

THE R.O.S.S. REVIEW

An inside look at our Recovery Community Organization

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A Word From The Editor

Welcome to the fourth edition of our Bi-Monthly Newsletter the R.O.S.S. Review! This April's Newsletter theme is "Spring Into Recovery!" Spring is a time of renewal and healing. According to SAMHSA, Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health & wellness, live self-directed lives, & strive to reach their full potential. We wanted to showcase how we make recovery possible through special recognition, education topics, highlights and events. Enjoy!

- Mark Litvine Director of Marketing

Congratulations Pam Butler, Cynthia Rice and all R.O.S.S. Peer Award Winners!

Pamela Butler was awarded the Carl Nowell Award at ASADS the Alabama School of Alcohol and Other Drug Studies this past March. The Carl Nowell Award is the highest honor anyone can receive in the Substance Use Disorder field in Alabama! Pam is a trailblazer of peer support services and this Peer Movement in Alabama. R.O.S.S. would not be where we are today without our Pam. Pam you are a mentor, friend, role model and advocate for all of us in this peer support field. Pam has retired from the Alabama Department of Mental Health and was instrumental in transforming Alabama into a Recovery Oriented System of Care Model. It was Pam that challenged us at the first Certified Recovery Support Specialist training to start the first Peer Run Organization in Alabama because individuals needed a better way to receive help and support. Hence, R.O.S.S. was born. Congratulations Pam!

At our 8th Annual Peer Conference Awards Banquet this past March our R.O.S.S. Executive Director & Founding President Cynthia Rice was awarded the first ever Pam Butler Award No one is more deserving of the Pam Butler award than Cynthia Rice. Cynthia is our fearless leader and R.O.S.S. would not be where we are today without our Cynthia! Cynthia Rice started R.O.S.S. with just a few of us! Congratulations Cynthia you are a mentor, friend, role model and advocate for all of us in this Peer Support field as well. We love you! We are forever grateful for you and all your work at R.O.S.S. Cynthia! You have taught us so much about leadership, humility and loving people to a better life! You have led R.O.S.S. for over 7 years and you have grown our Non-Profit into what we are today. We are forever grateful for you Cynthia, Congratulations!

At the 8th Annual Peer Conference Awards Banquet our R.O.S.S. Certified Recovery Support Specialists were awarded as well! You are all so deserving of this special recognition. You have all gone above and beyond advocating, empowering and collaborating for the individuals we serve. The work you are all doing is invaluable! The following Awards were given out to our team members. Congratulations to you all!

Innovative Peer Award - Michael Ann Green, Rebecca Stebbins, Carla Buggs, Sara Walker, Tamara Beasley, Janna Caddis, Heather Rich, Nikki Warren

Peer Service of Excellence Award - Lorraine Smith, Stephanie Richardson, Theodis Christian

Peer Warrior Award - Nikki Warren, Amanda Townson, Christina Abney



Cynthia Rice pictured top left with Cynthia's Pam Butler Award next to Pam. Pamela Butler pictured top right with Pam's Carl Nowell Award. Also pictured are R.O.S.S. team members Julie Ray, Carla Buggs and Mark Litvine

8th Annual Alabama Peer Conference and ASADS

Our R.O.S.S. Employee's attended the 8th Annual Alabama Peer Conference March 29th through 31st. This year's Peer Conference theme was "Nothing About Us Without Us!" The conference theme signifies that if services, policies and events are going to take place in our Alabama communities on substance use disorder and bringing awareness through advocacy that peer support specialists need to be involved every step of the way as well. The Conference hosted 400 Certified Recovery Support Specialists at Bessemer Civic Center! We held our first ever Awards Banquet that Thursday Night! Thank you to all of the Peer Conference Sponsors for making this event possible. Peer Support in Alabama rocks!!! (Continued at the top of the page)

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R.O.S.S. was a sponsor at ASADS the Alabama School of Alcohol and Other Drug Studies this year which took place at the Bryant Conference Center this past March 21st through 24th. ASADS exist to foster and maintain the integrity of alcohol and substance abuse related services for consumers and provide continuing education and educational programs for professionals working with populations affected by alcohol and substance abuse. Check them out at asadsonline.com Thank you to the Alabama Department of Mental Health!



Pictured top left are our R.O.S.S. team members Karen Ellington, Kristin Rhudy, Nan Burdette and Brandi Butler at the Peer Conference. Conference photo right.

From Stigma to Compassion

I'm in recovery from Substance Use Disorder, and I completely understand how important it is to reduce the stigma around addiction. When I was struggling with my SUD, I felt ashamed and embarrassed because of the stigma attached to it. I believed that my addiction was my fault and that it made me a bad person. It was so hard to admit to anyone that I had a problem, and I was afraid of how people would judge me.

