



Beyond Parody: Recovery Community Organizations Are Way Of Future

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Recovery Community Organizations (RCO) are the way of the future and will offer a *piece of the puzzle* that has been missing in our communities over the past few years. Talking about drug and alcohol addiction can be difficult for some individuals, significantly difficult if the controversial disease has impacted them or a loved one. On some days, it can feel we are on a *hamster wheel* as we spin round and round with no end in sight. While we may want to throw our hands up in the air in defeat, this only strengthens our resolve why we should continue working to help those that struggle with a substance use disorder (SUD), regardless of severity.

“Beyond Parody” tends to keep things tailored to the Riverbend area, but there is no denying that human beings struggling with an SUD is a global challenge that has reached epidemic levels. According to the World Health Organization’s (WHO) [2021 World Drug Report](#), 494,000 lives were lost due to the use of drugs in 2019. A local report by Karen Tilashalski of Chestnut Health Systems compiled data retrieved from the Madison County Coroner’s Office and revealed as of June 2021, Madison County has experienced 61 overdose deaths, with 35 of them involving opioids and 26 not. Fentanyl, not heroin, was involved in 31 out of the 35 opioid-related deaths. The rise of methamphetamine use has been linked to 11 overdose deaths, and the two top cities with the most drug-related deaths were Alton with 10 and Granite City with 18. To put things in perspective, the Madison County Coroner’s 2020 Annual Report details there were only 80 drug-related deaths in all of 2020. It is almost standard to talk about overdose deaths, glossing over the people still struggling daily that need help and ways to fund these efforts. Moreover, we cannot give up now.



Prevention and treatment need to continue to be immensely discussed, funded, and implemented, with newly, radical emphasis on recovery support services. There are RCO's like Amare in Wood River, Ill. that specialize in providing recovery coaching and peer support, linking people to needed clinical treatment, and introducing (or re-introducing) participants to pathways to recovery like Celebrate Recovery, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, SMART Recovery, Recovery Dharma, and so on. As an RCO, Amare plays a pertinent role in helping peers begin their journey on a healthier pathway to recovery and everyday living by walking side-by-side with the individual and family.

Amare was founded in 2015 and has been helping individuals, families, and communities find healing and recovery since its inception. After teaming up with Riverbend Family Ministries in early 2018, Amare finally had an office to provide services and programs, which remains to be an all-volunteer based team to this day. When funding is available, Amare also helps individuals with financial assistance to pay partial fees to get into sober living homes like an Oxford House. There are an estimated 150 RCO's nationwide, and what makes them unique is typically their leadership, Board of Directors included, is made up of 50 percent, or higher, of people with lived experience that identify as being in long-term recovery from an SUD. RCO's like Amare help families and individuals cut through the *red tape* of navigating prevention and treatment while providing holistic support and helping the participant develop a recovery management plan, so they have a solid idea of action moving forward in their recovery.

Understanding the power of recovery can be found in the numbers to follow. According to a Dec. 2020 [Alcoholics Anonymous report](#), there are an estimated 2.1 million active Alcoholics Anonymous members and 129,790 active groups in over 180 countries. [Narcotics Anonymous reports](#) on their website that there are over 67,000 weekly meetings held in over 139 countries. [Celebrate Recovery](#), a Christ-centered 12 step support group for different types of addiction, including drug and alcohol, lists on their website they have over 35,000 Celebrate Recovery churches globally. SMART Recovery, a science-based recovery support group that focuses on self-empowerment to overcome addiction, has over 3,000 meetings in over 24 countries based on their [Fast Facts Report](#). The theme here is that recovery is mighty in numbers and integral in the process of healing.

The federal government recognizes the need for recovery support services as well. The Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Region 1 Administrator, Tom Coderre, was recently asked by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (R-RI) at the Opioid Crisis Caucus about recovery services and a potential 10 percent set-aside of funding for these services. Senator Whitehouse asked, "What should we be doing going forward on the recovery part?" Coderre replied about the Comprehensive

Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) and FY 2022 funding, “There are no resources to fund these community recovery support programs. This funding, if enacted, of course, would provide a sustainable source of funding directly to community organizations to support the development of community-level recovery infrastructure and be available for a wide variety of recovery support programs like recovery community centers.” The full Opioid Crisis Caucus hearing from July 20, 2021, can be found [HERE](#).

There is a need to encourage the Senators to approve the 10 percent set-aside and anyone can assist by contacting their local, State of Illinois representative, encouraging them to let Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) of the United States Senate know how impactful recovery is and the need to fund RCO’s like Amare. Amy Elik (R) of the 111th District can be reached at 618-433-8046, Katie Stuart (D) of the 112th District at 618-365-6650, and Illinois Sen. Rachelle Crowe (D) at 618-251-9840. Sen. Durbin’s office can also be reached directly by calling 217-492-4382.

Recovery is a daily way of living. I have personally witnessed people turn their lives around and their family’s from having the right opportunity, needed resources, and proper support. As prevention and treatment are essential to the recovery process, community-based organizations specializing in lived experience and providing recovery support services are incredibly underfunded yet help drive positive change at a much-needed, grassroots level. Again, recovery support services Amare offers are one more piece to the puzzle to help better individuals, families, and communities by emphasizing the importance and dedication of recovery and implementing action. If you or a loved one would like help with a recovery coach to develop a recovery management plan, Amare can be reached at 618-251-9790, ext. 207, or by email at gethelp@amarenfp.org. If you are an ally of those seeking recovery and want to assist Amare in expanding its programs and services by securing funds to hire a staff, you can donate by mailing a check payable to Amare to P.O. Box 384, Wood River, Ill. 62095, or by visiting their PayPal page and making a reoccurring donation [HERE](#).

