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Volunteer outreach in the community is a wonderful offering helping to bring people together while creating a healthier environment. Volunteering is not only just beneficial for the people and the mission of the project, but also for the person actively volunteering giving them a sense of purpose. In the Buffalo, New York area, there is a small group of reiki practitioners that I volunteer with at a rehabilitative alcohol and detox center. The patients are either interested in receiving reiki healing, have never heard of it or they are just there for something to do. Through this volunteer program our group has helped to expose patients to a form of healing helping to assist them during an exceedingly difficult period in their lives.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 19.7 million American adults over the age of twelve battled a substance abuse disorder in 2017. A major contribution to these numbers are from the use of prescription pain killers such as Fentanyl, Oxycontin and Hydrocodone. As people have become dependent on prescription pills for pain, they have often neglected to seek out alternative care in ways that can help to manage pain. One such treatment that can help is through the application of massage therapy. As studies have shown, massage therapy has been scientifically proven to stimulate neurotransmitters in the brain producing natural pain relieving and feel good hormones such as oxytocin, serotonin and dopamine. Massage has been proven to decrease levels of the stress hormone cortisol while stimulating the parasympathetic nervous response. One such study conducted on pain relief through massage was at the University of Portsmouth. Research showed that patients who received reflexology felt about 40% less pain and were able to stand pain for about 45% longer, when reflexology was used as a method of pain relief. During a study at the Touch Research Institute in Miami, Florida, results showed an average increase of 28% for serotonin and an average increase of 31% for dopamine increased.

After graduation and upon receiving my NY massage license, I would like to volunteer my time as a massage therapist at the rehab center where I currently volunteer at. It is my hope to increase awareness to the community promoting the positive effects of massage therapy. The support and care of a therapist during a massage may offer soothing comfort to a patient in rehab or while going through detox in general. When the patient is going through withdrawal, the lack of these feel-good chemicals can create anxiety, depression and mood swings while the dramatic drop of these chemicals may cause pain and uncomfortable sessions in the physical body. Massage therapy compliments the treatment program when dealing with drug and alcohol abuse as it can help to alleviate the discomfort of these withdrawal symptoms, while settling restlessness, insomnia, and anxiety. By volunteering my services as a massage therapist, it is my goal for others to experience this healing modality to incorporate into their lifestyle for healthy living.