Unfortunately, stigma is still a huge problem in our society when it comes to addiction. People often see addiction as a personal failing or a moral weakness rather than the disease it is. This stigma can make it harder for people to seek help because they feel ashamed and embarrassed. It's so important for us to reduce the stigma around addiction so that people can feel more comfortable reaching out for help.

On the flip side, I've also experienced the positive effects of reducing stigma. When I finally did reach out for help, I was met with compassion and understanding. People who didn't judge me for my addiction, and who saw me as a person who needed help. It made all the difference in the world, and it helped me to start my journey to recovery.

Reducing stigma can be done in a few different ways. We can educate ourselves and others about the nature of addiction as a disease, we can use language that emphasizes compassion and understanding, and we can advocate for policies that support those in recovery. By working together to reduce the stigma around addiction, we can create a more compassionate society that supports those who are struggling with Substance Use Disorder

Using person-first language can have a significant impact on reducing the stigma around addiction. It helps to eliminate stereotypes and assumptions about those who struggle with addiction, and it emphasizes that SUD is a medical condition that requires treatment, rather than a moral failing or personal choice.

By using person-first language, we can create a more supportive and compassionate environment for those in recovery.

We can help break down the stigma surrounding addiction, making it easier for individuals to seek help without fear of judgment or discrimination. For example, instead of saying "he's an alcoholic," we can say "he's a person with an alcohol use disorder." This small change in language can have a big impact on how we view and treat those who struggle with addiction. It shows that we recognize them as individuals, rather than defining them solely by their addiction.

If you or someone you know is struggling with addiction, don't hesitate to reach out for help. Recovery is possible, and there are people who will support you on your journey.

- Whit Freeman CRSS/R.O.S.S. A.C.E. Peer Educator

Embracing Harm Reduction Strategies

When I think about harm reduction, I think about compassion. I think about community. Harm reduction is a set of evidence-based practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing the real harms and dangers associated with substance use. I've heard it said that harm reduction is enabling people to use, or that it is condoning drug use. Instead the reality is that drug use happens, so instead of simply ignoring the problems, harm reduction is about providing resources and support to the people who use drugs and to the communities they live in.

For decades we as a society have predominantly used an abstinence based approach and people continue to die at more alarming rates every day. That is not to say harm reduction is anti-abstinence, because it's not. Abstinence reduces harm, but harm reduction believes in meeting people where they are at and helping them where they are at. For instance if someone with a substance use disorder doesn't want to go into treatment, their lack of readiness shouldn't make them any less deserving of health care and support.

Harm reductionists build relationships with the people they serve, which breaks down barriers so people feel more comfortable asking for help when they are ready to do so. There are so many barriers to treatment and recovery that people fall through the cracks before they find the access and support they need to progress in their journey. Through building community relationships and meeting people where they are at, harm reduction provides more complete access to treatment and recovery for those who want it.

I ask that you take a moment and think about what would happen if we took away helmets, seat belts, safety glasses, car seats, or routine annual checkups...

These are harm reduction practices present in everyday life. Without them we would see far more harm from accidental situations. Harm reduction exists all around us so is it really harm reduction that our communities oppose? I believe the disconnect is not in the willingness to provide humans with basic needs and resources but that we as a society still view drug related difficulties as a moral problem.

Millions of people personally know someone that struggles with substance use and most would do anything to help their loved one, yet they judge the person they don't know who has the same struggle. In order to see a change in our communities we must change our thinking. If we can provide support and be compassionate to people, simply because they are a person, we will see a change. We will see people succeed in their own journeys and we will see people LIVE.

- Aubin Cawthon CRSS/R.O.S.S. A.C.E. Peer Educator



Register your organization for an A.C.E. Professional Development Training today on ace.ross4u.org ! It's about saving lives!



We have a R.O.S.S. Baby! Pictured left is our team member Aubin Cawthon with Partner Caroline Cawthon and their new born baby Ellery Harlow Cawthon! Congratulations to the Cawthon Family!

There Is Hope On Every Call

Our R.O.S.S. Statewide Helpline is available 24/7 at (844-307-1760.) Here at the 24/7 Helpline Call Center, we give referrals to people seeking help through state funded treatment for a substance use disorder. It doesn't stop there. We receive calls from parents, siblings, and friends. We get them raw and uncensored and at their lowest point. It's at this time we gladly let them know that we once felt the same way and had very similar experiences. We are able to stifle stigma by letting them know that there is hope for every person who diligently seeks help and follows through. Our team can show them how that is possible through our own stories.

