



# 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 fifth edition of our Bi-Monthly Newsletter the R.O.S.S. Review! This June we celebrate Pride Month & Juneteenth! On Juneteenth (June 19th), we recommit ourselves to the work of racial justice, equity and equality in America as we celebrate the centuries of struggle, courage and hope for Black Americans. Pride Month is a vibrant and inclusive celebration that honors the LGBTQIA+ community, their history, achievements and ongoing struggle for equality. We wanted to celebrate Juneteenth & Pride Month through personal reflections along with events, special recognition & more. Enjoy!

- Mark Litvine Director of Marketing

## The Significance of Juneteenth

Where do I begin? When I think of the significance of Juneteenth, I experience a range of emotions. Why? There are a number of reasons. At the top of my list, as glorious a day this is to many, myself included. Many of my sisters and brothers in and out of recovery are not free to celebrate "emancipation" or "freedom day". They don't know that they have a choice or a chance. Jails, Institutions and even death. It is not the color of my sisters and brothers skin that causes me to pause at the thought of Juneteenth. It's meaning. It's history. Not the greed of slave owners denying emancipation two and a half years beyond the original "free" day. It is the shackles still wrapped so tightly around the minds and spirits of those who still struggle with the disease of addiction.

In this age of plenty. I would like to honor the memory of my family and friends as I celebrate our history this year. So much has changed for me and around me. I often think of my grandmother who raised me in a little southern town in Alabama. A hardworking lady who taught me so much about respect, responsibility and creating something out of nothing. My father demonstrated the same. A jack of many trades and a hostage to alcohol for many years. My mother was a tough lady too. My 8 siblings who are no longer with me. I'll be thinking of them as I celebrate history for them and countless other members of my village who left me life lessons of strength.

I am grateful for each of my coworkers. They are thriving and sharing their experiences, humor, strength and hope so that others seeking freedom can find it. It is available to us ALL. The significance of Juneteenth to me.

- Shirley Jones CRSS/ R.O.S.S. Helpline Call Center Specialist



## R.O.S.S. Pride Month Celebration

Our new R.O.S.S. Gadsden campus at 1030 Tuscaloosa Ave held our First Annual Pride Month Celebration! We would like to thank Carmarion D. Anderson the State Director at Human Rights Campaign Alabama and Marie Holiday with Free Mom Hugs Alabama for coming to speak and support us as we recognized the impact that the LGBTQIA+ community has had on history locally, nationally and internationally. What a way to love people to a better life!



## The Importance of Pride Month

Pride month is the month of June and celebrates pride for the LGBTQIA+ community. The month of June was chosen to honor the Stonewall Uprising which took place in June 1969. The Stonewall riots began the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States.

Pride month is to celebrate and honor the beautiful identities of the LGBTQIA+ community. It is a time to celebrate how far we have come in equality and acceptance, as well as bring light to what still needs change. The LGBTQIA+ community and allies aim to raise awareness of ongoing issues of inequality.

During the month of June there are events nationwide to celebrate LGBTQIA+ culture and support the right of the LGBTQIA+ community. Pride promotes self-affirmation, equality, and increased visibility for the community and represents being yourself. Pride to me means getting to be myself and being proud of who I am. Pride means having the courage to unapologetically be my authentic self. Pride is the freedom to be me. Pride is my acceptance of me.

- Haley Horne CRSS/ R.O.S.S. Outreach Specialist



## Recovery Leadership Summit

In June R.O.S.S. attended the Faces & Voices of Recovery Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. Since 2017 R.O.S.S. has been a member of the Association of Recovery Community Organizations ARCO under Faces & Voices. On Capitol Hill R.O.S.S. met with Alabama U.S. Representatives and staffers in order to advocate for and improve the lives of individuals impacted by substance use disorder in our state. R.O.S.S. is the first Recovery Community Organization RCO in Alabama. We received the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award from President Biden in 2021 for our 24/7 Helpline.

Pictured from left to right is our R.O.S.S. Agency Administrator Christine Smith, Outreach Administrator Julie Ray, Marketing Director Mark Litvine and Executive Director Cynthia Rice at RLS 2023.



June 2023

## Going Above And Beyond The Call Of Duty

R.O.S.S. Montgomery recognized our incredible Outreach Specialist Christina Abney for going above and beyond the call of duty for our Montgomery Recovery Community Center at 2100 Mt. Meigs Rd. Christina played an instrumental role in helping our Montgomery Campus Coordinator Lorraine Smith with the day to day operations of the Center. Thanks to Christina, Ms. Lorraine was able to get the support she needed to provide a safe, supportive space for the individuals we serve in Montgomery. Thank you Christina you Rock! R.O.S.S. Montgomery wishes to recognize all of your hard work and dedication! You are an inspiration to us all!



## I Have My Life Back

I grew up in Mississippi, I started hanging out with guys that were much older than I was in Middle school. I started drinking and experimenting with substances when I was 14 years old. When I was 18 years old I started to get into trouble with the law, so I moved to New York. I continued with that lifestyle and ended up doing three different stints in the New York Penitentiary. I still didn't think that the substances were an issue. In 2016 I came to Alabama to help a family member move and I ended up staying here. From 2016 to 2022 I continued using substances and drinking. I had lost my relationship with my family and I wasn't paying my utilities or my rent. My landlord had finally had enough and was going through with the eviction process. I was about to be homeless.

In January 2022 a friend referred me to the Recovery Organization of Support Specialist or R.O.S.S. I made the call to R.O.S.S. and met with a R.O.S.S. Outreach Specialist who scheduled my assessment to determine the level of care that I needed. The R.O.S.S. Outreach Specialist drove me to Pearson Hall on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022. I completed detox at Pearson Hall and was able to stay in their 90-day men's program. I absolutely loved it in the program. I knew that I was finally done with my past life. I became the chairman of our support group there. I learned how to rely on God and put my faith back in Him. I started working the 12 steps and taking suggestions. I could feel in my heart that this was a new beginning I had been given.

I met Christina Abney an Outreach Specialist with R.O.S.S. next and Christina picked me up once I completed the program at Pearson Hall. I was at Pearson Hall 101 days. Christina and R.O.S.S. helped me find an Oxford House in Montgomery and Christina dropped me off at the Oxford House on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. I'm still here! I go to meetings several times a week, I have a sponsor and a home group. I have sober friends and a relationship with my family. I can look at myself in the mirror today. February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, I celebrated 1-Year Sober! I am truly blessed, being amongst the people that stood by my side when I was at my worst. I have my life back and I thank God every day for giving me another shot. None of this would be possible had I not made the call to R.O.S.S. when I did and had I not been willing to trust God.

## - Darren Forrest



Pictured from left to right is Montgomery County R.O.S.S. Outreach Specialist Christina Abney with Darren Forrest

## God's Grace

My name is Jason Crouse. My story is a story of pure adversity. I grew up in a small town in Jasper, Alabama and I was raised by a wonderful mother and father. I was watched over by a sister that has never left my side, and my aunt that never has never once judged me. I had a grandmother that made sure that all the family never went without anything. When I was 12 years old, I was struck by tragedy my father died of suicide. This spiraled my life into a shambles. I didn't know what to do or where to turn because I loved him so much. I was so hurt that I ran away from all the hope and love that my family was trying to give me. I was so scared of getting hurt again that I pushed everything and everyone away.

By the age of fifteen I was using substances heavily. By the age of seventeen I was so far gone, that I ended up in a fight with a guy and it just about cost me my life. I ended up losing my right leg due to complications. It was only by the grace of God that I stayed alive. Still, I didn't know what to do with the love I had received from God or my family that stuck by my side with every breath. I got my life together for a couple of years by moving to Whitewater, Wisconsin to play Wheelchair Basketball for the University of Whitewater Wisconsin. However, I had never been taught how to succeed so at the first sign of adversity I ended up quitting college and moving back to Alabama. I got back on pain medication for about fifteen years.

