



PROVIDING COMMUNITY During Mass Social Isolation | FAIRE HOLLIDAY, PROGRAM MANAGER

On my first day at Recovery Café Longmont, we officially closed our doors because of the social distancing requirements around the coronavirus. When I arrived, staff gloved up and headed outside with a box full of sack lunches. We knew this was going to be our last day to engage with our members for a while, and though saddened by this knowledge, we hoped that we could talk to our members face to face and let them know that we weren't giving up on them or forgetting about them. We'd be back in service again as soon as we safely could.

Where is everyone? We asked that question the day after experiencing a slow trickle of members coming by to grab a sack lunch. And we asked again as Becky, our new manager of hospitality, began calling our members. *Where is everyone?* And then again, as staff drove through the eerily quiet streets of Longmont: *Where are our friends? Are they going to survive this? Are they staying healthy? Are they staying sober? Are they getting the support they need?*

Since shifting to be a virtual community in March, we've struggled with the question of how we support people in recovery during this time. Our mission is to be a loving and healing community. So we have done the best we can from a distance: we've talked on the phone for more than 24 hours with our members, held 17 virtual Recovery Circles and 11 School for Recovery classes through May. We've mailed cards and craft supplies. We've opened up our virtual doors to the broader community so that anyone who needs support can call us and find connection.

Operating this way is a challenge. Some of our most vulnerable members are the ones we are having trouble reaching. Some don't have phones or access to the internet. Others have fallen out of contact with us, and we don't know why. While we are thankful to be in touch with some of our members, we worry about what's happening to the others.

We fully recognize that individuals who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness, addiction, and other mental health challenges are at greater risk of contracting, becoming severely ill, or dying from COVID-19. Yet we also recognize that isolation can be a silent killer for people living in recovery. We also understand that virtual connection isn't the same as seeing someone in person; it's a palm pressed against the glass when what you really need is someone to hold your hand. It's not the same... but it is something.

In every culture in the world, stories abound about a small thing that changes the direction of a person's life. That's been our goal from the start: not to be everything, but to be a small thing that makes a big difference. Of all the things our members have shared with us during this time, one sentiment emerges over and over: they are so grateful we are reaching out to them. They are so happy to be a part of such a wonderful community. They can't wait to return to Recovery Café Longmont when it's safe to be together again.



From the Executive Director

May 29th marked our first year of operation and welcomed the opportunity for reflection. Of the many successes, none resonate deeper than introducing our service model to the community and witnessing the transformative power of connection. The Impact Report on page 6 provides a snapshot of our work through 2019.

While the Café temporarily closed in March, we maintain connection with our members by phone, text, and email, as well as by holding regular virtual Recovery Circles and School for Recovery classes. We also provide referrals to local partner organizations for food, shelter and additional resources if needed. These services are crucial so that the fragile process of recovery can be supported. A phased plan to reopen the Café is in process, ensuring that the physical and mental health of our members, volunteers, and staff are our number-one priority.

Witnessing the global impact of the coronavirus is staggering. Experiencing its impact on Recovery Café Longmont is a daily reminder of how important our work is. The people we serve are disproportionately affected by the economic, health, and social disruptions from the virus, as many also struggle with mental health, homelessness, and additional life challenges.

While the pandemic challenges all of us, low-income and communities of color are impacted at a deeper level. Working from home and sheltering in place are luxuries not everyone can afford or attain. With more than 50% of Americans living paycheck to paycheck before the crisis, the increasing divide between those with privilege and those with less is undeniable. Record unemployment and lack of affordable healthcare, in addition to stagnant wages for those who are able to find work, have pushed millions to the brink of economic disaster.



Let us turn this challenge into an opportunity to advocate for meaningful social change. What kind of world do we want to live in? One in which all individuals and communities have the ability to achieve their full potential? A society with equitable standards of social, economic, physical, and mental health for everyone? A perfect model of the “common good” may never be fully realized, but it must be an aspirational goal if we are to learn anything from this crisis. We must strive to do better.

Thank you for having a place for Recovery Café Longmont in your heart,

Lisa Searchinger
Executive Director

DONATE!

Everything we do at Recovery Café Longmont is because of generous and compassionate supporters like you. YOU make our programs and services possible. Please visit our website to make a tax-deductible donation and learn more about additional ways to support our work: recoverycafelongmont.org. THANK YOU for supporting this transformative work!

VOLUNTEER!

