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50 Pearl Rd. Suite 115B • Brunswick, Ohio 44212

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**KEVIN McMANUS**  
Editor

**BILL LALLY**  
Circulation Manager

**KARL GERHARD**  
Senior Marketing Consultant

News  
330-416-6167; Kevin@MedinaWeeklyNews.com

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330-591-4185; Info@MedinaWeeklyNews.com

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Lorraine Sips

Left to right: Hope Recovery Community Center Coordinator Remi Conrad, Program Manager Sam Evans and Executive Director Stefanie Robinson look forward to serving more people in their expanded facility.

## HRC expanding to serve those impacted by addiction

By Lorraine Sips

August 31 was International Overdose Awareness Day. It was a day to remember without stigma those who have died and acknowledge the grief of the families and friends left behind.

Today begins National Recovery Month, created to promote and support the dedication of service providers and communities who make recovery possible for those impacted by addiction.

In Medina County, the Hope Recovery Community (HRC) provides more than 5000 hours of recovery support each year and helps more than 55 visitors per day at its centers in Medina and Brunswick.

Since opening the doors in Medina on September 20, 2019, the staff has grown to 22 people. Twenty members are in recovery themselves and two others have family members in recovery. Meetings and events at the Center have had overflowing response, so construction is underway to double the size of meeting space.

"We don't want people not coming to meetings or activities because they are too crowded," Executive Director, Stefanie Robinson said. "Recovery is about connection and community, and we try to show people that recovery can be fun. We have a free dinner every Saturday night, followed by a meeting and then

a bonfire. It's like a party house without the drugs and alcohol. We have had as many as 150 people come on Saturday nights, and this little house gets crowded."

"The Medina County ADAMH (Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health) Board did what they have done continuously over the past four years; they've responded to the needs of the recovery community. This is their building, and they secured the funding to add about 3000 additional square feet. That will give us more room for programming and more opportunity for recovery. I always say that recovery equals willingness plus opportunity."

The largest annual fundraising event for HRC is also held each September. The Ride 4 Recovery and Recovery Festival will be held on September 17 at Heartland Community Church, 3400 Weymouth Road in Medina.

The ride consists of a 100-mile scenic motorcycle ride, with participants collecting recovery chips that represent time in recovery. The rider who collects the most time will win \$500. The last stop is back at Heartland Church, where riders will celebrate with the community, enjoying live music, bounce houses, a foam party, food trucks and giveaways. All proceeds will go directly to support HRC programs.

More than 50 organizations are sponsoring Ride 4 Recovery. Platinum Sponsors this year

are Cathy's House, Pride One Construction, Paint Medics, Inc., Swine BBQ, Southwest Hospital, Medina County ADAMH Board and Heartland Church.

Tickets cost \$30 per rider, which includes a t-shirt (if you register by September 1), door prizes and a free meal. They can be purchased at Eventbrite.com, event name: 2022 Medina Ride 4 Recovery. Contact Stefanie Robinson at 216-406-8599 with any questions. You do not need to be a rider to purchase a ticket.

After the past four years HRC has evolved, continually discovering gaps in recovery services for people in Medina County and working hard to fill those gaps.

"We're the first recovery community organization in the state of Ohio to have two locations in the same county," Robinson said. "In September we are starting a group on Thursday nights called Fresh Start for people impacted by the criminal justice system. It will cover topics such as: how do I get a job with a felony, how do I get housing, how do I get an ID, and how do I get my record expunged?"

HRC realized that lack of childcare was preventing some people from seeking services, so one of its meetings on Tuesday nights now includes childcare. For others transportation was a barrier,

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so they are purchasing a vehicle to provide rides to the Center.

They added an LGBTQ meeting when they recognized that population was underserved. They also added softball and bowling teams and a Sober Browns Backers group. Recognizing that the needs of people in recovery are often greater on weekends and holidays, HRC is open until midnight on Saturday nights and on all holidays.

Robinson praised the current "Beat the Stigma" campaign in Ohio, which includes spots airing on local television.

"There is a lot of great research out there which shows that stigma impacts the care that people seek and in the care that people get," she said. "We want people to understand that substance use disorder is a horrific, horrible disease that is killing people every single day, but it also is an incredibly treatable disease."

Robinson and her husband Jon, executive director of several recovery housing facilities in the county, have more than 20 years of recovery between them.

"It's a hard world to work in, but when you see somebody plug back into life, it's remarkable," Robinson said. "That's why I get up every day."

"A big reason we're here is to show



Submitted

The Ride 4 Recovery and Recovery Festival will be held Saturday, Sept. 17, to fund services provided by the Hope Recovery Community for those impacted by addiction.

that recovery looks different than what you see on the news. When you walk around here you see a whole different side. You see families put back together and skilled people making massive contributions to our community. I have the opportunity to provide jobs for 20 people in recovery, and they get to give back and help other people in recovery. It's amazing."

Medina's HRC is located at 200 Highland Drive, and the Brunswick center is in the Brunswick Nazarene Church at 3965 Center Road. For more information about programs call: 330-952-0109, or email: srobinson@hoperecoverycommunity.org. Its website is hoperecoverycommunity.org.

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