

HUGS Foundation helps families fighting chemical dependency

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After only four months of operation, the local nonprofit organization, HUGS Foundation, has helped support four families struggling with chemical dependency.

HUGS, which works to help families of chemical dependents find Hope, Understanding, Gratitude and Serenity, was founded by Lakewood resident Dianne Vogt in March to provide funds that can be used for treatment, travel expenses and other services not covered by insurance policies. Treating dependency is often overwhelming for families as many insurance companies do not cover treatment, either fully or partially.

"If we give money there's an expectation that the family we help will pay it forward in some way so that they will help another family struggling with addiction," Vogt said. "We don't have any expectation that they'll give the money back and we're not telling them what to do, but part of our program is paying it forward and that's what I'm doing."

Vogt's own son has struggled with addiction, and she attended numerous support meetings at

Oakview Behavioral Health Center where she conceptualized the foundation.

"People are put in our lives along the way when we were struggling with trying to help our son and I just have such gratitude that those people were there so this is really my way of giving back," she said.

Vogt and her nine-member board contact treatment centers within 100 miles of Cleveland and receive referrals when the centers have someone in need of extra treatment. The patient's family must fill out an application form and write a letter explaining their situation. The family must be very involved in the treatment since, according to Vogt, "treatment for chemical dependency doesn't work unless there's a lot of family involvement and support."

HUGS will host its first fundraiser Monday to help the organization provide financial support to the families of adolescents undergoing treatment for addiction recovery. The golf outing will include a two-for-the-price-of-one certificate to Stone Water Golf Course, a box lunch, Chinese raffle and ice cream social following the golfing.

"Recovery is a gift to be shared and multiplied and we're going to do whatever we need to do to raise the money to help with that," Vogt said. "We just want to be in a financial position to help these families."

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. with a 10 a.m. shotgun start. For more information, visit hugs4families.org.