

Janelle Unger

My name is Janelle Unger I am from Lake County Ohio. I consider myself on the front lines fighting for many in this opioid epidemic. I am part of the Lake County Jail Ministry (LCJM) holding church services and conducting one on one visits with female inmates for 11 years. Over the Last 5 years, the majority of those incarcerated are in there for heroin/opioid related offenses. I was one of many in our community that helped bring one of the most successful Hope over Heroin rally to the Lake County Fairgrounds this past summer. I am heavily involved in a grass roots organization NE Ohio fight against addiction. I also serve on the board for Friends of Recovery; a nonprofit faith based recovery homes and am working with Dr. Richard Zinny for his non-profit faith based organization One Hope Recovery. But my greatest hard fought battle is on the home front. I am the mother of a 27 year old struggling heroin addict, and if there is one thing I have become acutely aware of is the problem of addiction is a complicated one. The issue is rooted in physical, emotional and spiritual causes. Faith plays a significant role in healing the wounds that drug and alcohol addiction have created.

Through being involved in all the areas that I have spoken about it has given me blessed opportunities to support and attend those in recovery giving leads, speaking at public rally's, conferences, church's, and anywhere else that they are given a soap box. One thing that I can speak of that those speaking out and sharing their story will always say is that "everyone's recovery is their own journey and looks different for each individual. What may work for one may not work for another." I believe if we were all honest with ourselves, we would all agree with that statement spoken by nearly every recovering addict I know, and I know a lot.

If a person feels that their faith is important to them, perhaps they would feel more comfortable in a faith-based facility instead of attending a secular facility. Even though the treatment received may be the same, the faith-based centers will have the same core value that a patient says he or she values. This means that they may feel more support as they go through the various steps of recovery; keeping in mind that feeling of support is an important part of maintaining long-term sobriety. It may be possible to discuss religious or spiritual concerns while simultaneously discussing physical and psychological needs, you may see where this would be preferable. Another benefit is that most of those in a faith-based program holds the same core beliefs. This provides an opportunity to fellowship with other patients who are struggling with the same issues. Many patients in recovery have

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stated that this only strengthened their beliefs and renewed their desire to become sober. Because there is at least one common interest, it may also make it easier to continue the fellowship with group members after the patient leaves the facility.

Many will try to persuade or argue that the success of faith based recovery programs have a much higher success rate than government-funded programs and they would be correct. I would however like us to take a moment and remember and think about what those that are in recovery and those who have overcome addiction all agree upon and that is everyone's recovery is their own journey and looks different for everyone. Believe me those in recovery know better than anyone what it takes to be successful in sobriety, so we should sit up and listen. There are many struggling with addiction that a faith-based facility is what will be a part of their recovery that works for them. However, they may die because what works for them is a faith-based recovery and that facility never get off the ground solely based on lack of funding. I believe that we are fighting a losing battle in this opioid epidemic if the State of Ohio is not able to or will not provide funding that is available to faith-based facilities. One thing I do know is in successful recovery there is a strong support system and a united front. I believe it is time that the State of Ohio not only continue to support government-funded programs, but also release funds for faith-based programs and facilities. It is time that we would no longer have to compare successful recovery statistics between government programs and faith-based but it would be just the success rate of recovery in Ohio because we came together for the common goal of helping the addicts and their families. It is time that Ohio's message is that we are stronger as one. It is time that we have unity in our community and we are fighting this war on opioids as an army.

Thank you for your attention