Volunteers help hold the spirit of Recovery Café Longmont by nurturing a sense of loving community and a culture of recovery for everyone who comes through our doors.

Please visit our website to learn more about volunteering in the time of COVID-19: recoverycafelongmont.org.

SIGN-UP FOR E-NEWS!

Join our email community to receive news, announcements, and updates. We only use your information to keep you connected with us — we don't share with, or sell to, anyone. Please visit our website and click on the SUBSCRIBE tab. You can also add your name and email on the envelope inserted into this newsletter and mail it back to us.



Recovery Café LONGMONT

ABOUT US

Recovery Café Longmont is a community of refuge and healing for people in recovery from addiction, mental health, homelessness, and additional life challenges. The Café was formed in 2018 to address the unmet need for adequate, accessible, long-term recovery services in Boulder County.

WHAT WE DO

We support our members as they learn to manage their mental and physical health, maintain sobriety, build community and reclaim life as a person worthy of giving and receiving love.

WHO WE ARE

We are individuals who are new to recovery, in long-term recovery, have had relapses, difficult life changes, physical health challenges or mental health transitions.

Our Programs

We have three programs designed to help people maintain recovery, reduce relapse and fulfill their potential. These programs work toward connectivity and accountability.

RECOVERY CIRCLES

are small peer support groups led by trained facilitators that educate members about recovery, help them to develop skills that prevent relapse, and teach accountability. Weekly attendance is a requirement of membership.

SCHOOL FOR RECOVERY

offers curriculum featuring classes that address the underlying causes of addiction, teach coping skills, develop knowledge, new skills and build recovery capital. Examples of offerings include: addiction recovery, grief and loss, art, music, building healthy relationships, yoga, and creative writing.

MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

offer members the opportunity to learn the rewards of giving back, improve communication skills, develop leadership skills, and learn to interact effectively and productively with staff, other members, and outside volunteers who spend time at the Café sharing their gifts.

Every day the Café is open we offer radical hospitality, which includes a communal meal, healthy snacks, coffee, beverages, and a supportive, loving community. This community includes members, staff, and volunteers who listen - without judgment - and who meet our members wherever they are on their recovery journey and support them as they work toward lasting recovery.

“We all have our own battles to recover and how we can fix our own life. You gave me hope to push for the better and not give up on myself.”

Member Moment

With his trademark cowboy hat, handsome features, and gentle demeanor, it would be hard to guess the incredible difficulties Zach has faced.

“I became an alcoholic after my divorce from my boys’ mom. I started drinking just to have a fun time, but it got worse and worse. Soon I was just drinking to get drunk. Eventually I got into trouble with the law and served jail time. I was a drinking fool.”

Zach managed to stay sober for a short time, but he soon started smoking pot.

“It was not any better. I wanted to clear my head, but it just all became a blur, and there are days I just don’t remember.”

Before long, he was drinking again.

“I thought I was living the cowboy life, but in reality I was living to drink, and drinking to live,” he recalls.

A good friend told him about Recovery Café Longmont.

“After coming in and meeting everyone, I felt so much love and happiness from the people there. I was able to lift my head up again and know I wasn’t doomed. I had found my happy place.”

With support from the Café, Zach was able to find work and housing.

“Recovery Café is the best thing I found because it was my safe zone. Between joblessness and homelessness, I was able to get my head put back together. I felt no judgment and soon became a member. The goals and help from the men and



Zach

women there and in the Recovery Circle is the best support group I’ve been in.”

Zach’s warm smile and welcoming conversation have helped newcomers to Recovery Café feel like they belong. Whether offering a new member a hot cup of coffee or talking about his own experiences, the way Zach gives back to his community is inspirational to members and volunteers alike.

With the Café being closed during the COVID-19 crisis, Zach misses his friends and support.

“I miss Saturdays the most with the guys, and I miss everyone at the Café also.”

“All I do now is keep busy with work and try to stay more positive about my life. COVID-19 is no fun to deal with, but we all have to stay strong and be the best we can be. I try my best every day, because I am a proud member of Recovery Café. I want to show others that the fight is not over, and recovery is an ongoing battle to win every day.”

Even with his successes in creating a healthy, stable life, Zach knows he needs to keep working hard at his recovery.

“I know I will beat alcohol, but sometimes it gets close to beating me again. I will fight to be sober for each day, one day at a time... just one day at a time.”

Donor Corner

For Susie Sisson, the mission of Recovery Café Longmont strikes a particular chord.

