AVA CARE
OF HARRISONBURG
Advocate. Validate. Answers.

Winter 2024



INTERRUPTED THINKING

>> Suzy Kanode
Staff Patient Advocate

*Erin came to AVA Care for STI testing and her reason was one we commonly hear. She had sexual relations with a guy, but did not know if he had sex with anyone else. She wanted to make sure she "was clean" before moving on to another partner. Early in the appointment, she admitted that she did not like to think about making different decisions. I gently reminded her that it is important to pause and reflect in order to learn from our choices and make healthier ones in the future. I continued to ask various questions to help her examine her sexual decisions over the past year.

As Erin became more comfortable with the conversation, she began to naturally reflect and share more in depth about how sex is something she does with partners she is emotionally invested in. Erin identified that there was one specific partner out of her five short-term "relationships" that impacted her more than the others. She put her hand over her heart as she spoke about a sexual encounter earlier this year that "was special" compared to the others. When asked to share what she felt was different, she expressed that they had waited a month and a half before having sex. She identified that for her, sex is an expression of love, and that she enjoyed getting to know him first as a friend. I explained to Erin that most likely her "special one" was different because she felt valued as an individual and was desired by someone because of who she was and not what she had to offer sexually. When I challenged her to consider how she would feel about

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FROM THE DIRECTOR



SUSAN NULL

Connect with Susan at susan@avacareforyou.org or 540.434.7528

As the end of 2024 approaches, we take time to reflect on all that the year has held, both blessings and challenges. As I write this article, we are celebrating our one-year anniversary of serving patients in our beautiful new facility! We continue to give God thanks for this space that allows us to serve our patients more efficiently, with increased privacy for our patients and additional needed workspace for our staff. He truly is a good and faithful Father.

So much is going on in our world both politically and culturally, and it is important to know the facts. Access to abortion has never been easier, and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* has not changed this. The *Dobbs* decision gave states the authority to determine their own access laws, and that is not going to change with a turnover in administration. Now more than ever, it is vital that women are well-informed and receive the care that they deserve; we must remain committed to the work to which God has called us.

AVA Care has had a busy 40th year serving women who face unintended pregnancies and sexual health crises, empowering them with truth and hope. As the year comes to a close, we continue to be overwhelmed with gratitude for you, our supporters, our partners, our faithful prayer warriors. Thank you for your belief and investment in this ministry. Thank you for your determination to battle with us against a culture of death and for your steadfast commitment to create a culture of life in our community. I graciously ask that you consider AVA Care in your year-end giving.

This Christmas season, as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, may you and your family experience the presence of God in an intimate and tangible way.

Wishing you and yours a very Merry Christmas,



INTERRUPTED THINKING cont'd

starting a relationship by building a friendship first, she immediately agreed she would love to do that. However, she stated that it's not currently feasible with "what men want." Erin was quick to admit that the people she knows in her circles have the expectation of sex. Unfortunately, Erin is not the only patient we've heard this from. Many of the women we serve believe sex is what is expected even if they are not necessarily desiring to engage in it. They see it as a possible start to something more, a deeper relationship. I challenged Erin to take time to really focus on her own values and desires for a long term, committed relationship and what it would take to change her approach to achieving this.

When asked if her spiritual beliefs impacted her daily life, she excitedly answered "yes." She quickly clarified that she does not include her sexual decisions in her Christian beliefs. We talked about how we cannot pick and choose the areas in which we want to honor God, but that we should strive to honor Him in all areas of our lives. She expressed she has read the Bible and knows about God's design for sex, so I challenged her to consider what that means for her own life and how submitting to that would change her relationships. I shared with her how God's heart behind His commands in Scripture is to protect us emotionally and physically.



SUZY KANODE

As sexual health advocates, we have the opportunity to interrupt our patients' thinking, even if it is for just a moment in their lives. We spend time empowering young women to reflect on the choices they have made in the past and to empower them to know how to make better decisions moving forward. We share truth with them, and seek to lead them to an understanding of their value and worth.

**All patient names in this newsletter have been changed for confidentiality.*



Are you looking for a fun and easy way to get your family, church, or small group involved in the work of AVA Care? Our upcoming Change for Life baby bottle campaign is the perfect opportunity! This is an important fundraiser for AVA Care – we hope your church will prayerfully consider partnering with us.

