AVA CARE
OF HARRISONBURG
ADVOCATE. VALIDATE. ANSWERS.

Summer 2025

SITTING IN THE SADNESS

>> Kara Durante
Director of Patient Services

Jessica* had pain in her eyes as she shared that the first time she had a sexual encounter was as a teenager. Her original desire was to wait to have sex until she was married, but that faded after weeks and weeks of being pressured by her boyfriend, whom she believed, "loved" her. This was a turning point for her. She acknowledged that throughout her first relationship, she felt "conditioned" to give in to what her partner wanted as a way to "keep him happy," which shaped her future relationships and how she now views sex. She described going on two different dates where she ended up having sex even though she didn't want to. Jessica explained that she found it "easier" to give in rather than speaking up and risk upsetting the other person. We discussed the physical risks she was exposing herself to, such as STIs or unintended pregnancy. Jessica recognized that her way of thinking was "wrong," but admitted that in those moments, she couldn't see a better way out. We talked about setting clear boundaries with her current partner, who she has not had sex with, and I encouraged her to be in public places until she is able to have that conversation. Jessica desires to take things slow and build a friendship. I affirmed Jessica's desire and the value of building relationships off of emotional intimacy and friendship.

Jessica explained that she found it "easier" to give in rather than speaking up and risk upsetting the other person.

Continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE :: Annual Fundraising Banquet pg. 3 :: Abortion Amendment pg. 4 :: We're Hiring pg. 7

FROM THE DIRECTOR



SUSAN NULL

Connect with Susan at susan@avacareforyou.org or 540.434.7528

We are in the midst of the hottest time of the year—and it's not just the temperatures that are rising. On the legislative front, the heat is intensifying as well. A proposed amendment to the Virginia Constitution is gaining momentum, and if passed, it would enshrine full access to abortion in our state. I encourage you to take time to read more about this critical issue in this newsletter.

In the face of these developments, we remain steadfast in our mission: to save the lives of unborn babies and spare women the deep regret that often follows an abortion. The fight for life continues all around us, presenting new challenges each day.

Right now, one of the most pressing concerns we see among our patients is the increasing availability of the abortion pill. When something becomes so easily accessible, it sends a dangerous message: "This is normal," "It's okay," "There's nothing wrong with it." These cultural signals reinforce the idea that abortion is acceptable and without consequence. But we know these are lies from the enemy.

Time and again, we've witnessed the emotional and spiritual toll that follows. After the decision is made and the act is done, the darkness often sets in—and women begin to realize that what they were led to believe may not be true.

We truly can't say it enough—your partnership means the world to us. We simply couldn't do this life-affirming work without you. Your support lifts our team, strengthens our mission, and allows AVA Care to be a beacon of hope, creating a culture of life and love right here in our community.

As the challenges grow, so does the need—and your continued involvement makes all the difference. Thank you for standing with us, and please continue to pray, give, and share this mission with others who believe in protecting life.

For Life,



SITTING IN THE SADNESS *continued*

Unfortunately, about a week after her appointment, our nurse had to share with Jessica that she tested positive for an incurable, but treatable, STI. Jessica was open to meeting with me again to process this diagnosis. She was tearful and expressed being uncertain how this could have happened, and she was not sure how to tell her current partner. Since she had not been sexually active with him, I reassured her that she didn't need to disclose the diagnosis immediately and could take time to process her emotions first. I encouraged her to confide in at least one trusted person who could support her emotionally. In the midst of her sadness, I was able to share with her how God sees her, loves her, and has a perfect plan for her life, even in the face of unexpected and painful circumstances. I shared from my own experiences of trusting God through my struggles and then prayed with her. This is just one reason I love being a part of AVA Care. In the middle of women's crises and disappointments, we can sit with them in their pain and sadness and, when the Holy Spirit prompts, we can share the truth of who God is and how He is a present help in times of trouble, providing them the ultimate comfort.



KARA DURANTE

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



Have I not commanded you?
Be strong and courageous.
Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.
Joshua 1:9

TAKE HEART



Kelly Lester
Guest Speaker

Guided by Faith, Committed to Life: Influencing Abortion Culture with Strength and Courage

AVA Care's Annual Fundraising Banquet is

Tuesday, September 9, 2025.

This year's theme, *Take Heart*, reflects a call to courage in the midst of challenges. Rooted in the promise of Joshua 1:9, we are reminded that we do not walk alone. At AVA Care, this truth fuels our daily commitment to stand in the gap for women facing unintended pregnancy. The heart of our mission is clear and unwavering: **to save the lives of unborn babies and spare women the regret of abortion**.

Interested in learning more? Contact kayla@avacareforyou.org or call 540.434.7528.

#GREATCOMMUNITYGIVE

An initiative of The Community Foundation

AVA CARE'S RESULTS:

163 total donors
Thank you to all of you who donated!

$7,500 matching gift funds met
Thank you Keener Construction, Integrity Custom Builders, and Mehegan & Sons Masonry, Inc.

$37,025 raised through donations!

$700 Power Hour prize
sponsored by Park View Federal Credit Union

GRAND TOTAL: $37,725



What you Need to Know



Graphic credit: The Family Foundation

Virginia is already the most pro-abortion state in the South where abortion is legal through 26 weeks, 6 days, and in some cases even up to birth if the woman's life is in danger. On top of that, an Abortion Amendment is in process that would enshrine "reproductive rights" into the state constitution.

This is a major threat to pregnancy centers. If the amendment passes it could easily be interpreted to mean that PRCs that don't offer abortion services are "denying, burdening, or infringing" on the rights of Virginia citizens. We would be exposed to legal threats that could hamper or even stop our ability to minister to women and babies in our communities.

