

# TOWN OF VERNON

## Office of the Mayor

14 Park Place • Vernon, CT 06066

Tel: (860) 870-3600 • Fax: (860) 870-3580

[www.Vernon-CT.gov](http://www.Vernon-CT.gov)



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 24, 2024

**Press Contact:**

David Owens, Communications Specialist

Desk (860) 870-3574

Cell (860) 494-5973



**Daniel A. Champagne**  
*Mayor*

**Michael J. Purcaro**  
*Town Administrator*

**Dawn R. Maselek**  
*Assistant Town Administrator*

## UFC MMA Champions to Help Vernon Launch Campaign to Prevent Opioid Abuse

***Alex Pereira and Glover Teixeira Will be at Vernon's National Night Out on Aug. 6***

**VERNON, Connecticut** – Two MMA champions will be in Vernon on Tuesday, Aug. 6 for National Night Out and to help kickoff the town's "Connection Beats Addiction" campaign to prevent opioid abuse.

UFC Light Heavyweight Champion Alex Pereira and former UFC Light Heavyweight Champion and MMA legend Glover Teixeira will meet fans, sign autographs and advocate for the Vernon opioid initiative, which focuses on treatment, intervention, helping families affected by opioids, drug take back events, harm reduction, developing positive connections and working with the Vernon Public Schools.

"Our goals are simple," Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne said. "We want to help people avoid opioids, help people with substance use disorder connect with treatment, and save the lives of those who continue to struggle."

Pereira and Teixeira are enthusiastic about helping kick off Vernon's Connection Beats Addiction campaign.

In addition to being elite athletes who have reached the pinnacle of their sport, Pereira and Teixeira live in Connecticut, and are friends, training partners and ambassadors for their sport. Both train at Teixeira's Connecticut-based gym, Teixeira MMA & Fitness.

"Having world-famous athletes such as Alex and Glover join us in launching this campaign will help us reach as wide an audience as possible with our life-saving message," Vernon Town Administrator Michael Purcaro said. "Our program of drawing people in to build connections can be replicated by other communities across the state and nation. Connection truly beats addiction."

ESPN calls Pereira MMA's biggest star. But it wasn't always that way. He was born into poverty in his native Brazil, lost a brother to a drug overdose and battled alcoholism in his late teens and early 20s. He overcame his addiction by committing himself to his sport and rose rapidly to the sport's highest levels.

"I have seen what addiction can do to a person and a family," Pereira said. "I have also seen what people can achieve when they get help and get sober. Passion for something such as sports can help save people and that's why I am so happy to be able to support Vernon's campaign to build connections and beat addiction."

Teixeira, also a native of Brazil, is now retired from the sport. Like his friend, Teixeira experienced a rapid rise to the top of his sport. He moved to the U.S. and worked as a landscaper, sending money back to his family in Brazil. He became enthralled with mixed martial arts and boxing and began training. People who believed in Teixeira invited him to train with them, and he absorbed and mastered everything that was taught to him and became UFC world champion in the light heavyweight division.

“These two remarkable athletes are examples of how building strong connections with family, friends and others can have a positive impact on one’s life,” said Matt Hellman, Vernon’s Director of Social Services.

Michelle Hill, Vernon’s director of youth services, said the program is designed to address the full spectrum of impacts opioids have on people, families and the community.

“A primary goal of Connection Beats Addiction is to create a comprehensive program that enables people to engage in constructive, meaningful and rewarding activities so that they build healthy connections with others, making them less likely to use or abuse opioids and other substances,” Hill said. “We also want to help people get treatment, help families, sponsor drug take back events and harm reduction efforts, and work with our schools to reach young people with this important message.”

National Night Out is a nationwide program that builds partnerships between police and community. The Vernon Police Department and Vernon Community Network will be on hand to provide school supplies to Vernon kids and serve hot dogs, ice cream and other snacks. The event features a variety of community organizations and takes place on Tuesday, Aug. 6 from 5 to 8 p.m. at 20 East Main Street in the Rockville section of Vernon.

### **About the Town of Vernon**

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of more than 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in “New England's Knowledge Corridor” with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870-3670 or visit [www.vernon-ct.gov](http://www.vernon-ct.gov).

###