

The Opioid Crisis (Part 2): A Success Story

Posted by [Zach Hill](#) On 03/04/2021

SOUTHERN MARYLAND - As a result of the first part of this series, posted on February 18th, many readers sent in messages about how they've been personally affected by the opioid epidemic. While there are many stories of the struggles caused by opioid addiction, there are also many stories of success.

A local man named John Viland described his battle with opioid addiction after being prescribed "way more opioids than necessary" after a back injury. John became addicted to the opioids, and when they became more difficult to obtain, he dabbled with heroin—which was cheap and easy to get. He overdosed on heroin and was left for dead in his truck.

Viland said that it was, "By the grace of God that he survived." A man who had left for work realized that he had forgotten his laptop at home and drove back to get it. He saw John lying limp inside his truck and called 911. There just happened to be an ambulance right down the street. Paramedics immediately used the AED (automatic external defibrillator) and gave him an injection of Naloxone.

His overdose and near-death experience was the wake-up call John needed to finally seek help. Viland's insurance company offered him a 21-day detox program, but he knew this wasn't going to be enough time to fully recover from his opioid addiction. John said that he, "was fortunate that his church helped him go to a recovery home for about seven months" where he was able to get and remain drug-free. Viland's family was his motivation for recovery.

When John was asked what we, as a community, can do to help with the opioid crisis, he said, "It's important to educate the population on just how addictive opioids are. Also, we need more volunteers to help people struggling with addiction and we need more long-term recovery programs. In addition, we must treat each person struggling with addiction with kindness and respect."

John believes that doctors need to limit the length of time patients are on suboxone (an opioid used to treat opioid dependence) and methadone (an opioid used to treat chronic pain and opioid addiction). Both of these drugs can help with the drug detoxification process, but they are also addictive, and some patients remain on them for decades. In 2019, health care providers across the United States wrote more than 153 million prescriptions for opioid pain medication—a rate of 46.7 prescriptions per 100 people. John implored anyone that has unused opioids in their medicine cabinet to please dispose of them. Many addicts go right to the medicine cabinets of their friends and family members.

Another helpful component of John's rehabilitation process was an exercise program that helped him learn to deal with stress healthily. Once his rehabilitation program was complete, he knew it was critical to avoid the triggers that caused him to use. This included not hanging out with the same people or going to the same places. John said that the volunteer work he started participating in after rehab helped him look outside of himself and allowed him an even greater incentive to remain clean. He began helping with local non-profits such as The Mission, Reformers Unanimous, Celebrate Recovery, and other organizations. John said that he, "wouldn't be here today if it were not such a supportive community."

A happy, and sober, John Viland helping plant the garden at The Mission in Lexington Park, Md.

For more information, or to seek help with opioid prevention or treatment for addiction in Southern Maryland, click on the corresponding link(s) below:

St. Mary's County, Md.

Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery

<http://www.smchd.org/opioid/>

Charles County, Md.

Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery

<https://www.charlescountymd.gov/services/health-and-human-services/opioid-abuse-and-overdose-prevention>

Calvert County, Md.

Opioid prevention

<https://www.calverthealth.org/personalhealth/substanceabuse/prevention.htm>

Overdose response program

<https://www.calverthealth.org/personalhealth/substanceabuse/naloxone.htm#:~:text=Free%20Training%20for%20Community%20Members,breathing%20problems%20from>

Treatment for Opioid addiction

<https://www.calverthealth.org/personalhealth/substanceabuse/services.htm>

Anne Arundel County, Md.

Opioid Misuse Prevention

<https://aahealth.org/opioid-misuse-prevention-program-ompp/>

Opioid Response Training

<https://aahealth.org/events/oort/>

Substance Abuse Treatment

<https://aahealth.org/substance-abuse-treatment/>

Prince George's County, Md.

Alcohol and Drug Prevention

<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/2877/Alcohol-Drug-Prevention>

Opioid Response Training

<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/2958/Overdose-Response-Training>

Substance Abuse Treatment

<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/2836/Behavioral-Health-Outpatient-Services>

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