I have been a part of the Helpline for 5 years and have helped many to seek help and get their life back. Being a part of this Helpline gives me purpose and direction and I pay it forward. The Helpline is a safe and judgment free line that people can call to get resources to fit their recovery path. We take down the information needed to place them with a facility that will see to all their needs. We then turn it over to our Outreach Program in 38 Counties and know that these clients will receive love and care. We are caring participants in their lives. Through close contact of our outreach specialists, we get to know that our callers are on their way to a better life. The fact that we were once in the same situation drives us to want to know how they are doing. Helping them find their path in recovery is a great joy. We take pride in advocating, collaborating and empowering each individual that calls our Helpline.

- Stephanie Hudson CRSS/R.O.S.S. Helpline Supervisor

Visit us at ross4u.org, rosshelpline4u.org & ace.ross4u.org

A Safe Haven For Those In Need

Serving as the coordinator for our R.O.S.S Marshall County Recovery Community Center is very rewarding. Working with the community outside of the agency has been amazing. Our Marshall County community has so many resources that we have put together for anyone seeking help. Those individuals seeking help could possibly get an assessment to determine their level of care to enter a state certified treatment center, work with our R.O.S.S. Outreach program, go to school, or find jobs. R.O.S.S. also works with the Department of Human Resources hosting visitations at our facility. R.O.S.S. partners with Family Services of North Alabama, Thrive Alabama, several different churches, Drug Court, Court Referral Programs, Pardons & Paroles, probation, and some Juvenile Courts. R.O.S.S. works with Marshall County Jail, some of the city jails and Cedar Lodge. R.O.S.S. offers support groups in the jails and Cedar Lodge to anyone who would like to attend. We try to love people to a better life.

At our R.O.S.S. of Marshall County Recovery Community Center we provide Parenting and Anger Management classes. We have Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, a Chemical Dependency Support Group and a Medication-Assisted Recovery Support Group for individuals utilizing medication who have a Opioid Use Disorder. We have speaker meetings the second and fourth Wednesday of every month in our Chemical Dependency Support Group. Alcoholics Anonymous celebrates Birthday night on the last Thursday of every month. We will have about 80 people in attendance. We feed them a meal and have birthday cake for the people who have their recovery birth date that month. It is amazing to watch these things transform in front of us, the smiles, the happy lives that they have are contagious. It has been a privilege for me to work with this organization in this community.

Our R.O.S.S. Marshall County Recovery Community Center is a safe, supportive and fun environment for everyone in our community. We provide; a pool table, horseshoes, a basketball goal, bingo, cards, and also have recovery games. We also do things for people in the community who are not in recovery. We host birthday parties, baby showers, weddings, wedding receptions. and we have also had memorial services for people who have lost their life to their addiction. The one thing that I have learned is that - a dream is a dream, but a goal is a dream with a plan and a deadline. "If we want to reach the people no one else is reaching, we have to do the things that no one else is doing" (Andy Stanley)

- Michael Baker CRSS/R.O.S.S. Marshall County Agency Coordinator



Pictured above are our R.O.S.S. Employees at the 8th Annual Alabama Peer Conference

R.O.S.S. Gadsden Open House & Other Events

Our R.O.S.S. Gadsden Recovery Community Center at 1030 Tuscaloosa Ave Gadsden, Alabama 35901 in the back of Carver Community Center is open to the public! We are open 7 days a week from 9am to 9pm and you can call us locally at 256-438-5285 or email us at ross4us.etowahco@gmail.com. Follow us on Facebook @rossec4us. We are a safe, supportive and fun environment for everyone in our community! We held an Open House at R.O.S.S. Gadsden on Friday April 14th! We had a great turnout with our community partners. Thank you to every one who attended including the Court Referral Officers and Pardons & Paroles. Our R.O.S.S. Agency Coordinator, Gadsden native Reginald Flowers, is excited to serve his community and make a difference in Etowah County.

Our R.O.S.S. team in Walker County including Michael Ann Green, Nikki Warren, Sara Walker and Vanessa Hubbard helped to organize Love Walker County Day at the Walker County Courthouse on Saturday April 15th. This was an incredible event to provide resources for the people in Walker County! There were vendors, bounce houses, food, groceries, clothes and music all for free! Thank you to our amazing Walker County Recovery Community for organizing the event!

Our R.O.S.S. team in Dekalb County Amanda Townson and Rebecca Stebbins organized an amazing Spring Into Recovery event in Crossville, Alabama on Saturday April 15th. 300 people attended the event! Thank you to our R.O.S.S. team members Tammy Williams, Anna Harden, Tracy McWaters, Whit Freeman and Shane Tidwell for helping make it a success! Vital Project FREEDOM handed out over 100 doses of Naloxone and we gave out hundreds of Fentanyl Test Strips to help reduce the overdose death rate. We released 150 balloons in memory of those who lost their lives to substance use disorder and we put their names on a Remembrance Wall.



Pictured above left is our R.O.S.S. Gadsden Agency Coordinator Reginald Flowers. Pictured above right is our R.O.S.S. team about to release balloons at the Spring Into Recovery event