

AVA CARE
OF HARRISONBURG
ADVOCATE. VALIDATE. ANSWERS.

Spring 2025

DESPITE THE CIRCUMSTANCES

>> Suzy Kanode
Staff Patient Advocate

Emily* was scared when she walked into AVA Care with an unintended pregnancy. She was in a relatively new relationship and while she hoped to have a future with this man, neither felt ready for the addition of a child right now. Emily shared about her medical condition that has impacted her life and she was afraid of passing it on to her child. Since it had been years since Emily spoke with her doctor about it, I suggested she not rush into a final decision, but to first make an appointment to find out for sure if her condition might impact her baby. Our desire for women is to have all the information they need to make a well-informed and confident choice. When I asked about her family support, she explained that it was limited and for that reason, she would likely not even share that she was pregnant. In addition, she felt as though she was not in the best housing situation to raise a baby. Many circumstances seemed to be against Emily which brought her to believe abortion was her best and only option. On the other hand, Emily expressed that she never wanted to have an abortion and did not feel at peace with it. We discussed the possible repercussions of abortion and how going against her core beliefs could lead to significant negative impacts on her physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I gently suggested she consider confiding in

"Many circumstances seemed to be against Emily, which brought her to believe abortion was her best and only option."

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FROM THE DIRECTOR



SUSAN NULL

Connect with Susan at susan@avacareforyou.org or 540.434.7528

As Spring approaches and new signs of life and growth appear along the way, boasting their vibrant colors, we are reminded of the beauty of life. At AVA Care, we celebrate the possibilities of life every day.

We have some changes happening at AVA Care. While staffing and circumstances may change, our God remains constant and faithful. You'll see some of those on page 7, with more updates to come in our next newsletter. Consider if you or someone you know may be the ones we are looking for to fill our open positions (pg. 7).

In this newsletter, you'll read stories that will demonstrate how two women, who came to AVA Care for different reasons, made life-honoring decisions because of the love and hope they were offered. Each day at AVA Care we are also faced with the dark reality of abortion, and the way our culture is luring women into its grips. I hope you'll also take time to read about the darkness that is abortion in Virginia and our country (pg. 6). In this post-*Dobbs* world, Virginia does not have any regulations against abortion through 26 weeks. Because of this, women from other states, where abortion is banned or restricted, are crossing state borders to access abortion in VA. We must not let up on our efforts to reach and serve women facing unintended pregnancy in our community, so that they have a chance to hear truth, receive hope, and be empowered to make a life decision for their unborn baby. We're not just a service—AVA Care is a community, and it's because of the unwavering support of people like you that we can continue to give hope, love, and a future to so many women and children.

Together, we are making a difference, one life at a time. This Spring, let us continue to sow the seeds of hope, compassion, and unwavering commitment to life. I'll never be able to say it enough – Thank you for your financial partnership with AVA Care. We simply could not do this work without you, nor would we want to.

Celebrating the beauty of life,



DESPITE THE CIRCUMSTANCES cont'd

her family since she wasn't certain what their response would be. Emily shared that she believes in God, which opened the door for me to assure her of God's love for her, and His faithfulness to walk alongside His children if they surrender to Him in obedience. She also seemed encouraged by the community resources that I shared. By showing the resources available to her, we hope to broaden her vision and build her confidence in choosing life. To close our time together, I prayed for her and sent her home with a Bible where God's promises are marked so she can see for herself how deeply God cares for her. The following week Emily returned for an ultrasound with her boyfriend and to our delight, she shared that they were planning on parenting their baby! We congratulated them and gave her the classic book *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, and reminded her of the community resources available. It is because of our faithful donors that we're able to care for women like Emily. Thank you for all the ways you support AVA Care so that women and men can be empowered to make decisions not based on fear, but hope.



SUZY KANODE

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

Mark your calendars for Wednesday, 4.16.25!

The Great Community Give is an impactful, virtual fundraising event hosted by The Community Foundation, dedicated to supporting local nonprofit organizations in the Harrisonburg-Rockingham community. This event stands as one of our key fundraising initiatives. Last year, we exceeded our goal and raised over $40,000 in celebration of our 40th anniversary! We are confident that with the generous support of our faithful donors we'll reach our new goal of $45,000 in this year's GCG!

