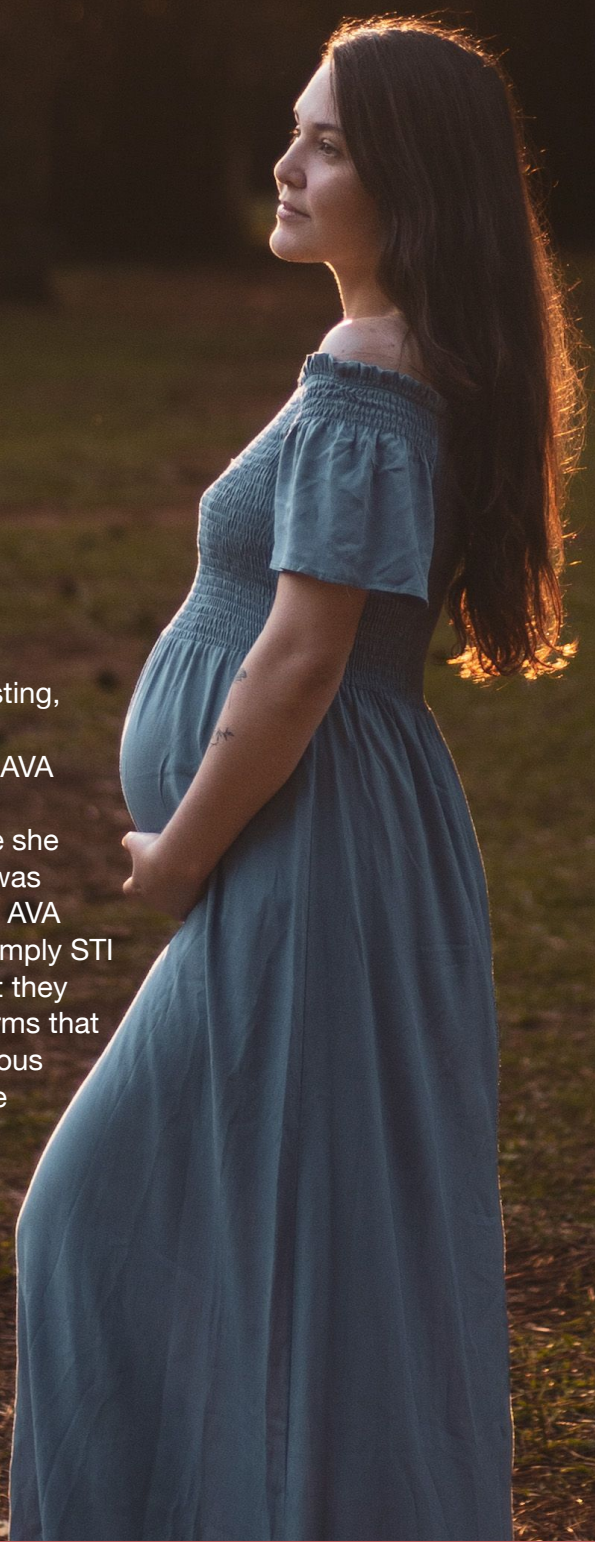
AVA CARE
OF HARRISONBURG
ADVOCATE. VALIDATE. ANSWERS.

Fall 2026

# SAME DECISION, DIFFERENT CHOICE



*>> Suzy Kanode*
*Staff Patient Advocate*

Celia* first came to AVA Care a few years ago for pregnancy testing, but moved forward with her intention to have an abortion. After recently finding out she was pregnant again, she came back to AVA Care because she remembered our staff being “caring and understanding.” Celia knew she could return to the place where she would be listened to and cared for without judgment. And she was right. The fact that patients who have chosen abortion return to AVA Care for another pregnancy, an after abortion assessment, or simply STI testing is evidence that we truly care for women no matter what they decide. During her appointment, Celia marked on one of the forms that she is totally against abortion and shared it’s because her previous abortion was a “hard decision”. She also shared details with the nurse about how difficult it was for her. While we grieved with Celia over her abortion experience, we honored her for now choosing life for her baby and seeking guidance on parenting alongside the father of the baby. She bravely chose to face the challenges before her, believing that carrying and parenting their child would bring a future filled with more hope than heartache. We informed her of the wonderful resources our community has to offer so that she and her boyfriend can be equipped and empowered as they prepare for their baby’s arrival. A partner’s support is often a