"What is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday?"

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is an annual celebration of God's gift of Life. It began when President Ronald Reagan designated January 22, 1984 to be set aside to celebrate life, commemorate the many lives lost to abortion, and commit to protecting human life at every stage – from conception to natural death.

We invite you to celebrate Sanctity of Human Life Sunday with a personal report from an AVA Care representative. Let us share with you how the ministry of AVA Care saves the lives of unborn babies and spares women the regret of abortion.

If you're interested in learning more, or participating in the CFL campaign, email *kayla@avacareforyou.org* or call 540.434.7528.



EVENTS





Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord. Psalm 102:18

Celebrating 40 years of service to our community, AVA Care's 2024 fundraising banquet, *Generation to Generation*, was an evening of sweet remembrance, sober reflection, and boundless thanks to the Lord for His grace and providence. Hosted at Hotel Madison on October 8th, the event was emceed by Pastor Ronny Breen and attended by 344 guests. We are so grateful to all who took the time to come and hear what the Lord has been doing through AVA Care and to consider supporting this vital ministry.

The program included stories from two patients, Hailey and Megan. Hailey shared how the holistic care and attention she received through AVA Care has pointed her to the Lord; through our Spiritual Mentorship Program, she now has someone to speak truth into her life and encourage her in her walk. Megan shared that everyone in her life told her to have an abortion, and it was not until she spoke with her Patient Advocate, Kara, that she realized: she had options. Megan called AVA Care a "turning point" that made her feel like she could choose life for her daughter, and thanked us for being "a soft place to land."

A video created for AVA Care's 40th anniversary included an interview with founders Dick Blackwell and Roy Ferguson. Looking back, Blackwell said, "It's not right to just say 'you shouldn't have an abortion'...if we're not willing to help." This interview was interspersed with testimony from past patients; women AVA Care was able to empower in their time of crisis.

Executive Director Susan Null gave the keynote address, which included a review of the current "abortion landscape," describing how women can order abortion medications online without seeing a doctor and without being honestly educated about the risks, and are then left to experience the abortion and its aftermath alone. She spoke of a patient who had an abortion after visiting AVA Care, but came back for an after-abortion assessment; the patient expressed dismay at how society had downplayed the abortion experience, and gratitude for AVA Care's education and the way we had shared the truth with her.

In her invitation to others to join our work, Null said that "the impact of abortion ripples down through generations…[but] Truth matters. It impacts the heart." AVA Care is able to speak truth in love to women and to serve them and their children well thanks to the generous support of our donors and Invest*Hers* - individuals who commit to an ongoing monthly financial partnership. In honor of 40 years of ministry, Null asked for 40 new Invest*Hers* and, prayerfully, added a goal of one contributor investing $40,000. Whether or not you were able to attend, we hope that you will consider partnering with us to continue our ministry for the next 40 years, so that future generations may have life abundantly.



AVA Care staff

Honoring our Founders



Dick Blackwell & Roy Ferguson



Warren & Dorie Dillenbeck

Celebrating 40 years

Many thanks to the following top underwriters whose generosity made the AVA Care 2024 fundraising banquet possible:

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From Uncertainty to Expecting