Susie Sisson



Asked why she chooses to support our organization, Susie says that she likes that it's focused on the root causes of homelessness, substance use, and mental health challenges, not just the symptoms. For her, the real healing starts with creating a community that feels like a family.

"People need to get back their self-worth and know that they are loved and valued no matter how hard they struggle," she says. "A lot of people never get that from other places."

Susie's passion for this work began when her son chose to live on the streets. After his death in 2009, she got involved with Homeless Outreach Providing Encouragement (HOPE) and served six and a half years on their board. What started as a personal desire to help others going through similar struggles to her son has grown into something more: a calling of sorts. She reflects that once you get involved with this work, it gets into your blood. This dedication is what motivates her to donate both her time and money to organizations like Recovery Café Longmont.

As a resident of Longmont since 1990, Susie has seen the number of people experiencing homelessness grow significantly. She attributes this to the rising cost of living, as well as disasters like the flood of

2013. While this is heartbreaking for her to see, she is thankful that the community's response has grown, as well.

"One change I am glad about is the rise in organizations to help people – Recovery Café, HOPE, Agape Family Services – organizations that are trying to make it safer for them," she says. "We didn't have that when I first moved here. There was nothing."

Susie knows that organizations like Recovery Café Longmont thrive when they have dedicated financial supporters. Serving on a nonprofit board gave her insight into the challenges facing a new organization. With this in mind, she began financially supporting the Café before the doors opened for the first time. She has been a dedicated donor ever since.

Susie's involvement with Recovery Café Longmont over this past year has made an enormous difference for us. Her warmth, genuine compassion, and incredible artistic skills make her a joy to have as a volunteer, and her generosity helps us continue to meet the unique needs of our members. We are so thankful to get to count her among the people who believe in us and choose to offer their support!

Volunteer Spotlight

In our first virtual Ambassador of Hospitality Circle held during the pandemic, Jan and Steve Kukic listened thoughtfully to their fellow volunteers, chiming in now and again with encouraging thoughts. When they chose to speak, it was to share joyous news about getting to see their grandson during this time of social isolation. Even from a distance, their loving and supportive presences came through. It is clear that they choose to live their lives with integrity and intentionality, demonstrating the same principles that guide Recovery Café Longmont in its mission.

During a recent conversation, Steve shared that he loves the dual mission of refuge and recovery that Recovery Café Longmont is built around. He sees them as two intricately connected pieces, both crucial to a person's journey through substance use, mental health disorders, homelessness, or other challenges. Steve and Jan both have a close connection to the mission of Recovery Café. Their son and Steve's brother are both in recovery from substance use disorders. While these personal connections are one of the reasons the Kukics stay so involved with Recovery Café, there are others that draw them as well. One key reason is a chance to get to know others and experience the shared humanity that connects us all.

Steve & Jan Kukic



"Our involvement with Recovery Café teaches us to view the challenges others face with empathy and the knowledge that we can never fully understand their complexities. We love getting to know our members as our sisters and brothers on our mutual life journeys," Steve explains.

"We are retired and are able to volunteer together, which we love," says Jan. "Our commitment to Recovery Café energizes us to continue to know, work with, and advocate for those whose life experiences and challenges are especially overwhelming without the strength and hope community brings to all involved."

Recovery Café Longmont is so lucky to have these two dedicated volunteers. They have happily stepped into many roles at the Café: Café Cooks, Ambassadors of Hospitality, all-around advocates, and (in Steve's case) a member of the board. Whatever volunteer hats they're wearing on a given day, it is always a pleasure to have them in the Café, sharing their gifts with members, volunteers, and staff alike!

IMPACT REPORT

MAY - DECEMBER 2019

RECOVERY CAFÉ LONGMONT OPENED FOR SERVICES ON MAY 29, 2019. THE FOLLOWING SERVICES WERE PROVIDED THROUGH THE END OF 2019:

- 176 unique guest visits
- 82 members enrolled
- 2,100 nutritious meals
- 4,200 cups of coffee
- 60 School for Recovery classes
- 52 Recovery Circles
- 2,880 volunteer hours

IN 2019, MEMBERS REPORTED:

100% say feelings of hope increased • 87% say housing improved • 87% say coping skills improved • 100% say mental health improved • 100% feel a sense of belonging to the Recovery Café community



“Having faith in yourself is a big key to recovery and it can be hard to find. Digging out of the depths of ruins is hard but it can be done.”

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Recovery Café
LONGMONT

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