

CARS

CHRIST-CENTERED
ADDICTION
RESTORATION
SERVICES



BRINGING HEALING, HOPE, AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO BROKEN LIVES

By Tom Fish | Photos courtesy of CARS



Normally, I begin our monthly non-profit article with a brief explanation of the issues or problems the featured non-profit organization seeks to address and how those issues and problems impact our lives in the Culpeper area. I'm going to open this article a little differently.

Addiction has impacted my life on many levels. My maternal grandmother died of an accidental overdose of alcohol and sleeping pills when I was a young boy. For the first 17 years of my life, my father was an alcoholic. I was the oldest of five children. One evening in the autumn of 1977, the day after we had had a violent altercation, Dad came to me and said he had attended an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting. The night before we might have killed each other. In that moment, we cried like babies wrapped in each other's arms. He was sober from Thanksgiving that year until he died in 2014. He became the man he always could have been and helped many people with their journeys to recovery.

One of my younger brothers, the one closest in age to me, got into bad stuff as a young teenager. That earned him a bar from reenlisting in the U.S. Navy. He led a tumultuous and degrading adult life, until he left Long Island, NY for clean country living in Kentucky. His demons followed him there, but he achieved a certain clarity of mind and peace in his heart. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, he journeyed back to Long Island to retrieve one of his sons and take him to Kentucky. But a friend died, so he decided to stay until the funeral. My brother visited some

of his old crew, and he ended up dying face-down on a hotel room floor before his friend was buried. Other relatives have died in similar circumstances. By the grace of God, one niece and two nephews are living better lives recovering from addiction.

My dad taught me that addiction is first a disease of the attitudes, and therefore has spiritual roots. It becomes a disease of the body as foreign substances alter the brain's chemistry and attack other organs. Nowadays, the spiritual roots of addiction are often overlooked by the popular media and society. Yet, God featured prominently in the original 12 Steps developed by the founders of AA. The Culpeper area and surrounding counties are fortunate to have Christ-Centered Addiction Restoration Services (CARS).

I have had an opportunity to communicate with each volunteer member of the CARS Board. Each board member has been affected by addiction in their own life, through a family member, or the struggles of a close friend. We don't have the space to tell all their stories, but many of them are like what I've already shared. All of them are involved because they want to help provide hope, healing, and encouragement to people struggling with addiction of any kind and to the people who love them.

CARS currently has no paid staff, and it operates solely with volunteers. The CARS Board has eight members. Mark Jenkins cast the original vision for CARS, and he continues to serve as President and Chairman. Richard Brookings serves as Vice Chairman. The other board members are Shelley Burnham, Paul Callahan, Shirley Cox, Lisa

Haynes, Taylor Songer, and Sydney White.

There are numerous staff volunteers ranging from bookkeeping and data entry to field support for events and fundraisers. It is difficult to provide a hard number, but a fair estimate is 28 people. Sydney White pointed out, "Many if not all of those involved in this ministry are there because we or a family member or a friend has been impacted by addiction, which affects everyone in that circle of people in some way. Healing and hope are needed for all of us."

MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

"The mission of CARS is to bring restoration to lives destroyed by addiction," explained Mark Jenkins. "It is a VA non-profit corporation 501(c)3, established to provide long-term, faith-based nurturing and restorative environments for men and women, ages 20-40, who are struggling with risky, habitual, and debilitating behaviors surrounding primarily the use of alcohol and drugs. Sydney White shared, "We believe every human being has dignity and worth, regardless of beliefs, background or gender, and that we are called to show the love of Christ to members of our community needing our help." Sydney continued, "Always at the forefront of CARS is a message of hope in Christ and His life-changing work done through relationship with Him and the heart change that comes as a result."

RESTORE GROUPS

CARS started its work in the community by offering weekly RESTORE group meetings.



The purpose of the meetings is to help people get on the road to recovery and to stay on that road. "In 2017, we had only one RESTORE group. It was in Culpeper," recalled Shelley who participated as a volunteer before becoming one of the initial board members. "Today we have groups meeting weekly in five counties: Culpeper, Madison, Rappahannock, Greene and Warren," Shelley continued, "RESTORE meets an immediate need in the community for help, support, hope, healing, and encouragement." These are open meetings, meaning that they are for everybody affected by addiction, not only people suffering from dependency. Shelley relayed a memory, "There was once a woman whose grandson was incarcerated. She came weekly and took notes, sending them to her grandson. When he got out, he came to meetings as well." RESTORE meetings aren't only about substance abuse. Whether it's gambling, overeating, or anything else – addiction is still addiction. RESTORE follows a 12 Step program, giving people opportunities to share about their journey for the healing and encouragement of others. All meetings are free to attend. Although RESTORE is a faith-based program anybody can attend and participate.

CARS collaborates with other organizations. Shelley explained, "We don't have a meeting every day of the week, but we can help a person find a meeting if that is what they need." Mark Jenkins added, "We also welcome anyone who has a desire to serve or walk beside people who are struggling with addiction or life's various hurts, habits, and hang ups. We are a safe place for people to find healing and restoration."

RECOVERY HOMES

Although the RESTORE groups meet an immediate need, Richard Brookings shared, "The ultimate goal of CARS is to have a faith-based recovery home(s) for people to find freedom from addiction and provide them with the tools to remain sober/clean and be successful in life once they graduate from the program. Sometimes a person needs to move into a safe place where they can begin the healing process. Mark Jenkins reported, "A district attorney once told me he had

only two choices, put somebody in a jail cell – and nothing helpful happens there – or the streets. But the DA lamented that what an addicted really need was a bed (a safe place). That is what recovery homes are all about."

Richard Brookings observed, "The process of securing the right house and then building a staff requires the support of a community in multiple ways: volunteering, financial support, supporting the staff as well as the students in the program during the various phases of their recovery." Shirley Cox shared, "We have met with many other organizations offering similar services and have studied what was effective for them and what wasn't so we can provide the very best opportunity possible." Sydney White added, "Our current most pressing need is to secure a home in which to provide restoration to a small number of women. We are eager to provide the necessary structure by means of curriculum, counseling, mentoring and accountability that is needed to recover from a life caught in addiction."

FINANCES AND FUND RAISING

"Most people don't think that small communities can produce a quality, long lasting program for people struggling with drug and alcohol, whose brains have been hijacked by chemicals not natural to their bodies. But we know differently," offered Mark Jenkins. He continued, "We are asking the residents of Culpeper, Madison, Rappahannock, Orange, and Southern Fauquier, as well as those in other nearby communities, to partner with us to not only bring hope to young women in our area (for starters) but in the vehicle through which that hope will be received."

Sydney White observed, "As a 501(c)3 organization, we are funded from private or corporate donors, as well as fund raising that is often done in partnership with community and other organizations with the same goals and concerns. Shirley Cox pointed out, "Actually, the majority of our money comes from annual fundraisers. We also receive monthly support from sponsoring churches and organizations." Sydney

explained about some of the fundraising activities, "We have held a Car Show for two consecutive years and plan to continue that annually. There have also been motorcycle rides, church-related suppers and appeals, and community events that we attend to give awareness of our message of hope and support."

Shirley amplified concerning the car show, "In 2021, the July 4th Car Show was held at Culpeper United Methodist Church and was very successful. In 2022, Culpeper Renaissance, Inc. and the Town of Culpeper invited CARS to host the annual car show on East Davis Street, which was even more successful. We had 200 cars, trucks, and motorcycles. It is a wonderful way to let our community know about us as well as to raise money for CARS."

Paul Callahan observed, "Every year we add additional events to the list of community event we participate in or sponsor. Besides those already mentioned, CARS has been involved in the re-entry resource fair, Culpeper Fest, Business Industry and Education Event, Taste of the Mountain, the Living the Dream 5K, the Orange Street Festival, and more."

Shelley Burnham told me this story:

I met an older gentleman at a medical facility. He was waiting for his wife. We got to chatting. I told him about CARS and the Conversation with Brian Welch that we had hosted in October. I mentioned that Brian has committed to a \$10,000 match to encourage the community to support the work of helping people break free from addiction. Then the man surprised me by digging out his wallet asking, "Can I give you some money toward the match? I will give you all I have." The contents of his wallet turned about to be \$2, but he insisted that I take it. "I used to be an alcoholic," he explained, "And I want to be part of helping other people recover."

The battle against addiction is real, urgent, and winnable. The quickest way to reach CARS and explore getting involved is through its website HeRestores.com. Go to the Support Us tab and look for Volunteer Work. You can also email: info@HeRestores.com