

'We all need to stand up and do something'

By [Outer Banks Voice](#) on February 2, 2022

At Cross Roads, Teresa Clarkin fights the addiction battle

By Maggie Miles | Outer Banks Voice



Teresa Clarkin overcame her own long struggle with addiction.

After taking her first drink as a teenager, Teresa Clarkin battled with addiction to drugs and alcohol for 30 years. She got clean in 2003 and stayed that way for seven years until she suffered an injury in 2010 and was prescribed pain pills. This led to her falling back into addiction for a year-and-a-half until she became suicidal and got help in 2012. She now has nine years sober.

Clarkin's son Sean battled his own addiction to heroin for many years until he joined his mother in recovery in 2020. He had 14 months clean until he relapsed in May 2021. According to Clarkin, it was Fentanyl that killed him. He was 28 years old. Sean, she notes, was one of four men out of his friend group that grew up in Nags Head together who have died from Fentanyl overdoses in the past few years.

One year ago, Clarkin, along with Della Gill, who helped Clarkin overcome addiction, founded Cross Roads, an Outer Banks non-profit on the frontlines of helping those struggling with substance abuse disorder find the help they need.

“My take on it is that our streets on this beach are flooded with a lot of deadly substances and we all need to stand up and do something,” Clarkin told the Voice. “Don’t turn your head from people.”

Clarkin, a trained peer support specialist, is constantly making house calls to those who need immediate help. The process begins when she gets a call from someone struggling and seeking help for themselves or from a referral. If they agree to treatment upon her arrival, she starts that process. She helps them find somewhere to go and she and her volunteers provide rides, even if it’s as far as a few states away. They also find emergency housing for a few days if someone can’t get into treatment right away.

And according to Clarkin, once people get out of treatment, Cross Roads helps them with whatever they need while they are getting back on their feet — whether that’s providing clothing, taking them to get groceries, helping make sure they have what they need for their children, or picking up the phone when they need support or advice. Cross Roads also offers a grief group, a narcanon group and a twelve-step group.

The nonprofit describes itself as faith based, but Clarkin makes it clear they accept everyone and don’t force any beliefs on anyone. If the person is interested, Cross Roads works toward connecting individuals in need with a Christ-centered “Friend” to help guide them throughout the recovery process. Clarkin says finding a higher power was a key part of her personal recovery.

At the time of her interview with the Voice, Clarkin had received eight calls from people in crisis in just the previous few days. They had just driven a 26-year-old man to treatment in New Jersey and Clarkin is now headed to drop off food to a 50-something man at the laundromat while they wait on a bed for him. Both men were addicted to Fentanyl-laced heroine and have overdosed a number of times.

According to Roxana Ballinger, co-chair of the Saving Lives Task Force, this is happening more and more, with Fentanyl being added to other drugs such as counterfeit pills, cocaine, heroin, meth and even marijuana without the user knowing. But Clarkin also notes that once people experience a drug with the Fentanyl added, they start seeking it out.

“They tell me it’s the best high they’ve ever had,” says Clarkin. “It’s horrifying. I remember what it was like to have a mind of an addict, whether it be drugs or alcohol. Alcohol just takes longer on the body. Fentanyl there are no second chances,” says Clarkin. “If it had been around when I was using, I might not be here.”

Clarkin says the only reason the 26-year-old survived was because the family in whose home he was happened to have Naloxone, the so-called rescue drug used in the

emergency treatment of opioid overdoses. She and all of her volunteers are trained in administering it. She even walked into a local bank recently and distributed it there. Dare County EMS has just released their end-of-year Naloxone reports and it shows an increase in the number of times first responders had to administer Naloxone (also known as Narcan) in their emergency response visits throughout the county. The number went from 34 in 2019 to 54 in 2021, although that clearly doesn't tell the whole story.

"It definitely is significant, in that the numbers have gone up in North Carolina as a whole too, and Dare County is certainly a part of that," says Roxana Ballinger. She attributes the increase to a multitude of things, including Covid-19, more people being unemployed and not able to get a job, heightened stress, mental health issues, suicide, and depression.

There is a network of organizations on the Outer Banks working to combat addiction and overdose in the community. Peer specialists from the [Dare County Health and Human Services Department](#) trained Clarkin in Naloxone administration and are helping her apply for grants. When Clarkin needs help with things like getting her clients into an Oxford House, she calls [Interfaith Community Outreach](#), and when she needs help getting people into detox or longer-term treatment, she calls [Mobile Crisis](#) or [PORT Health](#).

Cross Roads is working on applying for grants but so far, much of its revenue comes through donations. Clarkin asked for donations to Cross Roads for her wedding in September 2021 and for her son's funeral, in lieu of gifts and flowers. She has been using that money for the hotels, groceries, clothing and gas for the rides they give. She wants to change the stigma. And she wants to honor her son.

"Like myself, my son didn't say I'm going to wake up and die today, and I didn't wake up one day and say I'm going to become an alcoholic so bad that I'm going to lose my license and have my kids taken away from me. This is an addiction. This is a disease of the brain. It's just as serious as diabetes," says Clarkin. "And if I can do anything about it, I'm not going to let another kid die from Fentanyl or anything else."

[Cross Roads OBX](#) will host a fundraiser called "The Main Event" to be held on April 1, 2022, at Liberty Christian Fellowship, 244 Williams Drive, Kill Devil Hills, NC.