>> Sonja O'Donnell
Volunteer Patient Advocate



*Jackie, a thirty-something single mother of a ten and seven year old, had a positive pregnancy test while at AVA Care. She was very distraught at the thought of being pregnant. Jackie and her children were living with her parents. Her children were old enough to be somewhat self-sufficient, so she shared that she absolutely did not want to go through the baby stage again. Jackie was adamant about her decision to have an abortion, and did not want to discuss the option of adoption. She had not spoken to the baby's father since they conceived, and did not want to tell him about the pregnancy. She shared that she did not have anyone to talk with about her situation. She felt as though her parents would disown her if they found out she was pregnant again. I was able to share in our conversation how keeping secrets is like living a lie and how it can be detrimental to our health and relationships. Jackie shared that she had been a nurse before beginning to work with her father. As her patient advocate, I felt led to share my daughter's story about her unexpected pregnancy, and how she did not want to be pregnant and was quite distraught as well. She is also a nurse, and that common ground helped Jackie relate to her story. I shared with Jackie that once the "flight or fight" mode calmed down and things seemed a bit less overwhelming, my daughter decided to carry and parent her baby. Now we have a beautiful granddaughter who is the light of our life and such a joy. Several days later, Jackie came back to AVA Care for an ultrasound. She shared with our Patient Services team that she was still wanting to have an abortion. She made an appointment with an abortion provider, only wanting our staff to discuss the procedures with her. She said she had to pay six hundred dollars before she could even go into the waiting room. Once she spoke with the technician about the procedure, they told her she was to go to another room to be prepped for the abortion. Jackie said she froze and was not expecting the abortion to take place on that day, so she rescheduled the appointment for another time. Several weeks passed and I contacted Jackie a couple of days before her scheduled abortion. She said she was still undecided about what to do. I challenged her by asking if she was paying attention to her emotions and why she had not been able to go through an abortion. We invited her to come back in for another ultrasound before going through with the abortion. She agreed to another ultrasound appointment and learned that she was 11 weeks pregnant. Incredibly and sovereignly, the due date was on the same day my granddaughter was born! We had the opportunity to talk after her appointment and she shared that she could not go through with the abortion. When she told her mother about the pregnancy, her mother was saddened that Jackie didn't feel as though she could come to her. She had also spoken with the father of the baby and learned that he was against abortion, which really encouraged her in the decision-making process. Recently, I spoke with Jackie, and she told me the father of the baby took four weeks off under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for after the baby is born. Jackie is very excited, and she shared that she's having a boy!

It is vital to give women like Jackie time to slow down, think about their options, and have conversations with those closest and most trustworthy to them. Our desire is for each woman, who believes abortion to be her best or only option, to have all of the information so she can be empowered to make a confident decision. We give thanks to the Lord for this new life - that an unborn baby was saved, and a woman was spared the regret of an abortion. Your partnership made this possible.

Does this describe you?

Personal relationship with God

Life-affirming values

Strong work ethic

Excellent communication skills

Active in a local church

Competent with computers, emails, and Microsoft Office

Love working in a team environment

Desire to make a difference

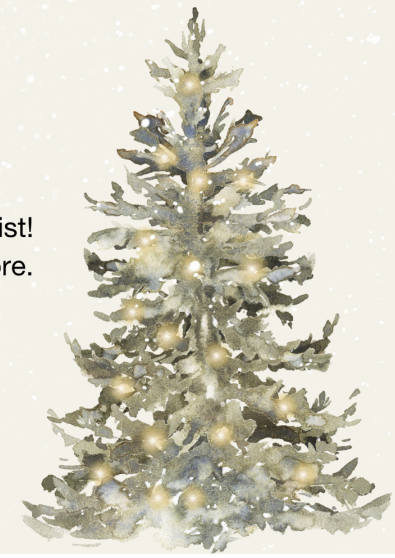
If it does, take a look at our open positions and see if you might be a good fit.

Staff Patient Advocate (15 hrs/wk) & Director of Events and Engagement (32 hrs/wk)

If interested in learning more, scan the QR code. To apply, please send a resume and cover letter to *apply@avacareforyou.org*.

AVA Care's *Christmas* Wish List

Scan the QR code to view our Amazon wish list! Items include toys, office supplies, and more.



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Vision

To be the most trusted source of care for individuals facing sexual health and pregnancy decisions in our community.

Mission

We are a Christian, life-affirming medical nonprofit that provides relevant testing services, education, and hope to individuals at risk of or facing undesired pregnancies.

Newsletter paid for and sponsored by:

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HOW YOU CAN HELP



Urgent Volunteer needs:
Weekly office cleaners
Spanish interpreters

Material needs:
Diapers – size 4

Wish List
Apple iPad (gen 9 or 10)
O-Cedar Mop & Bucket System

Financial
One-time donations – visit support.avacareforyou.org
Invest*Hers* – ongoing financial partners
For more information, contact susan@avacareforyou.org.

Friends of AVA Care

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WE'RE THE EXPERTS ON UNINTENDED PREGNANCY AND HERE FOR HER - NO MATTER WHAT SHE DECIDES.

AVA CARE
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ADVOCATE. VALIDATE. ANSWERS.

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WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER