

August
2021



Shenandoah Valley Area of NA

SheVANA Zine

Recovery awakens us... member art

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Please submit stories, art work and ideas to:

Shenandoah Valley of NA
newsletter@shevana.org
PO Box 2436, Winchester,
VA 22604

For All Submissions: By submitting article(s), poem(s), and/or other written material pertaining to my personal experiences with or opinions about the NA fellowship or program, I understand that my material may be edited. I also give the SheVANA Area Newsletter, NA Fellowship, their successors, assigns and those acting on their authority permission to publish anything submitted. I further understand that every effort will be made to assure my anonymity, unless authorized. I possess full legal capacity to exercise the authorization and hereby release SheVANA Area Newsletter, the NA Fellowship, its service boards and committees, from any claim by myself, my successors and or my assigns.



Photography was important to me when I was using because I felt so detached from reality that it provided me with a tether to something concrete. I always felt like I was on the cusp of dying and I wanted to document my waning life.



When I got clean I felt like photography it was a way to connect with people in a more meaningful and impactful way. When I took photographs, my incessant, often critical, inner monologue was quieted. Because I struggled to see myself as I was, I strove to enable others to see how wonderfully remarkable and beautiful they were. I knew I could use my skills to give others an opportunity to be illuminated and crystallized in all of their authentic joy, pain, love, hurt, and passion. Through the awkwardness of early recovery, I was armed with my Canon and thus my anxiety was disarmed. I made lasting, lifesaving connections by being "that girl who is always taking pictures." I wouldn't be where I am today without the friends who indulged me even when they felt "ugly," getting off work late at night, smoking their first cigarette of the day, or simply trying to scroll through Instagram in peace.

"Addiction and withdrawal distort rational thought, and newcomers usually focus on differences rather than similarities. They look for ways to disprove the evidence of addiction or disqualify themselves from recovery." - Basic Text pg. 90

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: "By meeting, talking, and helping other addicts, we are able to stay clean. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away." - Basic Text pg. 10

I might as well be happy!

I used a lot of drugs and I loved using. Gradually over time, I had to have a fix and it lost its glow. I got clean in 1991, after a suicide attempt. My lover had died and I hated my life. I was 34 and had been using since I was 10 or 11 years old. I didn't plan to stop using. My doctor said, "you've been unhappy, maybe you need to try something different". I signed myself into the psyche ward and stayed 2 weeks. I saw enough to learn I was not unique and I saw myself in those addicts around me. Insurance forced me out of the hospital but the staff suggested that I enroll in an outpatient program at Whitman Walker Clinic in DC, nicknamed WWAS (Whitman Walker Addiction Services).

WWAS was an 18 month program that taught us about the disease of addiction with a group of like minded addicts. The members were to hold each other responsible for their actions, help us learn and grow in recovery. The group started out with 28 people and finished with 8 people graduating. I love these guys and at times I really hated them. We were not supposed to socialize individually, we needed to maintain group unity and alone we may isolate ourselves from the others. There are only 5 of us remaining today, but we still try to get together at least once a year even though we have moved on in our lives.

I got a sponsor, I worked the steps, I grew and I changed my playgrounds. I did service work. When I didn't want to show up the group held me responsible. Service work forced me to be present and responsible. No matter how much I didn't want to go, I knew others were counting on me and would chastise me if I didn't show up.

WWAS directed us to try other 12 Step programs and decide if they were appropriate for our lives. SLAA (Sex, Love Addicts Anonymous), CODA (Co-Dependents Anonymous), AA, DA, CA anything and everything that our group pointed out was an issue for us—we had to attend at least 3 of those selected for our recovery. Finally, it became apparent that I was extremely co-dependent and an addict. Those were the focus of my program for the first 5 or 6 years. We had to attend 1 meeting a day initially but I usually attended 8 or 9 each week—sometimes even more.

My social life has & does completely revolve around the recovery community. I learned to like myself again. I found my "inner child" and helped him thrive. Using, I had attempted suicide 3 times after relationships ended. I lived through the deaths of many friends and family members. I learned that I didn't have to use to get through those losses. I survived job changes. I went back to therapy. I did multiple types of therapy—private to discuss more intimate details and group therapy to learn that I wasn't that unique in those intimate details.