When you participate, you help create a culture of life and love in our community—a culture where every woman knows her worth, and every baby is given the chance to live. We invite you to partner with us. Your donation makes a difference – one woman, one baby at a time.



There will be various opportunities to maximize your gift on the day of, including our designated Power Hour (8 - 9 am) and Matching Gift challenges. If unable to give on the day of, early giving opens on Wednesday, 4.2.25.

To learn more about how you can partner with us for the Great Community Give, visit support.avacareforyou.org/gcg or scan the QR code above!

Don't miss out on being involved in our fundraising events throughout the year! Stay connected through our Email Updates (contact kayla@avacareforyou.org to sign up) and Facebook (@avacarefriends).

EVENTS

CHANGE FOR LIFE
BABY BOTTLE CAMPAIGN

Thank You to the 28 churches and groups that participated in our Sanctity of Human Life Change for Life baby bottle campaign!

We distributed over
2,000 bottles,
which was almost a
50% increase
from last year's campaign!

We're incredibly grateful for the churches in our community!

If we are not yet partnered with your church in this way, please contact kayla@avacareforyou.org or call 540.434.7528 to participate in the Mother's Day (5.11.25) Change for Life campaign!

Scan the QR code for more information.

Save the Date

Annual Fundraising Banquet

Tuesday, 9.9.25

at Hotel Madison

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

>> Kara Durante, Director of Patient Services

When expressed in the right context, sex is something that is meaningful, beautiful, and an intimate expression of love. I shared this with Daisy*, who had experienced multiple casual, sexual encounters in the past year and did not view sex as something meaningful. When I asked her if at any point in her life this view was different, she acknowledged that she was unsure and shared she was sexually abused as a child, which brought about a "warped view of men." Unfortunately, many of the women we serve have experienced sexual assault. Every day we see the effects of the Fall and hear distorted views about intimacy and self-worth. We make every effort to equip our patients with resources, like professional counseling, that can lead to holistic healing. When Daisy left the appointment, I encouraged and challenged her to consider her current sexual decisions and how they may impact a desired future relationship. Several months later, Daisy returned to AVA Care for further STI testing. I was disappointed to see her name on the schedule, but was thankful she trusted us enough to come back. Daisy shared that she had not engaged in sexual encounters since her previous appointment. Early on, she blurted out that since the last visit she had been thinking about something I had said. I sat back in my chair, uneasy about what she was going to say next. Did I offend her or make her uncomfortable in some way? Instead, she shared that I had challenged her thinking and gave her "good food for thought" when I told her that sex can be meaningful. She told me that when she left her first appointment at AVA Care, she immediately called her best friend and asked several others in her circle if sex meant something to them. She reported that "99% said that it did, everyone except for me." She shared that she's been re-evaluating the relationship with her ongoing, casual partner and that her view of him and sex has shifted. I affirmed Daisy for taking the time to engage in conversations with others. I encouraged her to continue reflecting on her decisions and to pursue counseling as a way to process everything and re-evaluate her decisions. Daisy is on a journey to sexual healing, and I believe that the Lord can and will restore her as she seeks change. I am thankful that at AVA Care, we were able to provide her with holistic care and "food for thought" as she continues to work through her own beliefs, brokenness, and views on sex. Please be in prayer for Daisy and the many other women who come through our doors who have experienced sexual assault, which drastically distorts their views of not only sex, but love. We pray that every woman would feel safe and respected at AVA Care and would experience the love of their Creator.



STI Testing and Treatment: AVA Care's Strategic and Preventative Initiative

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

We recognized the need to better serve women facing unintended pregnancy by also providing them with sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing for gonorrhea and chlamydia – two of the most common STIs. In November of 2018, we began offering this service to our patients. In 2021, we expanded our STI testing program further to include testing for up to 10 different infections. We believe by offering STI testing and treatment, we are more equipped to educate and empower women regarding their sexual health and pregnancy decisions. The addition of our STI testing and treatment program was both a strategic and preventative initiative. This program allows us to provide a much-needed service to women, all while building connection and trust with them. The hope is that when they face an unintended pregnancy, they will return to AVA Care because they already have a relationship with us. Our desire is for women to choose to live in sexual integrity. We help women process their experiences and give insight into why abstinence before marriage is not only God's design, but also the most natural way to live a healthy and satisfying life.