During this time, I had a lot of encounters with life and death experiences. I wrecked a vehicle at the age of twenty-five. By the time I was twenty-eight years old I had a major heart attack. By the age of thirty I was so far into my substance use disorder which led me to going to prison. After getting out of prison I met a wonderful woman that I loved very much. I lost her to an overdose which sent me spiraling out of control again and back in jail. By this time, I had lost everything I had in my life including my family. I was homeless on the streets of Jasper Alabama. I found myself completely alone and broken. I had finally hit bottom. One night after my aunt came to pick me up to see if I had eaten that day, I cried out to God to please help me. Whatever it will take Lord just please I'm done I remember saying. The next day I was arrested, going back to jail again but, this time it was different. I was glad to be in jail and I was asking to stay instead of bonding out. I was willing to go to treatment!

A Court Officer referred me to R.O.S.S., the Recovery Organization of Support Specialist while I was in jail. I was accepted by their program. A few months later R.O.S.S. helped me get into a program. I was transferred by a Deputy to Mountain Lakes at Cedar Lodge in Guntersville, Alabama. The best thing that could have ever happened took place. The seed of God's love, forgiveness & grace was shown into me. It was my miracle place! I had never been shown so much love and support in a way that I could understand. I was shown the way to succeed. Then one night a woman by the name of Sara Walker came to Cedar Lodge to share her story. Sara is in long term recovery and is a Certified Recovery Support Specialist. After Sara's story was over I found out that Sara also worked for R.O.S.S. as an Outreach Specialist for Walker County. Sara connected me to resources and has stayed with me every step of the way. Sara helped guide me into the right direction on my road to recovery. Sara is still a part of my life today. I will never forget what R.O.S.S. did for me or Ms. Sara Walker!

After Graduating Cedar Lodge, I ended up at a Sober Living House in Huntsville, Alabama. There are so many great people here which I now call my brothers. I only have two months left to graduate. During my time here I have been blessed with a great job at a manufacturing plant, where I'm doing great! It is such a wonderful place to work at. They specialize in working with people that have disabilities and they make sure that they are able to lead a productive life. I will have a place of my own to call home before long. Most importantly to me I truly believe that God led me here not just for my job and to become a productive member of society. God led me here because I found my place here at my church, 1st assembly of God (Hoen). I love my Church dearly with all my heart. It is where I truly meet God and have learned to have a true meaningful relationship with Him. I have found unconditional love, strength, hope, faith, trust, and success in all things in life. The people that God have put on my path have truly been sent by Him. Now I'm just waiting to see what My Lord wants me to do next in my life so that He can work through me like he did so many others.

To anyone who is out there thinking that there is no Hope please I urge you to just ask for some help and be willing to surrender your life to Him if that is your pathway of recovery. Thank you Father God for delivering me from all addictions and sorrow and pain. Thank you for loving me unconditionally and showing me how wonderful, amazing & miraculous life truly is.

## - Jason Crouse

## R.O.S.S. Madison County!

Madison County here we come! Our R.O.S.S. Madison County Recovery Community Center Grand Opening is on Friday July 7th from 11am to 2pm at 8211 Stephanie Drive Huntsville, Alabama 35802.

R.O.S.S. in Madison County will be open 7 days a week from 9am to 9pm. We are a safe, supportive, and fun environment for everyone in our community! You can call us at 256-713-8881 & visit us at [facebook.com/ross4us.madisoncounty](https://www.facebook.com/ross4us.madisoncounty).

We will have support groups, a computer lab, a kid's room for DHR visits as well as arcade games, a pool table, and a lounge area for sporting events. If someone doesn't have a place to go for the holidays, they can come and share a meal.



## Sobriety Birthdays

- Pamela Butler 30 Years
- Shirley Jones 21 Years
- Julie Ray 20 Years
- Annie Simmons 33 years
- Mark Litvine 10 Years

Call our 24/7 Helpline at 844-307-1760 or Visit us at [ross4u.org](https://www.ross4u.org) or [rosshelpline4u.org](https://www.rosshelpline4u.org)