I had to learn to cope with my childhood sexual abuse. I didn't think that was all that relevant because I was always aware of it and had coped and talked about it all the time. But then I got clean and wanted to have sex—clean. The abuse seemed to take over my mind and body during sex. I desired violent and abusive sex. I have had a fair number of sexual partners—I was a slut and thrived using and tried a lot of different things from bondage to.....ok, that's weird, you'll have to imagine. But clean I was shutting down. I wasn't finding sex fulfilling and gradually I couldn't perform the way I had for years.

Finally, I fell in love again. I learned I wasn't a sex addict, but a love addict—when I was in love—none of the kink mattered. Sex was passionate and fulfilling, fine and great! If I fell in love—I'm all in! He was an addict too. I don't know that I could have a relationship with someone that isn't an addict. I want to know they feel the same way. He had 2 children with his ex-wife and I was in heaven. I sold my condo and bought a house to accommodate my growing family. We had kids alternating weekend and vacations and holidays shared.

I had a major job change that took me from working 36 hours to 60-70 hours a week. Making good money I suggested that Steve take over managing our lives and finances. Four years into our relationship I discovered that he had not been clean the whole time and as a matter of fact had spent a great deal of my savings. Using, I had always said, it's only money. I maintained that concept and we follow our pact. He had 72 hours to be enrolled in an approved (by my sponsor and I) program or had to get out of the house. The next 5 years were spent with him present sometimes and disappearing at times. I continued to get the kids like normal and attempted to maintain some honest semblance of order for them.

I lost track of the number of programs he enrolled in. He would be in-patient for 3 or 6 months, a few times. I paid his child support so his ex-wife continued to be taken care of. I said I was codependent. I survived the insanity by going to a lot of meetings, working the steps and using my network to keep me calm.

Suddenly, my sponsor died and left me executor of his estate. Steve had been living with him as part of Steve's life circumstances. Then he disappeared for a few weeks I was a mess. My sponsor had become my best friend and walked me through the insanity. Before he died, he had just told me that he thought I needed to call it quits for good. Suddenly, Steve reappeared and helped me manage handling Bob's estate. He was showing up, like he hadn't in years.

He moved home and wanted to start a business with me. We were together 24-7 except when we went to our "own" meetings I was out of a job and decided

to try something completely different. The business didn't make any money and I spent a lot trying to make it but we had a lot of fun and it was a great experience. It brought us back together and we seemed stable again.

He found a great therapist and psychiatrist that actually diagnosed him as bipolar with an anxiety disorder. He actually went on disability and managed to get 18 months back pay from the government.

My unemployment/income loss made selling our house in Alexandria a good move to clean up the debt we had accrued. The kids wanted to live with us so we moved to Ashburn, where their mother had been. It gave them a step out of their mom's house but not off into the deep end alone. That didn't work so well. They only added chaos that we didn't need in our lives.

We had parked our RV in Luray and had fallen in love with the Shenandoah Valley. Homes were more affordable - so we bought a house in Linden. We loved living on the mountain. The beauty, we had a small pool, an acre of land to tend and develop. I was heading into retirement in 10 or 15 years and working from home 2 days a week. Life couldn't be better.

After a couple years, our move coupled with Steve's doctors changing lives/retirement. Suddenly, he seemed to be returning to his old self. I came home from work one day and he had hooked our RV up to the truck and told me he was going to Florida for a few weeks. He returned with a focus on redeveloping his recovery and committed himself to the Shevana Area NA. He seemed to be as normal as normal was.

I returned from work in March of 2016 to find him near death in his office. A needle in his arm. I called 911. They revived him with 2 hits of NARCAN and took apart the winding stairwell to get him down from the 4th floor of the house. Therapy, program, new sponsors, change of doctor again. It seemed like everything was fine. Oct 21 was our 19th Anniversary, Oct 24th was his 56th birthday. He had been gone again and I found a receipt on his nightstand from an Arlington gas station. I asked him about his trip to DC? He told me that what he did wasn't any of my business and took off again—that was Sunday.

Tuesday morning I prepared to drive into the office in DC. As I drove the length of our property, I saw his car parked on the back of the lot. Parking, I ran to his car and found him slumped over, immediately calling 911. They kept me talking on the line and the sheriff arrived in minutes. It wasn't until I walked around to the other side of the car that I saw the bullet hole in his head. He was no longer in pain. But it was only the beginning of a new pain for me.

The next few days were a jumble—

from being fingerprinted and kept out to my house while they searched for signs that I didn't have anything to do with him being shot. Watching the coroner deal with his body.

Calling the kids, my sponsor, my WWAS group. Asking for help. I didn't know what I needed but I knew I couldn't be left to my own devices. I didn't want to use but I was in shock.

What I had learned in my recovery was that I had to go to meetings, talk to people in recovery and not pick up. So, that's what I did. I talked about what I was feeling, I went through all the feelings from; I caused him to do this to his kids think I caused him to do this. I prayed. I had survived the AIDS crisis. I had survived my addiction. God really didn't bring me this far to have me lose it now. I didn't know what I was supposed to do but show up, talk about it and not use.

Gradually as the shock wore off, I had to function. I was upside on a mortgage on a condo in Alexandria that my tenants had moved out. Selling our house here to pay off the \$40k loss on that property seemed the logical choice.

I couldn't imagine living or that I would live long. I wasn't sure what would happen. I wanted to isolate and I found a friend that would let me move into their basement and yet wouldn't let me hurt being too alone.

The hardest thing I discovered about not having my life partner, I hated holidays and other life events without him. I felt so isolated and alone even with all the people around me. So, I had to plan holidays for a while to get away from this abnormal life. A Christmas trip to the southwest visiting family elsewhere gave me the perfect diversion.

Finally, I needed to move beyond the aloneness. Something new—living with someone who wouldn't let me be alone. I've lived for two years with a wonderful friend and had a lot of fun. Surviving COVID staying home has not been horrible. I've actually had some fun. Shortly before it started I had taken over a new roll in my job, adding a whole new area of responsibility in managing our art/production department. I was working extremely hard. Suddenly, COVID added a new dimension to managing the SHEVA NA public relations role in maintaining changing meeting times, places and Zoom capabilities. Working at my desk became my sanity/insanity during COVID. I enjoyed being busy.

Don't pick up, get a sponsor, go to meetings, build a network of recovering friends and when life gets difficult, remember using will only make it more difficult.

I am looking forward to my next adventure—back in Indiana—if you are in the area look me up!

I will always cherish my friends and family here. **Phil R.**

I came to Winchester in 2014 for treatment, right after my 24th birthday. I was a shell of a person and I did not even know what my favorite color was. I had been using since I was 13 years old.

As a child I was always interested in arts and crafts. I always wanted to create. I took some art classes as a teenager and taught myself through videos and books. I lost my love and creativity for art when I was in active addiction. Addiction became a full time job for me and the only time I found to create which was when I was not under the influence, and creating did not happen often.



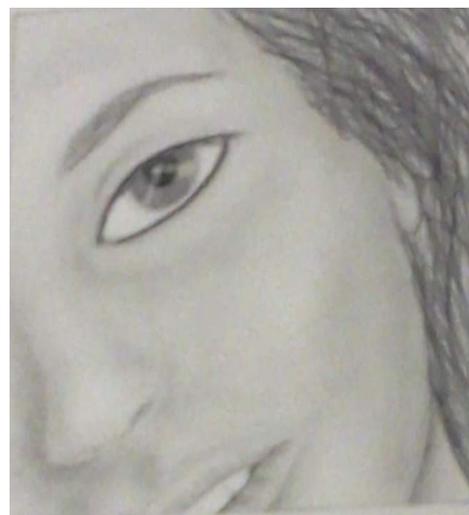
When I entered my last treatment center in 2014, I brought my sketchbook and some pencils with me. I did not know that all my artistic ability would come flooding back in and even more so that my mind was healing itself. I spent time creating and making artwork an important part of my recovery.

Since 2014 I have spent time challenging my artistic ability and learning new techniques. I love creating art of various forms. It brings me peace and solidarity. I also enjoy people finding their own voice and thoughts within my pieces. Hearing how my art speaks to others brings me happiness. I want to continue to share what has brought me so much joy and healing. I am grateful.

-Haley B



Back in March of 2020 and I found out that I had multiple sclerosis. That following August I lost my motor skills which was devastating my whole life was centered around art. I started using more because I didn't know how to deal with anything I didn't want to feel the pain. I got clean March 2021 and my motor skills have come back tremendously. I'm so thankful for Narcotics Anonymous and my higher power for helping me through this. It is only going to get better if I hold on and be patient with myself. Life On Life's terms.
— Sherri H.



