

In the spring of 2010, a small, dedicated, courageous group of people with diverse professional backgrounds and lived experiences – peers in recovery and allies – came together to create The North Central Vermont Recovery Center. The founders received NCVRC's 501c3 nonprofit certificate on September 9th and on November 1st, they opened the doors to a 1410 square foot space owned by the Demars family in the middle of Morrystown along a busy road, but somewhat hidden and private at the same time. The building, which is still NCVRC's home and was expanded to nearly 2000 sq. ft in 2014, is rather non-descript from the outside. It's like a giant storage container with bright metal siding. As I arrive at the center, I sometimes wonder what first-time visitors think awaits them inside and if they can imagine the healing, warm, homey space contained within that rough exterior. To me the center is like Narnia in that you enter a different world, a world of possibilities, when you cross the threshold greeted rather simply by the word "Hope" above the door. The building strikes me as an apt metaphor for recovery. Recovery is something beautiful and full of promise and potential that one can only experience by moving forward, one step at a time, one day at a time, and by crossing the threshold guided by hope for a better life. NCVRC has now been providing hope and connection in the Lamoille Valley for 10 years.

At its core, NCVRC's mission is to provide a safe, welcoming, substance-free environment for individuals and families on their paths to lasting recovery from alcohol and drug addiction. But it's become much more than that. Today, what we do, and who we are, is more than just a place. NCVRC is a supportive community of peers and peer-professionals - currently eight staff members, twenty-five recovery coaches, six emergency department recovery coaches, and seven board members strong. We also rely heavily on dozens of remarkable volunteer ambassadors who do everything from greeting people as they come in to answering phones and cooking meals and facilitating groups. Each of us stands on the shoulders and find hope in the example of all those who came before us, the people who have given of themselves to be of service to one another and to help the center survive and grow and thrive. In a few months, due to our partnership with Jenna's Promise that was recently described as "a match made in heaven," we will open a brand new satellite facility at Jenna's House in Johnson which will amplify and extend what we already do while adding groundbreaking, paradigm shifting new services and resources. Among the many additions are our Moms in Recovery Support Program, our Health and Wellness Program, and our new fitness center.

Thanks to a combination of grants and contributions from the community - from individuals, families, and businesses - all of our programs and services are provided free of charge to anyone who seeks them. There are no prerequisites or waiting lists to walk through our doors, and we are open every day of the year.

Of course, the Covid pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for the people we serve and for us as an organization, as it has for everyone. We have been serving more people in more ways without interruption while also having to invest in technology to deliver remote and hybrid services, supplies to operate safely, and additional staff hours as many of our volunteers are taking a break to care for their families. This has placed strain on our resources in a year when we could have no in-person fundraisers, no anniversary events, and when many of the individuals, businesses, and foundations we rely on for support are struggling. Isolation, financial strain, the loss of jobs, and other challenges presented by the pandemic have led to a significant increase in overdoses, alcohol consumption, relapses, and other adverse outcomes throughout Vermont. But we have risen to the occasion, evolving and growing and thriving against all odds to serve our community. Among the many ways we have adapted to the needs, since March we have distributed 365 Harm Reduction to go Packs, more than 1,500 doses of Narcan, and nearly 3,000 fentanyl test strips to detect the drug involved in 88% of all overdose fatalities. At least seven Lamoille County residents are alive today as a result of having Narcan from our HRP's, and others might yet have a chance because of these. They contain not only life-saving supplies but also information about how to access all kinds of resources from medical care to employment to food. Meanwhile, we have provided a home for many groups shuttered by public facility closures, we have served thousands of Lamoille county residents and the number of coaching sessions we have provided has increased by 35% over 2019 through November. Finally, we have three times as many recovery coaches, four times as many staff members, and four times the operating expenditures as two years ago. We are growing and adapting to meet the needs of our community while realizing innovative and holistic programs and services to help individuals and families affected by substance use. As much as we are responding to the needs of the present, we are also looking with vision and ambition to the future and how to meaningfully and sustainably impact the lives of people affected by substance use.

While we will not be able to put out a traditional Annual Appeal this year with our efforts dedicated to serving the community, and while we acknowledge that we are all affected by the toll the Covid pandemic has taken, if you have the capacity to help NCVRC sustain and grow its ability to serve our community, every dollar you invest will mean more than ever for us. You will be a part of something truly special through the unique and life-changing services we will be able to offer. You too will provide hope for our community.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us save and change lives over our first decade.



Daniel J. Franklin
Executive Director

