



# Lost Dreams Awakening

A Recovery Community Organization

*Living Proof That Recovery Is Possible*

## Timeline of Accomplishments

### 2009-2013

- Lost Dreams Awakening (LDA) co-founders hosted the first community-wide Recovery Walk during National Recovery Month for the Alle-Kiski Region, introducing the concept of “recovering out loud” to the community.
- LDA co-founders nurtured the vision of opening a Westmoreland County Recovery Community Organization (RCO) by volunteering and fundraising for Message Carriers of Pennsylvania, Inc., a Pittsburgh-based RCO which served as LDA’s mentor and guide.

### 2014

- LDA opened the doors as **the first RCO in Westmoreland County, PA**. It occupied a 400 square foot space on “Recovery Row” — a block in downtown New Kensington, PA that is home to outpatient facilities and medication-assisted treatment clinics. With tables and chairs donated from Wendy’s, LDA enlisted an entirely volunteer staff to provide peer recovery support free of charge to anyone who walked in the door.
- Hosted first annual fashion show fundraiser, “Recovery: It’s a Family Affair,” showcasing families in recovery; first annual Thanksgiving Meal; and first annual Kindness for Kids event, providing Christmas gifts for the recovery community’s children.
- LDA became a member of the Association of Recovery Community Organizations (ARCO) through Faces & Voices of Recovery (FAVOR).
- Co-founders trained by CCAR and **launch the LDA Recovery Coach Academy**.



*It’s my home away from home. The LDA Recovery Community Center is where we mourn and celebrate. I couldn’t imagine not having this building and this facility. —Jessica*



*We believe that once a person puts down a substance, all their old dreams that got buried from substance use disorder are now back on the table.*

*—Dr. VonZell Wade, LDACo-Founder*

### 2015

- Expanded the Recovery Coach Academy to train individuals, family members, allies, and community stakeholders in recovery coaching.
- Mobilized the local recovery community and chartered buses to attend the Facing Addiction event in Washington, DC, the first time in our nation’s history that recovering people from across the nation gathered to “recover out loud” on the National Mall. Thousands attended along with LDA, whose group included the oldest living substance use disorder family peer support member in the nation, 99 year-old Zoey. She traveled with LDA to represent family recovery — a concept that would grow in popularity in the coming years. LDA screened the award-winning *Anonymous People* film en route.
- Expanded the Recovery Community Center and added a Certified Recovery Family Specialist volunteer.

### 2016

- The opioid epidemic hits Southwestern Pennsylvania and the governor of Pennsylvania issued an Executive Order mandating the implementation of warm hand offs across that state. LDA mobilized to respond.
- LDA trained over 200 healthcare providers from the Allegheny Valley Hospital in the Allegheny Health Network in understanding substance use disorder, addiction and on recovery, warm hand off protocols, recovery-oriented systems of care, stigma, and the continuum of care.
  - » Supported people who experience opioid overdoses with warm handoffs — achieving a 99% success rate of connecting people with treatment services.
  - » Launched Family Grief Support Group for those who lost loved ones to opioid use disorder.
  - » Became a trainer for administering Narcan/Naloxone.



# Timeline of Accomplishments



*LDA gave me a chance to be a father, which I didn't know how to do when I first got here... They gave me a chance to be the dad I always wanted to be.*  
—James

## 2017

- Demand for recovery support services doubles. With a grant from Staunton Farm Foundation, LDA doubled responded with more services.
- Andre Johnson, Executive Director of the Detroit Recovery Project and Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy (BRSS TACS) technical assistance provider, mentored LDA's leadership. The LDA Board of Directors traveled to Detroit to study the Detroit Recovery Project, meeting with Dr. Trent and Andre Johnson.
- Faces and Voices of Recovery invited to Laurie Johnson-Wade to travel to Washington, DC and meet with the Office on National Drug Control Policy and give input on recovery support services. Laurie was one of five people chosen across the nation to meet with the Drug Czar.
- Commissions SaltWorks, a professional theatre company, to collaborate with LDA volunteers to perform a recovery production as the **LDA Hope Squad** at the First Recovery Symposium held at Penn State University. The Hope Squad also performs at treatment facilities and community events across the Commonwealth.



*LDA actually gave me my life back. I can be a mom today. A daughter. I'm employable. It gave me hope.*  
—Claudia

## 2018

- With technical assistance support from BRSS TACS, LDA's Recovery Coach Academy pioneers and launched the first ever dual certification for recovery coaches, which combines the Pennsylvania Certification Board Certified Recovery Specialist and the CCAR Recovery Coach certifications. The RCA dual certificate program helps Pennsylvania's Single County Authorities (SCAs) enhance the state's peer recovery support workforce.
- LDA hosted its first intern from Allegheny County Community College Drug & Alcohol Program, who created a presentation capturing the work of LDA and introduced VIA strengths-based program. The intern later became LDA's Advisor to the Board.

## 2019

- LDA mentored recovery leaders in the Tri-County area, who opened the first rural RCO in Indiana County, PA, now known as the Indiana County Recovery Center (originally SpiritLife Recovery Community Center), a faith-based, nonprofit recovery center anchored in the heart of downtown Indiana. LDA leaders served on its Board of Directors.



*Those of us who are in recovery face a darkness in our lives. Along with that comes a lot of stigma. Everyone tells you, 'You should get your life together,' but then nobody really wants to help you, give you a chance, trust you, or see if you're a good employee. We try to give people that chance.*  
—Dr. VonZell Wade

## 2020

- **January 2020**— LDA opened a Wellness Center to enhance the physical health dimension of recovery for the community, offering 24/7 access with a new fob system.
- **March 2020**— The COVID-19 global pandemic hits. LDA responded by keeping the Recovery Community Center open to all, following CDC public health guidelines. During the stay-at-home orders, many recovery support groups in the region stop meeting fact to face. LDA remained open, serving a critical need for many, especially those leaving inpatient treatment facilities and in need of connection to stay on the recovery path.
- LDA received 7,000 visits during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Received COVID-19 emergency funding from the Staunton Farm Foundation to create a Peer Workforce Evolvement and Supervision Program, designed to support peer recovery coaches during the stay at home orders. The program taught peer workers how to use Zoom, make the transition to providing virtual peer support, and support emotional well-being during the pandemic.
- Launched a virtual, 6-week Peer Recovery Support Workforce Training Program combined ongoing supervision. LDA provided volunteers with computers, resources, and training in skills and competencies to provide strengths-based support to enhance resiliency during difficult times.
- Received a COVID-19 County Relief Block Grant from Westmoreland County and Covid-19 Emergency Action Funds from the Pittsburgh Foundation.



# Timeline of Accomplishments

- Received the Recovery Friendly Workplace designation from the U.S. Department of Labor.
- In the wake of the public killing of George Floyd, LDA offered diversity, equity, and inclusion support to the recovery community.
- LDA joined the Black Faces Black Voices, USA and the African American Federation of Recovery Organizations.
- **September 2020**—Laurie Johnson-Wade named [Recovery Advocate of the Year](#) by the Pittsburgh Recovery Walk and received a commendation from the Pittsburgh City Council.
- Partnered with the Allegheny Health Foundation and the Neighborhood Resiliency Project as Health Deputies to reach peers and communicate accurate information around the Covid-19 vaccine to the recovery community.
- Dr. VonZell Wade, LDA Co-Founder, received the Message Carriers of Pennsylvania Tree of Life Award for Outstanding leadership in the Recovery Community.



*I get tears saying this, but I know that I'm never going to be alone. I know I'll always have a home with Lost Dreams Awakening. I know I can do anything with them.* —Nicole

## 2021

- Pennsylvania's Recovery Rising Commission invited LDA to participate as an Advisory Committee member. LDA attended all regional meetings of experts and stakeholders, provided leadership for a consensus-building event, and guided development and implementation of a framework for change that embraced a unified vision. LDA successfully advocated for prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Message Carriers of Pennsylvania, Inc., closed its doors and named LDA to receive its non-monetary assets and assume stewardship of the Pittsburgh Recovery Community, expanding LDA's reach into Allegheny County.
- LDA hosted Pamela Woll, Senior Consultant for the African American Behavioral Health Center of Excellence at Morehouse School of Medicine. LDA hosted 50 participants from 10 different prevention, treatment, and recovery organizations and who are trained and equipped with the Healing History Discussion and Study Guide to bring back to their organizations and facilitate systems change in PA.



*Laurie Johnson Wade is an inspiring advocate and person in recovery! The Co-Founder of Lost Dreams Awakening, she is a nationally-respected expert on building recovery capital and recovery community organizations.*

