

# Parents Helping Parents: A place to turn in the toughest of times

Caleb Slinkard Transcript Editor | Posted: Saturday, October 10, 2015 9:59 pm

For parents whose children are struggling with drug or alcohol addiction, asking for help is a daunting task. That's where Parents Helping Parents can step in and educate, connect parents with local resources and provide emotional support.

The Norman chapter meets twice a month in the Education Center of Norman Regional Hospital, and is run completely by volunteers and funded by donations. It is the only organization in the state that focuses on the parents of children who are struggling with addiction.

"We believe in empowering parents through education," program chair Joan Cole said. "We have speakers who come in and share information and experience, and we have a lending library of over 200 titles that parents can check out for free and learn about the disease of addiction."

Parents Helping Parents also works to connect parents with local, state and national resources, and to offer support when needed. Donations from the United Way cover the program's most significant overhead — their cell phone bill. The United Way's donation frees up the organization's limited resources to purchase educational materials.

Cole said Parents Helping Parents meets with the Norman Police Department, the Norman Public Schools and local churches several times a year, because they understand addiction affects the entire community, and takes community partnerships to assist addicts in their recovery.

"This is a society issue," Cole said. "This is not something that the police need to take care of or parents need to just be better parents — it's something that affects the entire community. Good parents with good kids have children who use and abuse drugs and alcohol."

In the nine years Cole has been involved with Parents Helping Parents, she said she's seen the Norman community open up more about addiction.



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Mike Boss from Four Winds Ranch Recovery Center in Guthrie speaks at a Parents Helping Parents meeting in Norman. Parents Helping Parents focuses on providing education and resources to parents struggling children with drug and alcohol addictions.

“There is more openness in the community to talk about these issues,” she said. “You don’t have to have drug or alcohol addiction in your family to attend a Parents Helping Parents meeting — just come learn.”

Parents Helping Parents is free and open to the public. Their next meeting is scheduled for Oct. 22 and will feature Gail Box, mother of former OU football player Austin Box and founder of the Austin Box “12” Foundation. Austin died in 2011 due to a prescription drug overdose.

For more information about how to donate to Parents Helping Parents, visit [unitedwaynorman.org](http://unitedwaynorman.org).

Caleb Slinkard

366-3543

[editor@normantranscript.com](mailto:editor@normantranscript.com)

Follow me on Twitter at [@CalebSlinkard](https://twitter.com/CalebSlinkard)