

# The restorative practice of community circles

April 7, 2021 [John Peters II Opinion 0](#)

By Charlotte Reeves Guest Columnist



*Editor's Note: This is one of a series of columns to be shared with Mount Airy News readers by the Surry County Substance Abuse Recovery Office.*

What defines a “healthy community”?

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), residents of a healthy community have access to a quality education, safe and healthy homes, adequate employment, transportation, physical activity, nutrition, and quality health care and experience low crime rates. In our own county, many agencies and individuals work hard to achieve this goal of a healthy community. But life is unpredictable and sometimes even the greatest of efforts don't result in the best outcomes.

As earthly occupants we all share in both the beautiful and unpleasant parts of life. Members of a healthy community accept that it is their moral responsibility to change, or at least mitigate, occurrences that limit the beauty and enhance the unpleasant. During that process, occasionally we realize we have been working alongside the problem's perpetrator. In that moment, there exists an enormous amount of power and possibility.

One of the most unpleasant experiences of being human is substance use disorder (SUD). National and local statistics reflecting the rapidly rising trend of behavioral health disorders have documented a decade of heartbreak. Preventing, intervening, and treating these disorders, the problems they predicate, are essential to the evolution of the “healthy community.”

Healthy communities are not born, but rather are nurtured over years of hard work, struggle, and sacrifice. In the same manner, so does one who suffers from SUD accomplish recovery. Healthy communities recognize that behavior health disorders are manifested over years and require years of effort to resolve. The result though is a vibrant and productive citizen, which the essential element comprising the healthy community.

How can we, as builders of our healthy community, help others who suffer from behavioral health disorders? What can we do to prevent these disorders from occurring in the first place? Simply being there, is the first to helping resolve their conflicts and problems. The concept of “Community Circles” enhance one citizens ability to provide that necessary helping hand, essentially multiplying and broadening this essential support network by combining the skills, talents, gifts and resources of the entire community to focus on improving the health of the individual.

This amazing and inspiring concept recognizes that all of us have both special gifts and essential needs. The concept of reciprocity, or “paying it forward” is an energizing and motivating force. Community circles provide us the opportunity gather and reveal our understanding about behavior, emotions, and the impact our actions on those we care about.

Surry County Substance Abuse Recovery will host virtual community circles on April 20 from 1:30 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. and April 22, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. During these virtual community circle sessions, the Surry County Substance Abuse Recovery will gather information about the following topics:

- What are the most important mental health and/or substance abuse issues in Surry County?
- What are the barriers to receiving mental health and/or substance abuse services?
- What are some solutions to overcome these barriers?
- If you were to design mental health and/or substance use services here, what would they look like?
- If you or someone you know, use substance use services, what was the experience like?

Your input is valuable to us. Please visit our website at [surrycountycares.com](http://surrycountycares.com) to register for these events. The number of participants will be limited. Charlotte Reeves at [reevesc@co.surry.nc.us](mailto:reevesc@co.surry.nc.us) to learn more about this event.

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