Sentara® We are proud to offer all of our services at no cost to our patients, relying on the incredible generosity of our community for funding. We were honored to be a recipient of the Sentara Cares grant in 2023 and 2024, which provided significant funding for our STI testing and treatment program in those years. It's a testament to the vital need for these services and the holistic approach we take in caring for our patients.

Hear from AVA Care STI testing patients…

"(AVA Care's holistic approach to care) gave me an opportunity to share things that had been weighing on me and gave me that safe space to share without fear of being judged."

"I never had a holistic approach somewhere else, and I really appreciate that they do that here. Physical health, mental health, and spiritual care are all connected. It's a good way to really identify the problem and give the support and care needed."

"I think the most impactful and helpful thing to me was being surrounded by positive, empowering women. Never once did I feel ashamed about my sex history. It was so comfortable being in a supportive environment as well. It really encouraged me to be honest, which is one of the most important aspects of healthcare in my opinion!"

"AVA Care is beyond amazing compared to other healthcare centers. AVA Care is kind, compassionate, and concerned with your wellbeing every time. They take care of your health needs without making you feel uncomfortable."

2023-2024

623
STI testing patients (female)

361
STI treatments (female)

27
STI patients returned for pregnancy testing

30%
of our patients attended James Madison University

31%
of our patients identified as Christian

50%
identified having no spiritual beliefs

Most common ages:
20-24: **54%**
15-19: **19%**

Most common ethnicities:
Caucasian: **52%**
Hispanic/Latina: **23%**

ABORTION EDUCATION

Abortion Access: The Fight for Life Intensifies

>> Susan Null, Executive Director

As I reflect on the 18 years I've served as the Executive Director of AVA Care, I'm in awe of how dramatically the landscape of abortion access has changed. Over those years, abortion has become more accessible than ever, at least here in the Commonwealth. But with this ease of access comes an even greater urgency. It's never been more critical for women to walk through the doors of AVA Care *before* making a decision about their pregnancy.

Today, a woman can order the abortion pill from the comfort of her home, delivered discreetly to her mailbox in just a few days with a few simple clicks. But what happens after that is deeply concerning. Does she take the pill immediately, in secret, without medical supervision? Does she give it to a friend, a younger sister, someone who isn't old enough to access it on their own? Or worse, does she sell it to someone else, perhaps a girl at school? These are very real and terrifying possibilities.

Another pressing question we must face: where are these pills coming from? Does she know what's in them, or who is behind the delivery? The truth is, these aren't hypothetical concerns – they are happening right now, in the lives of women we serve every week at AVA Care.

And in Virginia, a constitutional amendment is advancing (HJ1) that would dramatically change the state's approach to reproductive rights. It has already passed both the House and Senate, and next year, after an election cycle, it will go back for another round. If it passes both again, Virginians will vote on it in November 2026. If it's approved, this amendment would enshrine the right to abortion on demand, up until birth, for any reason, with almost no limits.

Friends, we are in the midst of a real battle. We see it unfold in front of us every day at AVA Care. More and more women walk through our doors already in possession of the abortion pill, some of them having undergone one or more abortions previously. We are on the front lines of a battle for life. This is a battle against death, against a culture of dehumanization, and against the forces of evil that would rather turn a blind eye to the sanctity of life.

But we are not without hope. We need you. Your partnership in this mission is absolutely crucial. We can't do this alone. Now, more than ever, we need your support, your engagement, and your prayers. Please take time to learn more about these issues and get involved. Every action you take, every prayer you offer up to God, makes a real difference.

And please, pray. Pray for our patients, who are making life-or-death decisions every day. Pray for our team, who are walking with them through their darkest hours. This work is profoundly important, but it's also emotionally exhausting. Our team faces an unrelenting burden as we care for women who are facing unimaginable choices.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2023, there were an estimated 34,700 clinician-provided abortions in the state of Virginia, which is an 85% increase in clinician-provided abortions in Virginia in 2020.

In 2023, over 5,300 women traveled to Virginia to have abortions (inflow from nine different states).

https://www.guttmacher.org/monthly-abortion-provision-study

In Virginia, abortion is legal for any reason up to 26 weeks and 6 days (through the second trimester).

If under the age of 18, a parent or legal guardian must give permission and be notified to have an abortion.

https://www.guttmacher.org/monthly-abortion-provision-study

There are no mandatory waiting periods and no ultrasound requirements in the state of Virginia.

https://www.kff.org/interactive/womens-health-profiles/virginia/abortion-policies/



Welcome

We're excited to introduce Cheryl, who will be serving as a Staff Patient Advocate at AVA Care.

"I look forward to working in a place where I get to partner with a Christ-centered, compassionate staff in sharing the Father's love with the women visiting AVA Care. I am excited to support our patients facing unexpected circumstances and help them feel heard, cared for, hopeful, and empowered to make the best choices for their future."

Farewell

We are so grateful to Dr. Teresa for her service as our Medical Director for the past 5 ½ years. She was a vital member of our staff providing medical care to patients and her expertise to our medical team. Dr. Teresa will be missed at AVA Care, but we are excited for what the Lord has in store for her and her husband, Mark, as they move to be with family in Ohio. Please join us in praying blessings over Dr. Teresa and her family in this exciting transition!



We're Hiring

Your career can change lives—join us! We're seeking applicants for the following positions. For more information, please scan the QR code.

Director of Events & Engagement (32 hrs/wk)
This position is responsible for the planning, organization, and execution of AVA Care's fundraising events, and for overall efforts to increase philanthropic sources of income to help position the organization to reach the women who can benefit from the services offered at AVA Care.

Staff Nurse (25-28 hrs/wk)
This position serves patients during designated hours to provide medical services following professional standards of care and in keeping with AVA Care of Harrisonburg's mission. This position is responsible for pregnancy and STI testing, and educating on pregnancy options, pregnancy, and sexual health.

Staff

Susan Null
Executive Director

Kara Durante
Director of Patient Services

Alicia Showalter, BSN, RN
Director of Nursing

Kayla Weber
Communications Coordinator

Deb Darrell, BSN, RN
Staff Nurse

Suzy Kanode
Staff Patient Advocate

Cheryl Buckwalter
Staff Patient Advocate

Amy Hoover
Administrative Coordinator

Miriam Clark
Donor Data Specialist

Jenny Andes
Finance Manager

Emily Ritchie, MD
Volunteer Consultant for Ultrasound Services

Board of Directors

Carrie Combs – President
Katelyn Will – Vice President
Matt Hinkle - Treasurer
Jeff Stapel - Secretary
Michael Marsh, MD
Pam Gray
Matthew Gray, CFP®
Lorenzo Carrazana

Vision

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

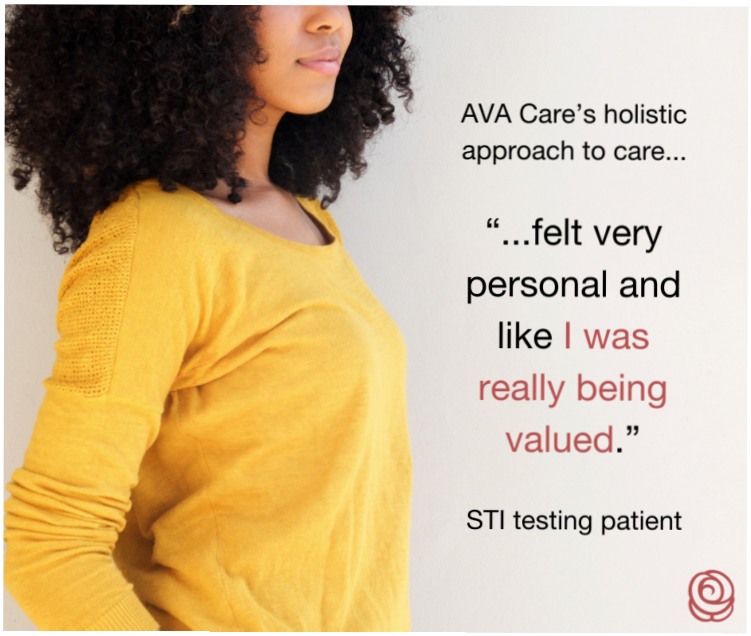
Mission

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:

PXI Print Signs Apparel

HOW YOU CAN HELP



Urgent Volunteer needs:
Office Cleaners
Spanish Interpreters

Material needs:
Diapers (sizes 4-6)
Non-religious journals
Sound machines (contact Susan for specifics)

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

Friends of AVA Care

@avacarefriends

Connect with us on Facebook & Instagram!

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

AVA CARE
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