—First Lady Kathryn Burgum, North Dakota

- Laurie Johnson-Wade presented a tribute to William White at the Faces and Voices of Recovery 20th Anniversary Recovery Leadership Summit. Written by Pamela Woll, the tribute recognized William White's transformative vision and his exhaustive efforts on behalf of people with SUD. The Pennsylvania Recovery Organizations Alliance underwrote the tribute.
- LDA participated in the "Passing the Mic-Centering the Other" workshop, leading a dialogue about the dominant culture and the recovery movement, the colorization of the recovery experience. The event provided space for telling the "other" stories, authentic conversation about multiple pathways and healing circles. Dr. Dietra Hawkins facilitated the workshop, featuring Joe Powell, Director of Association of Persons Affected by Addiction, TX; Laurie Johnson-Wade, Director of Lost Dreams Awakening, PA; and Dr. Angelia Smith Wilson, Director of Friends of Recovery, NY.
- Laurie Johnson-Wade was a keynote speaker at the Recovery Reinvented event in North Dakota (October 2021), alongside other leaders in the field. This event was hosted by North Dakota's First Lady Kathryn Burgum.
- Lost Dreams Awakening received the 2021 Organizational Champion of Service Award at the Annual Leadership in Recovery Banquet, held by PA Recovery Organization Alliance (PRO- A).
- LDA received a Designation of Recognition as a Recovery Friendly Workplace.

## 2022

- Lost Dreams Awakening RCO continued with 2021 funding from the Staunton Farm Foundation to expand the BIPOC Peer Workforce to provide Recovery Support Service delivery.
- LDA Ubuntu Recovery, a community-based recovery pathway, based on the ancient African philosophy of Ubuntu, continued to be developed by LDA Co-Founder, Laurie Johnson-Wade.



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*LDA Ubuntu Circles have created space for community conversations and pragmatic approaches to find Harm Reduction for Humanity strategies. We intentionally include input from people who use drugs in our Ubuntu Circles.*

—Laurie Johnson-Wade, LDA Co-Founder

- LDA expanded Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (JEDI) efforts to provide education and advocacy in the Recovery Ecosystem (Prevention, Harm Reduction, Treatment, and Recovery) and connect systems. LDA leaders served on local, state, and national JEDI committees for systems change, while highlighting shared humanity and dispelling the illusion of separateness.
- LDA was chosen to participate in a Recovery Research Institute RCO and well-being study, in partnership with Penn State.
- Ubuntu Recovery Received National Recognition-LDA Co-founder, Laurie Johnson-Wade was a Keynote Presenter of Ubuntu Recovery at the Multiple Pathways of Recovery Conference: (MPRC), Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs, CO.
- LDA named as one of the first 25 in the country to receive the SAMHSA Harm Reduction Grant.
- LDA Board of Directors voted to approve facility expansion and enhanced Harm Reduction Support Services.
- LDA Co-Founders helped to develop Kent State's Collegiate Recovery Program.
- LDA Co-Founders invited to participate on a Congressional Panel for Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care.
- LDA Co-Founder, Dr. VonZell Wade is featured as a Keynote at the Crisis Management Summit at UPMC (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center).
- Lost Dreams Awaken hosted back to School Bash.
- LDA Co-founders featured as Keynote speakers at Pennsylvania's State Capitol for Recovery Advocacy Day in September.
- LDA Co-Founder, Dr. VonZell Wade participated in SAMHSA's Office of Recovery; Yesterday and Today convening.
- LDA was named one of five in the USA for PCORI Project, in partnership with Black Faces Black Voices and Community Catalyst.

- LDA Co-Founder, Dr. VonZell Wade featured panelist on Harm Reduction at Carnegie Mellon University.
- LDA Co-Founder, nationally recognized as a Pioneer in Back Recovery by Black Faces, Black Voices.
- Lost Dreams Awaken onboarded its first eight Recovery Coaches and Recovery Coach Lead.
- LDA Grand Reopening and Harm Reduction for Humanity Program Launch.

## 2023

- LDA hosted the first Statewide - Pennsylvania Harm Reduction for Humanity Conference – the conference sold out and a Zoom feature was added to accommodate the overflow. A successful first for LDA RCO.
- LDA was recognized by the City of Pittsburgh Mayor's Office with a Proclamation recognizing its outstanding Harm Reduction work and proclaimed April 4, 2023, as Harm Reduction for Humanity Day in the City of Pittsburgh.
- LDA received the SAMHSA Building Communities of Recovery (BCOR) Grant to expand and advance the work of BIPOC Recovery Coaches in the community; and provide access to Recovery Support Services via a mobile Recovery Community Tour.
- LDA Co-Founder, Dr. VonZell Wade, received the Staunton Farm Foundation Albert B. Craig, Jr. Award for Innovation in Behavioral Health.
- LDA participated in its first Pittsburgh PRIDE Parade and developed the LDA Rainbow Recovery Support Program with the LGBTQA2S+ Community.
- LDA is designated as a LGBTQA2S+ Friendly RCO and Business.
- LDA Co-Founder, published the First Edition of Ubuntu Recovery Cards to support organizations in the facilitation of their own Ubuntu Recovery Circles.



*Everyone has inside of them a piece of good news. The good news is that you don't know how great you can be! How much you can love! What you can accomplish! And what your potential is!*

—Anne Frank