

## The Daily Advocate

# Darke County has first FOA meeting

By Carolyn Harmon

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Founding Director of Families of Addicts (FOA) Lori Erion (left) greets the crowd at the inaugural Darke County Chapter FOA meeting in Greenville, Thursday, June 15. The Darke County FOA Director is Jackie Wittler (right), and her husband Daniel (center) was there for support.

**“We are the ones who can change that conversation from problem to solution. We are the ones who can lift up those in recovery - that people can and do get better. If your community doesn’t know that, if we don’t know that anybody is getting better, why would your community know that?”**

— Lori Erion, Founding Director of Families of Addicts (FOA)

GREENVILLE — Founding Director of Families of Addicts (FOA) Lori Erion thanked Betty Thompson and her daughter Diane Cundiff for having the voice and fortitude to get an FOA Chapter started in Darke County.

Thompson and Cundiff have been making the long trip to weekly FOA meetings, in Dayton, ever since around September of 2015, after they discovered that Cundiff’s son, Travis, was using Heroin. Travis sometimes attended the meetings with his family, but Heroin eventually took his life in September, 2016.

Erion kicked off the first Darke County Chapter FOA meeting in Greenville, Thursday, June 15, at St.

Paul’s Lutheran Church. FOA is a 501(c)(3) grass-roots recovery support initiative founded in Dayton, Ohio, working to reduce the stigma of addiction, ensure availability of adequate treatment/ recovery support services and to influence public opinion and

policy regarding the value of recovery. Erion said the number one thing that sets FOA apart from other groups, is that the members support anyone touched by addiction.

“It really is until families are completely broken and don’t know what else to do that they find FOA,” she said. “Shortly after I started FOA, I watched “The Anonymous People”, a feature documentary film about the

more than 23 million Americans living in long-term recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, who aren’t saying anything about it. We all need to talk about this. We haven’t made much progress in eliminating the stigma of addiction - changing the conversation from problem to solution. That is how we became an advocacy - filled group, where we are the basic voice for those who don’t have one. We are the ones who can change that conversation from problem to solution. We are the ones who can lift up those in recovery - that people can and do get better. If your community doesn’t know that, if we don’t know that anybody is getting better, why would your community know that?”

Erion went to explain that FOA is an organization of integrity.

“We might not agree with what everyone is doing; this is a very dramatic and chaotic environment to be in,” she said. But FOA is impartial. We believe that any pathway to recovery is one worth talking about. If someone is having success we want them to have that.

There are no answers and we are open to anything that is working.

Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but as an organization we are impartial. We are an organization of integrity where if we don’t approve or agree with what people are doing, we play nice with everyone because it is an opportunity for us to learn what is going on.

Lots of families need help. The families are here without much support. That is where we come in. I The Darke County FOA Director is Jackie Wittler, of Greenville.

She has been working with addicts and their families for awhile now.

Her own journey led to her passion for helping others.

“I am a recovering addict and alcoholic and am 18 years clean,” Wittler said. “I come from an alcoholic and drug addicted family and had a really rough childhood. I became the child that had to take care of the household.

My son Tyler, started when he was 14 and is now 28 and in treatment. My Tyler put me through a lot. I am excited because to be director I have a mission, and I can do what I can for the community. It has been a little challenging at first, but I think I am fitting in really well.”

Darke County FOA meetings will take place Thursdays, 7 - 8:30 p.m. at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, 131 E. 4th Street, Greenville.

Here is a link to the Facebook Page: [http://bit.ly/ 2rFiX1O](http://bit.ly/2rFiX1O)

To watch “The Anonymous People” documentary, visit <http://manyfaces1voice.org/>

*EDS NOTE: This story is part of an ongoing series titled "Fatal Addiction" that will address the drug problem and effects on residents and resources in Darke County.*

The writer may be reached at 937569-4354. Join the conversation and get updates on Facebook search Darke County Sports or Advocate 360. For more features online go to [dailyadvocate.com](http://dailyadvocate.com).