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR



SUSAN NULL

*Connect with Susan at susan@avacareforyou.org or 540.434.7528*

As I write to you, my heart is so deeply grieved. The citizens in our Commonwealth have spoken and have chosen to allow for the destruction of innocent babies in the womb up until 40 weeks! It's hard for me to fathom that we live in a society that even considered full-term abortions, much less that we will now have to contend with this new law that is being enshrined into our state Constitution. This amendment may have the power to change the law, but it will not change the circumstances and pressures that women will face as they navigate unintended pregnancy. It will not change their need for a safe space to be heard and process their fears. It will not change what they deserve as they make decisions and live in the outcome of their choice. This new law will certainly not change AVA Care's mission in this community—to save the lives of unborn babies and spare women the regret of an abortion. When circumstances seem overwhelming and confusing, we must remain steadfast in God's Word. He assures us, in Romans 8:28 that "…for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

Friends, I don't understand it all, but this I do know. God is still God, and He is sovereign. No scheme of the enemy will deter us from the precious, sacred work that God has called us to at AVA Care. We need you to continue to, in courage, stand firm with us, as we carry out the good work that He has purposed for us. In order to do so, we need your continued partnership through your faithful, bold prayers and your generous financial support.

Never before has the need for AVA Care been more important!

As 2026 comes to a close, will you prayerfully consider AVA Care in your year-end giving? We are in a battle for life, and the abortion industry is strategic in their efforts to persuade women to choose abortion. We must **REACH HER FIRST.** You can help us do that.

As the holidays are quickly approaching. I wish you and your family peace and joy this Thanksgiving and as we celebrate the birth of our Savior,

For LIFE,



## Urgent Staff Opening

**Staff Patient Advocate (32 hrs/wk)**

Has the Lord gifted you with a heart of compassion that listens well and desires to boldly speak truth? Do you have a passion for the sanctity of life and ministering to women?

You may be who we've been praying for to fill our open staff position. The role of Staff Patient Advocate includes advocating for patients through options counseling, crisis intervention, sexual health counseling, along with identifying resources.

*Learn more about the qualifications by visiting our website. Send a cover letter and resume to apply@avacareforyou.org to get started.*

## Donate

**Please consider AVA Care in your year-end giving!**






*Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes. Nehemiah 4:14b*

On September 15th, AVA Care hosted its 2026 Fundraising Banquet at Hotel Madison. The theme this year was Courage Under Fire, reminding us to stand strong in the midst of an ever-changing social and political landscape. The passage in Nehemiah beautifully parallels the work of the Israelites and the defenders of their work to AVA Care's mission and those who courageously surround and defend it. Despite the opposition and hardship, there is hope in an ultimate Victory as we trust the God who equips those called to work and those called to defend.

"Friends, tonight I am going to share hard things, but my heart is full of hope." Executive Director, Susan Null, began and ended her keynote speech with reminders that we are all doing God's work. In her speech, Null highlighted three areas of rapid change and shared how AVA Care is responding to each.

1. *Public policy changes include the proposed amendment to the Virginia Constitution,* guaranteeing the right to abortions up to 40 weeks. Null emphasized that while AVA Care is intentionally apolitical, this amendment will give the abortion industry a permanent foothold in Virginia.

2. *Access to medication abortion is easier than ever before.* Null pointed out the ways websites whitewash the medical realities of the abortion pill and procedure, and wept as she recounted how the AVA Care team must explain the reality of abortion to patients every day.

3. *Young women are increasingly turning to AI chat bots* to ask for advice and instructions. Null explained that "the front door of the abortion clinic has changed. It is no longer down the street—it's in [a woman's] bathroom." The key, she said, is in reaching that woman before an AI chat or Google points her toward abortion resources.

The stories of two patients were shared with banquet attendees. Cassie came to AVA Care determined that abortion was her best option. Her Patient Advocate recalled assuming Cassie would go through with the abortion and highlighted the power of prayer in situations that seem hopeless. Cassie recognized the contrast between the cold and transactional feel of the abortion clinic and the warmth, kindness, and honesty of AVA Care. Cassie arrived at the abortion clinic, but couldn't even leave her car. She drove away, choosing life for her baby.

Leslie found AVA Care as she was searching for an appointment at an abortion clinic. After speaking with a Patient Advocate, she realized "it was the fear talking… [and AVA Care] made a challenging decision extremely easy." Leslie's partner, Chance, described being surprised that there was a Male Patient Advocate to speak with him, and said how much he valued the opportunity to process the

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## ANNUAL FUNDRAISING BANQUET RECAP

### Thank you to our top *Underwriters!*

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## Banquet Recap *continued from page 3*

situation. Leslie said that the ultrasound "made it real for both of us." The crowd stood in applause as Leslie and Chance, who were in attendance, were honored for their courageous decision to choose life.

Null closed by reminding banquet attendees that there will be another Cassie, another Leslie. Through prayer and partnership, let's make sure that AVA Care is there to Reach Her First. The challenges are real, but God is with us, and this is not the time to retreat. Just like the Israelites in Nehemiah, AVA Care can courageously continue in their work knowing they are surrounded by those who stand ready to defend it.



*Susan Null,*
*Executive Director*

## Total Banquet Net Revenue: $228,368.57

**We are overwhelmed with gratitude for our banquet donors!**

*Sanctity of Human Life*

CHANGE FOR LIFE

*BABY BOTTLE CAMPAIGN*

We'd love to connect with your church for our Sanctity of Human Life Change for Life baby bottle campaign that will kick off on January 24, 2027. We also invite your church to honor Sanctity of Human Life Sunday with a personal report from an AVA Care representative, even if they are not participating in the January baby bottle campaign.

Visit our website (support.avacareforyou.org/CFL) to learn more about how churches can partner with us in saving the lives of unborn babies and sparing women the regret of abortion.

*Contact kayla@avacareforyou.org or call 540.434.7528 to inquire how your church can participate in a 2027 Change for Life campaign.*



# A CHANGING LANDSCAPE, AN UNCHANGING MISSION

The amendment for unlimited abortion has passed, establishing a fundamental right to reproductive freedom, including abortion, in our Commonwealth's Constitution. This amendment will significantly change Virginia's legal landscape and raise serious concerns about protections for unborn children and safeguards surrounding abortion procedures.

The amendment would add abortion rights to Virginia's Constitution without setting a specific limit on how far into pregnancy an abortion could take place. It also raises concerns about the future of current regulations, including parental involvement requirements for minors and other "safeguards" for women choosing abortion.

These changes deeply grieve those of us committed to advocating for and protecting life. Yet, while the laws may change, the circumstances that lead women to consider abortion will not. Women will continue to face unintended pregnancies, financial uncertainty, relationship challenges, and pressure from those around them. They will still need someone willing to listen, offer support, and walk alongside them when the future feels uncertain.

Our mission is not dependent on the political climate or the laws of our Commonwealth. We believe every life has inherent value, and every woman deserves compassionate support, accurate information, and the opportunity to choose life without feeling alone.

As the challenges facing life-affirming ministries continue to grow, we must remain intentional about reaching women first and offering practical support and hope when they need it most.

**The laws of our Commonwealth may change; our calling does not.**

"Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm."

*Ephesians 6:13*

## What will happen to AVA Care?

AVA Care will continue to provide relevant testing services, education, and hope to individuals at risk of or facing unintended pregnancy.

The outcome of the unlimited abortion amendment does not change our mission, purpose, or services. If anything, this amendment has reinforced the great need for AVA Care in our community. The faithful partnership of our supporters is absolutely essential to continuing the work of saving the lives of unborn babies and sparing women the regret of abortion.

## What will happen in Virginia?

The vagueness in the amendment language opens the door to abortions up to 40 weeks, abortion access for minors without any parental knowledge or consent, zero safeguards, and almost no accountability for abortion injuries to women.

Virginia will now be a sanctuary state for abortion, an abortion destination. Guttmacher Institute reported that 8,400 patients traveled to Virginia to obtain an abortion in 2025. It is highly likely this number will increase.

# PRESENT IMPACTS ON FUTURE DESIRES

*>> Kara Durante*
*Director of Patient Services*

It always grieves my heart when I hear how young women get caught up in the pressures of the current sexual culture. During her appointment, Kim* shared that she decided to begin having sex because her friends were sexually active, and she felt "left out." As I helped Kim reflect on her decision, she shared conflicting feelings. While she wished she had never had sex, she did not necessarily regret her current lifestyle or see herself changing. Despite this, Kim expressed a desire for a long-term, committed relationship. She explained that "in the future" she wants to build a friendship and get to know someone better before having sex. I challenged Kim to consider why she was waiting for the future to make this change and encouraged her to begin living out those desires in the present. Her reasoning was that she does not see herself in a long-term relationship before she moves next year and does not have any interest in trying to make a long-distance relationship work. As our conversation continued, Kim shared that even though she grew up with Christian values and beliefs, she no longer identifies them as her own. I followed up by asking what then gives her hope. She answered that it was her future. Based on her response, I invited her to think about how her current sexual decisions either helped or hindered her future goals. However, she did not believe having multiple sexual partners over the past year put her at risk. This opened the door to discuss how an unintended pregnancy could impact her, including her career, goals, and desires. She acknowledged that she has always wanted to be a mom, but didn't know how she could have a baby in her current season of life. I reminded Kim that the only way for her to be absolutely sure she does not find herself in an unintended pregnancy is to practice abstinence. I shared the challenges she may face if she would become pregnant and how choosing to have an abortion, make an adoption plan, or parent is not just a difficult decision, but a life-changing one no matter what she decides. The conversations we have with our STI test patients are intended to empower women to choose healthier lifestyles and live in sexual integrity, so they don't have to make a pregnancy decision. These conversations provide opportunities for women to stop and contemplate the actual impacts that causal sex has on their bodies, minds, hearts, and future. After being tested, Kim was shocked to learn that her sexual choices did put her at risk and led to a positive STI result. While she was at AVA Care receiving treatment, she was quiet and tearful. We can pray that this experience motivates Kim to reflect more deeply on her sexual decisions and pursue lifestyle changes, like abstinence, to not only protect her physical health but to also care for her mind and heart.



KARA DURANTE

# Thank You

**Your support gives our patients encouragement, comfort, and hope. We're passing their thanks onto you.**

"Thank you so much for helping and walking me through this."
– *Pregnancy test patient*

"Thank you for your kindness, professionalism, and resources provided! This visit was extremely helpful and very much appreciated."
– *Pregnancy test patient*

"Thank you so much. I feel much more confident walking out than I did when walking in."
– *Pregnancy test patient*

"Thank you for praying with me. I have not had that at an appointment before."
– *Pregnancy test patient*

"Thank you for making this a safe place for me. I appreciate all the help and care I was given today."
– *Pregnancy test patient*

"I appreciate everything you guys do here to help women like myself."
– *After abortion assessment patient*

"I appreciate the work you do and I wish you all that you need to continue the process. It means a lot to many people."
– *STI test patient*

"Thank you for making this nerve-wrecking situation as calm and comforting as possible."
– *STI test patient*

"Thanks again for providing a safe space for women."
– *STI test patient*

"I appreciated the patience, understanding, and compassion offered to me by the women I met with today."
– *Pregnancy test patient*

## SAME DECISION, DIFFERENT CHOICE *(continued from cover)*

major factor in a pregnancy decision. We are grateful that Celia's boyfriend is stepping into his role as a father. After her appointment for pregnancy testing and then a confirmation ultrasound at AVA Care, my follow-up conversation with Celia revealed she was facing a whole new challenge. I was able to provide more information on resources that best fit her needs and situation. I also reminded her of AVA Care's EXCEL program that seeks to equip women and their partners through community resources as they enter into parenthood. As part of the program, Celia and her boyfriend could receive free diapers and wipes every month for the first year of their baby's life. One of our goals at AVA Care is to help both the mother and the father find support and encouragement as they work together to create a beautiful future for their family.



SUZY KANODE

## 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*

**Amy Hoover**
*Administrative Coordinator*

**Miriam Clark**
*Donor Data Specialist*

**Jenny Andes**
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**Michelle Turner, RT-S**
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**Jeff Domingus, DO**
*Volunteer Medical Director*

**Emily Ritchie, MD**
*Volunteer Consultant for Ultrasound Services*

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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.

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

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## HOW YOU CAN HELP

**Financial:**
- One-time donations
- Become an Invest*Her*
  *(monthly financial partner)*
- Plan a legacy gift

**Material Needs & Wish List:**
Please visit our material needs & wish list registries at:
*support.avacareforyou.org/in-kind*

## Stay Connected & Informed

**Follow us!**

Friends of AVA Care

@avacarefriends

Sign up for our monthly email updates to see more…

- AVA Care happenings
- Upcoming events
- Prayer requests
- Critical updates

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.

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