The Amendment has already passed once through the VA General Assembly. The Election on November 4th, 2025 for the House of Delegates must occur and then the new General Assembly will vote a second time for the Amendment in January 2026. If it passes then, it will be on the ballot for a popular vote in November 2026.

The House of Delegates is 51-49 Pro-Abortion. If that flips on November 4th, the problem goes away for now. If it doesn't flip and goes to a popular vote in November 2026, analysts say only a miracle would stop it from passing as polling on the amendment is 61-39 in favor.

Visit the The Family Foundation to learn more about the far-reaching impact of this Amendment if passed, as well as what you can do to be a part of helping to ensure it does not move forward.

A FLICKER OF HOPE

>> Suzy Kanode, Staff Patient Advocate

Cameron* was tearful, distraught, and distracted throughout her appointment at AVA Care. The stress of facing an unintended pregnancy was taking a toll on her. She shared her struggles openly—this was not the right time to add another child to her family, her partner was battling drug addiction, and she was already the devoted mother of a young child with special needs, who required her full attention and advocacy. The question she faced was "How could I possibly have enough and be enough for them both?" Despite her circumstances, the idea of abortion deeply unsettled her. I expressed concern for how she could be negatively impacted by doing something that conflicted with her core values. When she shared that she believed in God, I reminded her of God's unwavering love, presence, and care. We gave her a Bible and encouraged her to read it and spend time in prayer, asking God to guide her as she considered her next steps. We also discussed life-affirming options, including parenting and adoption, and reviewed the community resources that could support her if she courageously chose to carry her pregnancy. Then came the moment that changed everything. Each patient is given the option to view the ultrasound on the screen. Some decline—but not Cameron. To her surprise, she learned she was further along than she first thought. What she saw on the screen was not just a medical image—it was her child. The tiny heartbeat, the form of new life—this visual encounter reached her in a way that words could not. It was in that sacred moment that Cameron made her decision: she could no longer go through with an abortion. Cheryl, the Patient Advocate in the room, quickly compiled information on several community resources that would be beneficial to Cameron. This included information on clothes closets, a local addiction treatment center, and our EXCEL program to equip her with the resources and training she needs to flourish personally and professionally. Through EXCEL, she would also have access to free diapers and wipes for the first year of her baby's life. Cheryl reassured her: she wasn't alone. Where Cameron once felt unsupported, she now knew there was a team standing beside her offering hope, practical help, and the reminder that she is never without options.

The question she faced was "How could I possibly have enough and be enough for them both?"

The tiny heartbeat, the form of new life—this visual encounter reached her in a way that words could not.



Welcoming new members to our medical team!



Carter Gardner, RDMS
Staff Sonographer



Dr. Jeff Domingus
Volunteer Medical Director



Thanks to a generous grant from PreBorn, our brand-new ultrasound machine was provided at no cost to AVA Care. We are overwhelmed with gratitude for our new machine and pray that it will continue to provide a flicker of HOPE to our patients.

The Abortion Pill Harms Women—New Study Proves What We've Always Known

In April, a study was published from the Life and Family Initiative that reveals almost 11% of women experienced serious adverse events, such as sepsis, infection, or hemorrhage, within 45 days of taking the abortion pill. This real-world complication rate is at least 22 times higher than the "*less than 0.5%*" rate reported in clinical trials cited on the drug label. At AVA Care, we know there is no such thing as a "safe abortion" because it ends the life of an unborn child. But this study confirms what we've always known to be true—the abortion pill harms women too. We believe information empowers, and we hope that this new study will bring a fresh and sobering understanding of the abortion pill to women who believe it may be their best or only option.

Read *The Abortion Pill Harms Women: Insurance Data Reveals One in Ten Patients Experience a Serious Adverse Effect. Conducted and published by the Ethics and Public Policy Committee.*

Answer the call. Join our team!

Staff Nurse
24-28 hours/week

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.

Director of Events & Engagement
32 hours/week

This position is responsible for the planning, organization, and execution of events that offer opportunities for donors and the community to engage in and support the organization's mission.

General requirements:

- Be a committed Christian who demonstrates a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and is active in a local church.
- Strong commitment and dedication to the sanctity of human life and related issues of abortion and sexual purity.
- Self-motivated, dependable, creative, resourceful, and responsible.

To apply, please send your cover letter and resume to apply@avacareforyou.org. Qualified applicants will be asked to complete an application.

Looking for ways to get involved?

Volunteer
- Spanish interpreter(s)
- Weekly office cleaners

Give
- Become an Invest*Her*
- Donate a one-time gift
- Consider planned giving

Pray
- Join our prayer team
- Use our prayer calendar

Staff

Susan Null
Executive Director

Kara Durante
Director of Patient Services

Alicia Showalter, BSN, RN
Director of Nursing

Kayla Weber
Communications Coordinator

Suzy Kanode
Staff Patient Advocate

Cheryl Buckwalter
Staff Patient Advocate

Amy Hoover
Administrative Coordinator

Miriam Clark
Donor Data Specialist

Jenny Andes
Finance Manager

Carter Gardner, RDMS
Sonographer

Jeff Domingus, DO
Volunteer Medical Director

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 sponsored in part by:

PXI Print Signs Apparel



Friends of AVA Care

@avacarefriends

Connect with us on Facebook & Instagram!

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Wish List:
Books: *Why Pro-Life?* by Randy Alcorn

Material needs:
Baby wipes

Financial
One-time donations
Invest*Hers – monthly financial partners*
Planned/legacy giving
For more information, contact susan@avacareforyou.org.

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

AVA CARE
OF HARRISONBURG
ADVOCATE. VALIDATE. ANSWERS.

847 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way | Harrisonburg, VA 22801
Address Service Requested

SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER