

AROUND TOWN

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Come Walk With Me featured speaker Yolanda Walker and life coach Leon Stewart.



Springs Recovery Connection CEO Trudy Hodges and El Paso County Coroner Leon Kelly.



PHOTOS BY LINDA NAVARRO, THE GAZETTE
Springs Recovery Connection coach Steven Webb and Pamela Brinker, author of "Conscious Bravery," at the Come Walk With Me Breakfast.



Guests see the new Recovery Community Center for Springs Recovery Connection.



The family: Dolores Walker, left, Carl Liverman, featured speaker Yolanda Walker holding granddaughters Leilani and Asionna, Sade McInnis, Jada McInnis and Zhane McInnis.



Joanie Haley, left, and Connie Christofferson at the Springs Recovery Connection fundraiser.

Forces are coming together to help those with substance use disorder

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It was a time they could share a long-awaited announcement and cheer together heartily, sometimes tearfully, for the almost 650 supporters and volunteers at the Aug. 24 Come Walk With Me Breakfast.

Just 13 days earlier, funding had been secured and Springs Recovery Connection had closed on a building for a collaborative Recovery Community Center for substance use disorder, one of only 26 such accredited centers in the country. SRC staff would start the move immediately into the former Boy Scouts building at 985 W. Fillmore St., near Interstate 25, CEO Trudy Hodges said. It will be operational this month and an estimated 20

community partners and programs begin services there in the fall and early winter.

Recovery programs will include mental health (Diversus), help finding housing, health and legal services, Medicaid (Colorado Community Health Alliance), yoga and many other "sober living partners."

Hodges smiled through tears as she told those in the Antlers Hotel ballroom, "I personally thank you for sharing this time with us, for sharing your resources, for partnering with us, and in this moment for joining with us in solidarity to face this challenge to end substance use disorder in our community."

Hodges explained that the center had been envisioned years ago by SRC founder Cathy Plush as the place where those starting their walk toward addiction recovery could find a one-stop location with the different services needed.

"This model is collaborative, it builds a continuum of care. It is part of a larger systemic change" when those suffering addictions are "open to the possibility and hope

of recovery for themselves," said Hodges.

Springs Recovery Connection is where it begins, when someone makes that decision to seek help and start their journey. That totals more than 2,000 this year alone. For some, it is in the emergency room when a SRC peer counselor receives a call from medical personnel to visit the patient and offer support if it is wanted. Or just to talk if that's the request. Others call the SRC themselves. Then it's up to those callers, with support from the SRC peer coaches, life coaches and recovery coaches who have made that journey themselves.

"They are now in recovery and well-trained coaches," said Hodges. There is no charge for services.

Featured speaker Yolanda Walker took a deep breath during Come Walk With Me, making her first public speaking appearance. She's a mother and grandmother and an alcoholic in recovery.

Walker shared that she had been sick and her family, especially her mother, wanted to send her to the

emergency room. Walker refused. And then her 3-year-old granddaughter brought her the remedy, a shot glass, filled. Her life changed in that instant.

In the ER, Walker had a visitor, SRC life coach Leon Stewart, who visited with her, gave her his card and said it was up to her to reach out to him if she wanted. Walker went into detox.

"I'm a different person today," Walker said. "One year, five months and 21 days sober." And the ballroom exploded into cheers during a standing ovation.

Walker's family and life coach Stewart were there to share her success. "Thank you for walking the walk with me," she told everyone.

County Coroner Leon Kelly told Walker he, too, was very proud of her. Others didn't find that same success, he pointed out, noting, "227 members of our community lost their lives to substance abuse last year. Ninety-nine were for fentanyl alone."

Kelly said it is personal for him because his Irish Grandpa Kelly

was "a severe alcoholic" who died of cirrhosis. Kelly said that sadly the family emotion when Grandpa Kelly died "was relief" because of the man's abuse and how he treated all of them. Even his wife. When a family member cried at the funeral, said Kelly, there was no grieving the man, it was grieving the life that could have been.

Recovery, said Kelly, "is not about surviving death, it is about enabling life."

Hodges asked for any of those present to stand if they, like Hodges and Kelly, "have close friends, family members or if you yourself are affected by the disease of substance use disorder." It was almost unanimous.

"Take a look around you," Hodges invited. "This room of individuals represents the breadth of society affected by this illness. Together we can open the pathways to prevention and recovery."

During the breakfast more than \$200,000 was raised toward a \$236,000 goal and donations are still being received. (srchope.org)



Patsy Thompson, left, and Peg Rotarmel.



From left, Cody Odden, Priscilla Pfeifer, Michelle Knutson and Andrea Wood.



From left, Sathya McClain, Sparkle Lindsay, Springs Recovery Connection founder Cathy Plush, Laura Lindermuehler and Jason Angel.

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