

# The Mountain Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence

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*Tom Britton, MA, LPC, LCAS, CCS, ACS*

*The Mountain Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence is committed to promoting recovery for individuals, families, and communities to reduce the harmful impact caused by alcohol and drug dependency.*

In the spring of 2006, a small handful of providers in western North Carolina came together with a vision to return access to quality substance abuse services to the residents of this part of the state. The process of mental health reform in North Carolina from 2001-2006 had left deep wounds in the provider community which was reduced by more than half, a severe reduction in prevention services, a loss of most crisis services, and reductions in all vital resources to reduce and treat addiction. During the same time period, western North Carolina experienced significant increases in hospitalizations, a 16% increase in the county jail population, a 27% increase in the prison system population, and a 42% increase in chronic homelessness of substance abusers. The founding members had the strong conviction that solutions could be identified and implemented if a coalition could be built that established a network of relationships including law enforcement, providers, consumers, business, medical, and vital community stakeholders. From the volunteer efforts of the few and their own out-of-pocket contributions, the Mountain Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence (MCADD) was established. To this day, MCADD is fully self-supporting through volunteerism and small community contributions.

The early members of MCADD identified a strategy to address the issues and rebuild a continuum of care and coalition of providers that included provider network building, staff development, community education and outreach, and direct consultative support to the local law enforcement. The four primary members included Tom Britton, director of a local treatment center and director of the Council; state employee Jim Greer; state activist Bill Cook; and a person who was in recovery. Together they used their networks to bring together a strong inner core that established subcommittees to carry out MCADD's mission, including education, website design, event planning, strategic planning, and finance. Slowly the Council has grown to represent the community with over 100 members including law enforcement, social services, 12-step recovery groups, providers, consumers, and community members.

MCADD has provided nine low-cost training sessions to providers and countless no-charge trainings to law enforcement, community groups, and the state. The Council joined with the county jail to conduct research that demonstrated that between 60-70% of the locally incarcerated population were diagnosable as chemically dependent, most of whom committed addiction-related crimes. The research led to an increase of counseling services in the jail and several community projects to reduce recidivism rates for people struggling with addictions. Combined with community contributions, the Council has been awarded funds by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) two years in a row to hold a "Recovery Rocks the Mountains" event. The event draws approximately 400 people and includes a march to the county court house. The event is an important step in raising awareness around the importance of substance abuse treatment in our community. With over 23 million addicted people in this country we cannot ignore the problem, and without partnerships and education the Council fears that our people will die and our incarcerated population will only increase.

Under the direction of a new president, Marie Nemerov, MCADD is in a state of evolution that places it on the crest of actualizing its full mission through the successful acquisition of 501c3 nonprofit status. Over the past six months the Council has recruited a working board of key community leaders including a judge, entrepreneur, state leader, recovering persons, and three providers. The Council can no longer operate solely on volunteerism and is engaged in a vigorous strategic planning process that is focused on the needs of the community today. MCADD's goal for 2009 is to maintain the work of our committees that provide support and advocacy to consumers, providers, and the community while initiating a capital campaign to raise the monies needed to hire staff that can expand the work of MCADD to all of the Western Highlands Network, setting an example for the rest of the state of what can be done with committed people and a lot of sweat equity.

*For more information, please visit <http://nc-mcadd.org>, or contact the Council at 33 Coxe Avenue, PO Box 1564, Asheville, NC 28802; 828.398.2263.*

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