker. She also considers it a victory that students throughout the school now recognize her—something she’s reminded of when she hears her name being called in the hallway.

Looking ahead, Danielle is excited to be part of the planning committee for the upcoming Elevate Youth, Elevate Joy event. She also enjoyed attending Prevention Day at the Capitol, where she connected with agencies from across the state, met partners behind programs she had previously only heard about, and helped represent JBA’s work alongside colleagues.

Through her dedication to connection, support, and community collaboration, Danielle continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of both Berkeley and Jefferson County students every day.

## **MEET DANIELLE**

*School Support Specialist at Charles Town Middle School*

THOUSANDS OF US ARE IN RECOVERY.

**YOU CAN BE TOO.**



**WHEN IT'S TIME, WE'RE HERE.**

**CALL 1-844-HELP4WV**



FUNDED IN PART BY



# EVERY CHILD DESERVES A GOOD START

If you have an Infant or toddler at home and have concerns about their development with moving, talking, hearing, vision, playing, learning, or growing, we are here to help.

West Virginia's Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Program. Telehealth and In Person appointments are available at NO COST TO YOU.

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**(304) 267-3595 ext 132**





*Get the facts about electronic cigarettes, their health effects and the risks of using e-cigarettes.*

E-cigarettes (also called “vapes”) have been the most commonly used tobacco product among U.S. youth since 2014. Educators can make a real difference by engaging in meaningful conversations with their students about the dangers of vaping for young people and ways to quit.

CDC launched the Empower Vape-Free Youth™ campaign in 2023 to encourage middle and high school educators to speak with students about the risks of e-cigarettes and nicotine addiction. The campaign also provides resources for educators to help students avoid or quit vaping.

**EMPOWER**  
*Vape-Free*  
**YOUTH™**



Info Provided by the Center for  
Disease Control and Prevention



**i talk**  
they hear you®



# START TALKING BEFORE SHE HEADS OFF TO SCHOOL.

It's never too early to have a conversation about alcohol and other drugs.

The sooner you talk about the dangers of underage drinking and substance use, the greater chance you have of influencing your child's decisions about using alcohol and other drugs. For tips on how—and when—to begin the conversation, visit

[www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov)

#TalkTheyHearYou

PEP20-03-01-041



**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration



# A MODEL SOLUTION

## TO A NATIONAL PROBLEM

*Our mission is to prevent substance use disorders, build strong families, and empower the Martinsburg community through police, school, community, health, and education partnerships.*

1

### **Increase awareness**

of how to prevent substance use disorder through community empowerment.

2

### **Mitigate negative consequences**

Resulting from substance misuse or trauma through community interventions, medication overdose.

3

### **Identify, risk stratify and offer appropriate interventions**

for individuals experiencing risk factors of trauma or substance misuse.

4

### **Evaluate and report performance.**



THE  
**MARTINSBURG**  
INITIATIVE

A POLICE, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP