

New group helps parents cope with kids' addictions

Karen Kuhlman, Community columnist

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When a problem is as big and as deep as heroin addiction, families of loved ones hooked on the highly addictive drug need all the help they can get. Northern Kentucky has been hit hard by a tempest that drags families into situations they never expected to encounter. Applying its motto, "Extend a hand. Change a Life," a local charity is trying to provide a bit of shelter from the storm.

Catholic Charities in the Dioceses of Covington has long provided substance abuse treatment and support, as part of an effort begun in 1949 by the National Catholic Council on Addictions. The agency has sought to lessen the impact of the disease of addiction by offering hope, healing and reconciliation to those who suffer from addiction – and to their loved ones.

Catholic Charities substance abuse and mental health counselors Laura Jackson and Paula Weber work with clients whose addictions have overtaken them. Recently, counselors realized an greater need for assistance to parents who suffer from the toll that their children's substance abuse takes on family life. Jackson and Weber developed a plan to help those families who struggle in silence, not knowing where to turn.

Beginning in July, the agency will offer hope through PAL, Parents of Addicted Loved Ones. Parents with addicted children should find comfort in this parent-facilitated support group. Meetings

will be held 6:30-8 p.m. every Wednesday at the Latonia offices of Catholic Charities, located at 3629 Church Street.

PAL, developed in 2006 by licensed substance abuse counselor, Mike Speakman, of Phoenix, Arizona, provides continuing education and support, at no charge, for parents wrestling with a child's addiction to drugs or alcohol. The organization has parent groups that meet in Arizona, Indiana and Kentucky. Local counselors were very encouraged by what they observed at a Kentucky meeting.

In a unique environment, parents are able to discuss, the problems that their children's addiction has caused for their families. They discover that they share common experiences with others who can be a tremendous resource as they try to find their own way.

Parents from all socio-economic classes are suddenly encountering mental health and court systems for the first time. They are often at a loss as to how to navigate the foreign land in which they now live. Those who have traveled these roads before can provide answers for the sort of questions that most parents never expect to ask.

Catholic Charities substance abuse counselors stress the imperative of avoiding the problem in the first place. They say that there is more than one way to teach drug avoidance, and say that any campaign that stresses "no" is off to a good start.

Our children may not understand the dangers associated with drugs they might come across in a benign way, such as in the medicine cabinets. Proper disposal of unused medications can prevent youthful experimentation that could result in lifelong consequences.

PAL offers proven ways to help loved ones attain a permanent recovery from addiction. Parents, as well as spouses of addicted partners, are encouraged to come and help create an environment of hope through the process of giving and receiving support in the company of others who face the same challenges.

No registration is required for the free support group meetings. For additional information contact Laura Jackson at 859-581-8974, or www.covingtoncharities.org.

<http://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2015/07/17/new-group-helps-parents-cope-kids-addictions/30257723/>