



Photos by Donna Rogers

Shawn Roberson, with CenterPoint Human Services, participates in the workshop "Soul Shop: Ministering to Suicidal Desperation" on April 21.



"Soul Shop: Ministering to Suicidal Desperation" helps faith-based community members identify suicidal people and assist them through conversations.

Suicide

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office on Deacon Boulevard. Northwest Area Health Education Center is an educational outreach and training program designed to enhance the health of the public in its 17-county region.

CareNet says there is a rising tide of suicide in the area. Soul Shop is a suicide prevention training program and includes a daylong training session specifically designed to train church leaders, clergy, program staff, lay ministers, office staff and faith-based therapists to detect the signs of someone contemplating suicide and possibly save his or her life. The program also trains church leaders how to minister to surviving family members after a suicide and offers advanced training on the subject.

The issues are, how do you identify people who are thinking about suicide and how do church leaders and lay people help someone who is thinking about it?

"You have to ask the question," said Fe Anam Avis, the facilitator for the workshop. He is with the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute, which administers Soul Shop training. He uses the Bible throughout the training to show that "God CALLS us to minister to those impacted by suicidal desperation." He used the acronym CALL: Commit, Ask, Listen and Lead to safety and leave in good hands.

If you find out that someone is

suicidal, what would you do? Avis led those who attended the workshop through steps in helping suicidal people through various conversation points and allowed the participants to create public prayers that

"Having this workshop opens people's eyes at churches."

-Shawn Roberson

included the word suicide. He warned that often it takes a long time for people to overcome suicidal desperation.

One of the phrases used in the training is Second Day people. These are people who have overcome suicidal desperation. Saulpaugh is one. She said it took her 18 months to overcome her suicidal desperation. She said a therapist similar to ones at CareNet Counseling saved her life.

Saulpaugh said the response to

the four Soul Shop workshops "has been phenomenal."

Shawn Roberson, who attended the workshop, is another Second Day person. She is with CenterPoint Human Services, a nonprofit that oversees all the behavioral providers and Medicaid. The nonprofit has a division that offers an emergency response to people who plan to kill themselves.

Roberson said working with suicidal people when she was like that "is no problem." It took her three years to overcome her suicidal desperation. She said she did it with a supportive church family, the teaching at the church and a lot of prayer, affirmations, declarations and "a lot of psychological thoughts taught about the mind."

She said she stood on the Bible verse Psalm 118:17: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

Avis presented a section of the workshop devoted to working with families of people who have committed suicide. He said family members who are left behind after people commit suicide are more likely to commit suicide than those who have not experienced suicide in the family.

The Rev. Kathy Johnson, pastor of Greater Shekinah Glory Church in Hickory, said her church brought people to the workshop because "we realize that this is an epidemic." She wants to equip herself and church.

Soul Shop training material

Training material related to the workshop "Soul Shop: Ministering to Suicidal Desperation" can be purchased through Barbara Saulpaugh, regional director with CareNet Counseling, for \$30. She says the Soul Shop training will return to the area at some point. Contact her at 336-716-0854 (phone); 336-716-0822 (fax); or bsaulpau@wakehealth.edu (email).

Lesson

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they could be interpreted as any who were powerless, vulnerable, or spiritually immature. Continuing His teaching, Jesus makes it clear that sin should be dealt with prudently. He warned of disastrous consequences of enticing others to sin and to also be careful in the way they handled circumstances in which their fellow believers committed misdeeds. The circumstances were not to be ignored, nor allowed to harden the faith community against the offenders. But those who were wronged were to censure the believer who sinned. The purpose of this is to lead the wayward believer to repentance ... to ultimately experience a change in heart that will result in a character of virtue and integrity. Jesus taught the disciples that forgiving should be extended an inexhaustible number of times. This is possible however, only when we ask the Lord to do the forgiving through us. The disciples were urged to live responsibly. They honestly acknowledged their own weakness and asked Jesus to increase their faith (Luke

17:5) Jesus told them to make effective use of the faith they already had because it was anchored to their belief in Him (Luke 17:6). Jesus proceeded to touch on dutiful service of a disciple. Noting that Christians are to be like servants who are willing to do their tasks, disciples are successful when they surrender to His will. He also pointed out that genuine humility was a mark of Christlikeness and humility was not to be used as an excuse for refusing to do their best. Not only is your best expected, but with the attitude as though the labor was for the Lord. (David C. Cook, Bible Lesson Commentary 2015-16)

For Your Consideration: What is so terrible about causing other believers to stumble spiritually? What does it mean to be a humble servant in God's kingdom?

Life's Application: Don't entice other believers to sin, forgive those who repent of their wrongdoing, use the faith you have and perform the duties you have with humility. That sounds like a lot, but it's what God expects of us. We are expected to be equitable and responsible in ministering to others and we accomplish this by entrusting our lives to Christ. Our hearts and minds must be willing and ready to obey Christ in all.

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