ED NOTE: Thank you so much to Lila M., Haley B. and Sherri H who sent along their art for use in the Newsletter. Art can be a very personal thing and one need only look at these pieces to see that they are a window into the soul of the artis. The pain of our addiction can be transformed. Member Art does not have to stop here. You can always send photos, pictures of art pieces, poems, stories, etc. to newsletter@shevana.org.



What's Happening?!?

Celebration Acknowledgments,
Subcommittees, Special Events ...
and the 39th AVCNA JAN 21-23, 2022***



HOSPITALS & INSTITUTIONS

H&I is a subcommittee of Narcotics Anonymous which takes meetings into facilities where people cannot get out and go to meetings.

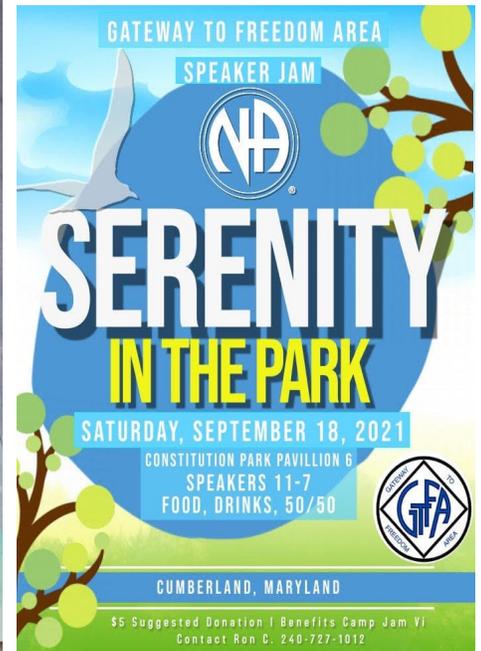
H&I meets the 1st Monday of every Month

**at 7pm currently on zoom.
Meeting ID = 388 180 6275
Password = 760085977**

There is no requirement to attend the subcommittee. The requirements to serve as a panel member are a minimum of six months clean time and two consecutive subcommittee meetings. We currently have four facilities that we are serving so there is ample opportunity to be of service to those that need a message of recovery. We need you!!!



ART: Sherri H.



**39TH AVCNA JAN. 21-23,
2022**

****The convention needs your help!****

**Host Committee meets monthly
2nd Saturday at 4pm**

Some contact names and numbers:

**Sarah M 540-671-1487
Thaddeus M 304-676-2098
Stephen P 540-539-2177**

Regional Phone Line: 800 777 1515
Email: Newsletter@shevana.org
Web: <http://www.shevana.org/>



JAN 21ST - 23RD, 2022

AVCNA 39 Host Committee

Chair: Sarah M. (540) 671-1487
Vice-Chair: Thaddeus M. (304) 676-2098
Secretary: Norman C. (540) 931-5042
Treasurer: Stephen P. (540) 539-2177
Vice Treasurer: VACANT

Reserve your room now to get the Convention Rate!!

Hotel Madison & Shenandoah Valley Conference Center
710 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Reservations: (540) 564-0200
\$149 per night for single or double occupancy
(\$10 for additional persons)
Self-parking is \$5 per day
(free for overnight guests)

AVCNA 39 Subcommittee Chairpersons

Additional Needs David T. (540) 514-5077
Arts and Graphics VACANT
Convention Info VACANT
Entertainment VACANT
Hospitality Annette D. (571) 212-6827
Merchandise VACANT
Pre-Convention VACANT
Program Sean R. (304) 671-4155
Registration Meredith S. (703) 582-5639

MAIL PRE-REGISTRATION MUST BE POSTMARKED BY DECEMBER 31, 2021
Check or money orders payable to AVCNA 39 Registration, P.O. Box 3207 Winchester, VA 22604

www.avcna.org

\$30 (cash) - \$32 (card) until Oct. 31, 2021 ~~cash~~ \$40 (cash) - \$42 (card) beginning November 1st, 2021

ON-SITE REGISTRATION \$45 (cash) - \$47 (card)

Please note: Merchandise online pricing includes \$2.00 surcharge for credit/debit

Main Speakers: 5-yr minimum clean time, please submit tape to PO Box 3207, Winchester, VA 22604

Workshop Speaker: 3-yr minimum clean time ~~cash~~ Workshop Chair: 1-yr minimum clean time

If interested in speaking, contact Sean R. (304) 671-4155

REGISTRATION QTY: _____ NEWCOMER DONATION _____ TOTAL: \$ _____

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address, include State and Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Additional Needs: _____

**We're on the web!
Shevana.org**