

Sidney Daily News

Nar-Anon groups starts in Sidney

October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015

SIDNEY — Family members, friends and employers of drug addicts now have a new source of help here.

Lynda Smith (not her real name), of Sidney, has started a local chapter of the support group, Nar-Anon, for people who face the daily horror of their loved ones' addictions. Smith is one of them. A close family member is a recovering heroin addict.

The Sidney Nar-Anon meets weekly, at 7 p.m., Thursdays, in the basement of St. John's Lutheran Church, 120 W. Water St. Until Smith established the group here last month, the closest regular meeting was in Wapakoneta.

That's where Smith met Chrissy Jones (not her real name), of St. Marys. Jones's husband is a drug addict. Jones, like Smith, used to attend Al-Anon meetings, where family members of alcoholics support one another. But each of them recognized that drug addiction is not the same thing as alcohol addiction. Friends and loved ones who have to watch people close to them ruin their own lives and the lives of those around them by using drugs need a different kind of help.

So 20 months ago, Jones and a friend started the Wapakoneta group, which meets on Fridays.

"It has literally saved my life," Jones said. "It has helped me take the emphasis off of (my husband) and his addiction and put it on me and my sanity and serenity. When you're dealing with an addict, their addiction becomes your obsession. You worry about why, about what they're doing, about how you can stop it. When you come to Nar-Anon, you learn how to put that focus on you. You learn to react differently."

Smith is aware of the mushrooming heroin problem in Shelby County. She participates in the Drug Coalition and has talked with police officers about the families they've seen who have been affected by court cases and overdoses. That's another reason why Smith opened the local support group.

"Heroin is so deadly compared to some other drugs. This one is killing people," she said. Although many area residents are having to come to terms with heroin addiction, Nar-Anon is open to all folks who must deal with someone addicted to any drug, from street drugs to prescription medicines.

"It's a 12-step program based on spiritual, but not religious, principles, like respect, kindness, courtesy," she said. "(At a meeting), you're going to be working on yourself."

Jones noted that it's very scary for some people to walk into their first meeting.

"We hear all the time that 'I was here last week' or 'the last two weeks and I never got out of the car.' But they can expect to be accepted completely. You instantly feel like you're at home. You no longer have to hide," Jones said.

The Nar-Anon website, [www.nar-anon.org](http://www.nar-anon.org), offers the same encouragement: "When you come into the family group, you are no longer alone, but among true friends who understand your problem as few others could. We respect your confidence and anonymity as we know you will respect ours. We hope to give you the assurance that no situation is too difficult and no unhappiness is too great to be overcome."

Meetings last for one hour and each opens the same way: with a description of what Nar-Anon is and what addiction is. There are readings from a book, "Sharing Experience, Strength and Hope," commonly known as "SESH," which is a compilation of members' stories, and then the meeting is

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open to participants for discussion. Jones said that no one is required to speak, but members help each other with the problems they face.

“What do we do with this? How did you handle that?” Smith said, quoting some of the questions attendees ask. “Once you find out that people are experiencing the same kind of problems, you don’t feel so alone.”

Both women stressed that the emphasis in Nar-Anon is on the non-addict who must deal with an addict.

“Sometimes people come to meetings thinking they’re going to learn how to get their addict to not be an addict,” Smith said. What they’ll learn instead is how to stop enabling behaviors in themselves.

“They’re so focused on getting the addict fixed they don’t realize they need help, too,” Jones said. Listening to attendees has taught Smith that “when it’s your child, it’s harder than when it’s your spouse.”

The meetings are places where people can practice what to say when situations come up with their addicts. The 12-step process allows participants to work through issues that may be hindering their growth and the addicts’ growth.

“If a wife calls (an addict’s) employer and says he’s sick, he’s off the hook,” she added. “He has to start to take responsibility.” The 12-step process leads people into thinking through the consequences of taking that responsibility and planning to handle them.

Changing behavior is a lifetime process, so people shouldn’t think that they’ll learn everything they need to know in one or two meetings, Smith said.

There is no charge to participate; however, because local groups are self-sustaining and cannot receive outside donations, a basket is passed each week. The average voluntary donation is \$1. The SESH book costs \$15. Purchasing it is also voluntary.

For information, call 622-5488.

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