

# ADDICTION RECOVERY



September 26, 2021



# Central Outreach Leads With Hep C Cure

Introducing a new service to continually meet patients where they are, Central Outreach unveils HepCMYWay.com.

Now, Pennsylvania and Ohio residents can access in-home treatment to cure their Hepatitis C. If you ever tested positive for Hep C and didn't get treated or receive the cure, through HepCMYWay, conveniently and effectively cure your Hep C as the provider will virtually develop a treatment plan for you and have the medication ship to your doorstep.

Follow three easy steps to use the service:

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2. Schedule your at-home or in-clinic test (Central Outreach or Quest Diagnostics)
3. Receive your meds to cure Hep C in the mail

Hepatitis C affects around 3.5 million people in the United States, many of whom don't even realize they have an in-

fection -- but the fact is, Hep C is curable with a simple round of medication. When that's the case, why don't we talk about Hep C until it enters our lives? Why is Hep C testing and treatment inaccessible to many of the people who need it most?

Powered by Central Outreach Wellness Center in Pittsburgh, PA, HepCMYWay strives to offer the latest Hepatitis C treatment in a way

***HepCMYWay strives to offer the latest Hepatitis C treatment in a way that's accessible, affordable, safe and judgment-free to anyone who needs it.***

that's accessible, affordable, safe and judgment-free to anyone who needs it. If you've tested positive for Hep C, we'll work together virtually to develop a treatment plan and send

your medication right to you. Or we'll send you a prescription to fulfill your labs at one of the Central Outreach locations or a lab like Quest Diagnostics.

If you're currently living with a Hep C infection, starting treatment is your first step to freedom.

With HepCMYWay, that step has never been easier to take!



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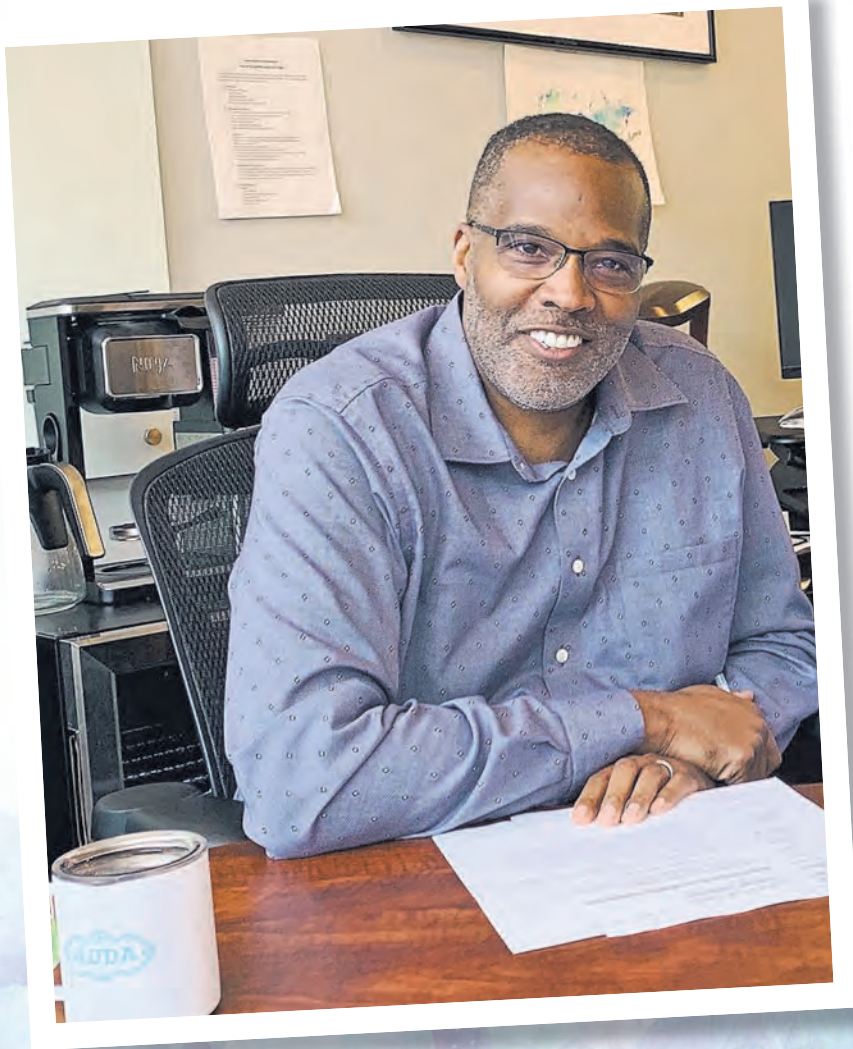
**HEPCMYWAY**

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# Light of Life Rescue Mission Provides Community for Those Experiencing Homelessness, Addiction

By Vanessa Orr



For almost seven decades, the Light of Life Rescue Mission has been a place where hope and healing meet for men, women and families experiencing homelessness, poverty or addiction. The key to their success, according to Executive Director Rev. Jerrel T. Gilliam, is the relationships they create with the people they serve.

"The opposite of addiction is not sobriety; the opposite of addiction is community," he explained. "We work to create a loving, caring community where anyone is welcome. It is a place of dignity and respect. It doesn't matter to us a person's background, sexual orientation, or if they are religious or not, we love them. That's what sets us apart."

Light of Life offers numerous services to help those in need, ranging from emergency services to community outreach

to its Life Transformation program, which provides housing, case management, educational and vocational training and more.

"It's difficult to say how many of our clientele suffer from addiction; people who come to us are often highly traumatized and have reached out to addictive behavior to deal with those issues," said Rev. Gilliam. "We have a continuum of care that creates an on-ramp for anyone who comes through these doors; we work to identify the needs that they have, and determine how we help."

According to Rev. Gilliam, the face of homelessness has changed over the years.

"In the 1990s, when I started in this field, alcohol was the main drug of choice, and we were seeing people age 50 and above," he explained. "When crack came onto the scene, we began seeing people in their upper 30s and lower 40s, and with the opioid crisis, we're seeing people as young as 19 or 20 who are homeless. We hardly ever saw that before, and now it's the norm."

As their demographics have changed, so has the way that Light of Life reaches those in crisis.

"Before when people needed services, they had to come to our doors," said Rev. Gilliam. "But during the opioid crisis, we realized that we needed to create an outreach team to go to where they are, and to try to

establish a relationship so that they will eventually come and get services.

"It's a long process, and can take weeks or months to build rapport before they trust us enough to come get a meal or shower, and to eventually take part in our programs," he added. "But for people experiencing personal trauma, the idea of navigating any system to get services is traumatic, so you need to take a more relational approach to let them know that help is there."

Light of Life offers long-term programs ranging from 18 months to two years to help men and women break the cycle of addiction and

homelessness. Men live on-site and learn about addiction while also undergoing educational, mental health and medical assessments, and can take part in the Educational Employment program to help them prepare for the workforce. Women without children live in off-campus community housing where they attend classes and work toward obtaining their own residences.

***"We have a continuum of care that creates an on-ramp for anyone who comes through these doors; we work to identify the needs that they have, and determine how we help."***

Women with children receive the same services but in a scattered site model, where they live in apartments, where their name is put on the lease, while going to Light of Life four times a week for parenting and addiction classes.

"Once they complete the program, they stay in these apartments, which gives them a head start on reestablishing

a new life for themselves," said Rev. Gilliam.

Light of Life also offers shorter programs for people with mental health and addiction issues, providing them with a loving, caring environment while they undergo outside therapy.

"Whether a person needs a meal, a place to stay, or are struggling with addiction, we welcome them with open arms," said Rev. Gilliam. "We want to be a part of making this a more just and equitable society and if we all help each other, we can get there. We want everyone to know that there is a safe place for them."

[www.lightoflife.org](http://www.lightoflife.org)

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# Connection, Celebration the Goal of Pittsburgh Recovery Walk

By Vanessa Orr



As a healthcare provider, Rachel Shuster, BSN, RN, CARN, CAAP, thrives in her role as a helper; someone who is there to offer assistance at what is often the worst time in a person's life. Yet it wasn't until the registered nurse suffered an opioid overdose five years ago that she realized just how important the support of a caring community can be.

"My substance misuse started at work," said Shuster, who is in long-term recovery from opioid use disorder. "After about nine months of use, I overdosed while on the job and was given NARCAN; that's where my recovery journey started."

Shuster underwent both inpatient and outpatient treatment, and was enrolled in a State Board of Nursing monitoring program that gives individuals a chance to recover while still protecting the general public.

"I went through that program and am still in recovery today," said Shuster. "I had no choice but to take those steps if wanted to keep my life as I knew it. If I didn't do what was required, I'd never be able to work as a nurse again, and that is a huge part of my identity."

***"Having events that celebrate milestones for people in recovery or who are struggling with substance use disorder is really important."***

Shuster's experience interested her in the recovery field, and she worked as an addictions registered nurse for almost five years, including in both inpatient and outpatient settings. She currently works for Gateway Health as an Addiction Specialist.

She says that one of the things that has helped in her recovery is the connection she's made with others undergoing the same experiences. "I've found that my recovery is better supported when I connect with people who are celebrating both tiny and larger victories," Shuster explained.

To this end, she volunteers with the Pittsburgh Recovery Walk, which celebrates the many roads to recovery from addiction and the people who travel them.

"It's difficult when all you hear is how there's so much more work to be done—in 2020, the overdose rates were the highest ever seen," said Shuster. "So, having events that celebrate milestones for people in recovery or who are struggling with substance use disorder is really important."

As part of the walk, speakers share their own journeys, and Recovery Awards are given to those in the community who provide support firsthand.

Community organizations, ranging from mutual aid support groups and legal assistance to medical providers and therapy pet programs are there to share resources, and there are numerous children's activities as well. This year's event will also include on-site COVID vaccinations.

"Then we do the walk together, which is the best part of the day," said Shuster of the route that travels from Waterfront Place in the Strip District, down Penn Avenue and along the Three Rivers Heritage Trail. "Once we return, there's a lot more mingling and celebrating and dancing. It's just the most amazing event—I always leave feeling refueled and

rejuvenated."

The walk is especially important to those struggling with recovery, as it lets them know that they are not alone. "Representation is really important, especially hearing stories shared by people on similar pathways and journeys," said Shuster. "It helps to dispel stigmas of what a person in recovery looks like."

Shuster believes that the walk is beneficial to everyone who attends. "Our theme is 'You Belong Here,' and we really encourage anyone and everyone to come, no matter where they are on their personal journey, or if they have a loved one, family member or friend in recovery, or even if



they don't have personal ties," she said.

"At the walk, you can see all the good that we don't normally get to see," she added. "Oftentimes, the media only covers the difficult things, like

overdoses. But here, people feel uplifted because they see that recovery does work—that people do recover." [www.pghrecoverywalk.org](http://www.pghrecoverywalk.org)

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# After Harrowing Journey, Dominick Helps Other Women Battling Addiction, Sex Trafficking

By Vanessa Orr



Sharlene M. Dominick, MSOL, has been clean for the past 23 years. Raised by drug addicts, and a full-blown addict herself by the age of 13, her story is one of tragedy and triumph. As the founder and executive director of Garden Home Ministries, it's also one she shares with other women battling addiction and sex trafficking.

"It blows my mind, some of the things that have happened to me. I'm so surprised that I'm still here," she says of her recovery journey.

***"The ladies in our program are successes because they have chosen — one day at a time — to stay clean"***

Dominick began drinking at the age of 8, and had her first stay in a psychiatric hospital at age 12. "When I returned home at 13, I started smoking weed, and then progressed to cocaine and heroin," she said. "The first time I smoked crack out of a pipe, I was 15. And that's the first time I was trafficked."

For the next eight years, Dominick struggled with addiction. "I was raped and molested more times than I can count, which is why I leaned so much into drugs and alcohol," she explained. "It took me out of my reality."

Though she made all As in school, she was kicked out as a result of bad behavior, and was soon in court on a robbery and assault charge. The judge let her join the Blue Ridge Job

Corps in Virginia where she earned her GED, and a home health aide and nurses' aide diploma. She then met another addict while working at a personal care home. "That was it; it went downhill from there," she said.

Dominick began using drugs again and became pregnant with her son at age 18. "I never thought I'd be in the position of being a full-blown addict and

pregnant," she said. "I didn't know how to stop, but I wanted to."

Though she was able to get clean for a while, Dominick relapsed and

ended up in jail three times and several psychiatric and rehab institutions. During her last time in jail, she had to take a hard look at the wreckage of her life. When her son, then 3, was assaulted by another boy while in foster care, she realized that it was time to change for good.

"I'd been blaming my parents for everything that was wrong in my life, and now my precious child could point back at me as the problem," she said. "I started going to Bible study while in jail, and it became a building block for me."

Dominick was encouraged by her mother, who by then had been clean for years, and she moved into Community Residential Rehabilitation (CRR), which offers individuals



with mental illnesses a safe place to stay while they are in recovery. At the age of 23, she finally got clean, and decided to dedicate her life to helping other women do the same.

In 2018, she founded Garden Home Ministries, an anti-human trafficking nonprofit focused on women in active addiction and early recovery. “The women that we serve are exploited and trafficked as a result of their addictions; we counteract homelessness and recidivism with tangible and meaningful solutions,” she explained.

Garden Home Ministries offers advocacy, outreach and housing, helping women in the early stages of recovery with safety, security and account-

ability.

“Our long-term recovery homes also provide women with resources vital to recovery and reintegration into society through faith, counseling, life skills, Twelve Step groups, money management and more,” said Dominick.

“We offer a safe space so ladies can take a break and ease into process of recovery. When you’re suffering from trauma, mental health issues, cravings and pressure, it’s so easy to say that recovery is too hard,” she added. “We provide a space for all things to come together in a way that allows women to slowly adjust to recovery.”

Giving women the time and space they need can help




them heal, and Dominick is living proof that this approach works. Since undergoing recovery, she has earned a bachelor’s degree in Human Services and a master’s degree in Organizational Leadership from Geneva College, and is also the published author of four books.

While proud of these accomplishments, it’s not how

she defines success.

“The ladies in our program are successes because they have chosen—one day at a time—to stay clean,” she said of the those living at Sunflower House, a Garden Home Ministries’ property. “The fact that they have committed to this process—that is success.” [www.gardenhomeministries.org](http://www.gardenhomeministries.org)







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# COVID-19 Has Severe Impact on Those with Substance Abuse Disorder, But Help is Available

By Nancy Kennedy

The gradual resolution of the COVID pandemic is bringing relief, gratitude and a return to near-normalcy for most Americans. But for others, the impact has been severe and progressive, worsening with time rather than improving. That group includes persons who are struggling with addiction: those who are presently addicted to drugs or alcohol, those who have recovered and those who are at risk of starting to use and becoming addicted.

The pandemic and the resulting shutdown brought a lot of challenges for this population, says Carin Fraioli, LSW, CCDPD, vice-president for clinical operations, Gateway Rehab Center. "The isolation of the pandemic was especially difficult," she says, "and led to relapse for many who turned to drugs or alcohol for comfort and escape. The anxiety about contracting COVID was perhaps higher for this group, many of whom have chronic medical conditions that already raised their risk. They could not see their physicians or their mental health providers. There was grief for those who lost loved ones to COVID 19. The closing of businesses meant job loss and reduced income for many people, creating more stress. For persons struggling with substance abuse, the loss

of their usual resources was a major difficulty: treatment centers, group support meetings, and 12-step meetings were suddenly unavailable. There was nowhere to turn, even as the stress worsened. With increased stress, there is a greater risk of using in order to cope."

Fraioli says that the COVID 19 pandemic took structure away – structure that persons

with substance abuse disorder rely on. For many, their support networks disappeared and are still not back to normal. "Addiction is already a very isolating disease and

the pandemic increased that isolation tremendously."

As an organization, Gateway Rehab has focused on how to get people the services they need, and how to do this safely.

"One of the positive impacts of the pandemic has been the increased use of telehealth, with virtual treatment sessions. With telehealth, we now have new ways to reach people so the help we offer goes further."

At Gateway, the goal has been to keep people healthy and safe, Fraioli says: "If you are concerned for yourself or a loved one, reach out now to professionals. Get the help you need; don't try to go it alone."

To learn more, visit [www.gatewayrehab.org](http://www.gatewayrehab.org)

***"One of the positive impacts of the pandemic has been the increased use of telehealth, with virtual treatment sessions."***



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# Happy Recovery Month!

Sage's Army, Inc. is a non-profit Recovery Community Organization located in Greensburg, PA that provides a variety of services, free of charge, to people who use drugs, people in recovery, and their family members. No matter what your background is, we believe that every person has the power and ability to recover – no matter what that looks like for them.

The mission of Sage's Army is to support and advocate for people who use drugs and their families. Our team of dedicated Certified Recovery Specialists and Certified Family Recovery Specialists will assist you or your loved ones along your journey to recovery by utilizing your lived experience

of being in recovery from a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) or being a family member of someone with a SUD and their professional training in supporting those with SUD. They provide support before, during, and after treatment; serve as a mentor to help build a personal recovery plan; provide referrals to resources in the community; and serve as an advocate for the individual. They'll help you draw the map to recovery that best suits your or your loved one's situation.

Sage's Army also hosts a variety of meetings and groups meant to help those in recovery. Every conceivable recovery group, from abstinence based 12-step programs, All-Recovery meetings, religious based

meetings, secular SMART Recovery, a Veterans support group, a GRASP meeting, and several Family and Friends support groups can be found at our Greensburg and Irwin locations.

Sage's Army was founded after the tragic death Sage Capozzi. He lost his life at just 20 years old, after a struggle with his relationship with substances. We believe that one more life lost to addiction is one too many. We believe in a "many paths to recovery" philosophy, a holistic approach that believes all programs of recovery are equally valid.



Sage's Army is a diverse, inclusive, accepting, welcoming, safe space for everyone, especially the LGBTQ+ community of Western Pennsylvania. We are teaching awareness one person at a time. If you or a loved one need help finding their way to recovery or need support, stop into our recovery center in Greensburg to meet with a Certified Recovery Specialist or call our 24/7 Help Line at 724-863-5433.

Drugs don't discriminate, people do.

## Signs of substance disorder & resources

Substance use disorder is rising among many populations. It does not discriminate. But one of the most common questions asked by loved ones regarding it is, "How did I not see the signs?" Although substance use affects people differently, here are some general warning signs to look for if you think a struggle is developing:

- Changes in behavior,

including altered communications patterns, mood swings, an increase in defensiveness, disinterest in things that used to interest them, and isolation.

- Manipulation/exaggerated stories
- Insomnia
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea/vomiting
- Changing friends or social circles

- Hygiene / physical changes such as enlarged or small pupils, a shift in weight usually weight loss,, unusual body odors, and bloodshot eyes
- Poor physical coordination
- Missing items (medication, money, cigarettes, etc.)

Negative stigma is often associated with people with a substance use disorder. But remember, it is a chronic

disease that is treatable.

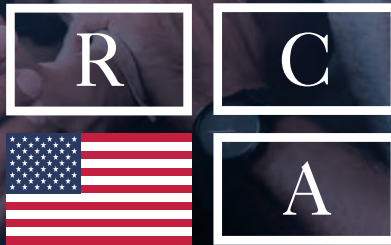
Just as warning signs vary from person to person, the path to recovery follows suit. The biggest takeaway is "Recovery is possible." Everyone's road to recovery is personal and unique. The sooner the signs of a struggle are recognized, the sooner a person can seek help for themselves or a loved one. Local resources are also

### Resources for people in crisis

Contact DDAP Crisis Hotline **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**

<https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Programs-Services/Disabilities/Drug-Alcohol/Drug-and-Alcohol-Services-for-Adults.aspx>

Support for family and loved ones: **Al-Anon** <https://alanonpgh.org/>



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