



A MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN MEDICAL & DENTAL ASSOCIATIONS

CMDA.org/AMS

[About CMDA AMS](#)

[Contact AMS](#)

[Forum \(CMDA Go App\)](#)

[Support AMS](#)

Introduction

July 2022

CMDA's [Addiction Medicine Section](#) (AMS) is excited to share our second quarterly e-newsletter. In this edition, we focus on our friends and colleagues at CMDA's [Western New York Chapter](#), who have so wonderfully demonstrated what it means to *embrace recovery* as a community, through collaboration and coalition building. The recent visit of CMDA CEO Dr. Mike Chupp and Vice President of Campus & Community Ministries Rev. Bill Reichart to [Embrace Recovery](#), Buffalo, highlights the strengths and teachable attributes of their multi-tiered approach.

Additionally, the tragic [mass shooting](#), which immediately followed their visit, has further brought into focus the abiding faith, enduring spirit and resilient fortitude of our dear friends who united as a community to help Buffalo heal and recover during this difficult time.



Watch this interview from CMDA Western New York with CMDA CEO Dr. Mike Chupp.

Announcements

Join us for our **first** monthly online workshop!

Topic: "12 Step Programs from a Christ-centered, Faith-based Perspective"

Presenter: Dr. Don Middleton

Date: The next three workshops are August 10, September 7 and October 5 at 5 p.m. PT, 7 p.m. CT and 8 p.m. ET.

[August 10 Meeting Link](#)

[September 7 Meeting Link](#)

[October 5 Meeting Link](#)

Participate in our Panda Express National AMS Fundraiser!

We are excited to announce we've enrolled in Panda Express' online order fundraiser.

How? Order online for pick up or delivery on our workshop days and enter the fundraiser code.

[August 10 Fundraiser Page - Code 909249](#)

[September 7 Fundraiser Page - Code 909252](#)

[October 5 Fundraiser Page - Code 909250](#)

[November 9 Fundraiser Page - Code 909251](#)

[December 7 Fundraiser Page - Code 909253](#)

With this fundraiser, 28 percent of sales goes to the AMS to help us raise funds to build community with events and resources.

AMS Presents at CMDA National Convention

by Kurt Bravata, MD, FASAM
AMS Vice-chair

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1, KJV).

It was a truly wonderful experience attending the 2022 CMDA National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana earlier this spring. In fellowshiping with so many Christian healthcare professionals from various fields, it was clear to see that CMDA is an exceptionally big tent, a true tabernacle of faith, bringing together a diverse congregation of like-minded believers.

As representatives of the newly formed CMDA Addiction Medicine Section, our team was blessed to share our vision of maximizing this platform to go into every person's world, casting a wide net to draw the outcast and downtrodden from the highways and byways with the restorative message of Christ's redemptive grace. This gospel of the Great Commission was reinforced by Dallas Jenkins, the creator and director of *The Chosen*, who has brought to light the relatable personhood of Jesus Christ through his creative work. This series wonderfully depicts the Son of God, living as a man, subject to the same weaknesses and temptations we are, yet walking in the fullness and power of his heavenly authority as He fulfilled his mission to bring light and healing to a dark and dying world. Jesus overcame the stigmas and biases of His day, sitting down with the people that society and the religious leaders had deemed unholy and untouchable.



As Christians called to service, we accept the call to carry the yoke of Christ's ministry to the lost (Matthew 11:30). This calling was powerfully illustrated by CMDA CEO Dr. Mike Chupp during his address to the convention attendees. Together, by the power of the Holy Spirit, CMDA AMS is committed to fulfilling the Great Commission by bringing healing and recovery to our communities through clinical evidence-based addiction medicine and by fostering collaborative efforts between our family of faith and the neighbors we are called to serve.



About the Author

Kurt Bravata, MD, FASAM, grew up in a Christian home where his parents were involved in ministry outreaches to the poor, outcast and downtrodden. From a young age he was impressed by the joy and fulfillment of seeing lives restored and hope given to the hopeless. He determined early on that he wanted to follow Christ and make a real and lasting difference in people's lives. Although Dr. Bravata did not initially set out to become an addictionologist, he soon felt called by God to share His grace by helping to lead people out of lives of deeply rooted hurt, dysfunction and addiction. As a family physician, Dr. Bravata simply responded to the need for effective, evidence-based treatment of substance use disorders in his rural patient population. This growing passion led Dr. Bravata to seek education in addiction medicine, become DATA 2000 waived to prescribe buprenorphine, and eventually obtain Addiction Medicine Board Certification through the practice pathway provided by the American Board of Preventive Medicine (ABPM). Along the way, Dr. Bravata has been involved in local and national family and addiction medicine leadership, education and publication.

Visiting Embrace Recovery

A Word from Mike Chupp, MD, FACS

When Rev. Bill Reichart and I landed in Buffalo New York on May 11, I really did not know what to expect from this site visit. The CMDA Western New York ministry had been touted by leaders of our Addiction Medicine Section (AMS) as “the best example of Christian healthcare professionals battling the opioid epidemic together.” I was overwhelmed and amazed by what I can describe only as a ministry “symphony” dedicated to transforming the lives of people enslaved by substance abuse.

Our hosts, Dr. Darren and Joy Caparaso, led us from one ministry partner organization in Buffalo to another during the course of two days. We interacted with several CMDA leaders/members who were working with faith-based, academic and secular entities alike in responding to the expanding crisis of opioid overdoses and deaths, many linked to fentanyl-laced illicit products on the streets. We heard from University of Buffalo addiction researchers; from several pastors working with our CMDA group; from addiction peer coach trainers; from medical students serving in a ministry fighting human trafficking; and from passionate, faith-based residential addiction ministry program directors in the greater Buffalo metro area. The testimonies of the transformed and the rescued were powerful, especially coming from leaders of several of the addiction ministries who themselves were former slaves of alcohol, opioids and other substances. The gospel of grace has delivered so many of Buffalo’s and western New York’s citizens, and God has done that through a biblical model that Dr. Caparaso refers to as the “four faithful friends” approach. Healthcare professionals alone are not enough to contend for victory against addiction. We need other friends, like those who brought the paralytic to Jesus. These friends include pastors, peer coaches and other advocates in this ministry of reconciliation and transformation that only Christ offers.



I have been reminded that there are no simple answers or remedies for the addiction crisis we face in the U.S. I must admit that in my career I preferred straightforward patient problems with a ready-made surgical fix—what surgeon doesn’t?! But this crisis demands leadership, compassion, collaboration and engagement by Christians, because addiction experts tell us that spiritual care and transformation are strongly associated with complete deliverance from addiction. These experts are speaking CMDA’s language! In fact, our two new curricula, *Faith Prescriptions* and *Bridging the Gap*, both have sessions focused on a Christian healthcare professional’s duty in the setting of addiction. I have been praying daily since our return from Buffalo that God’s Spirit will guide us to and through next steps as a national organization whose motto is “Changing Hearts in Healthcare” with a vision of “bringing the hope and healing of Christ to the world through healthcare professionals.” Praise God for the way our anointed CMDA members in western New York (and members of our AMS), like Jesus in Luke 4, are proclaiming good news to the poor and freedom for the prisoners, setting the oppressed free and proclaiming the year of the Lord’s favor.

Soli Deo Gloria!



About the Author

Mike Chupp, MD, FACS, is the CEO of CMDA. He graduated with his medical degree from Indiana University in 1988 and completed a general surgery residency at Methodist Hospital in 1993. From 1993 to 2016, he was a missionary member of Southwestern Medical Clinic in St. Joseph, Michigan, while also serving as a career missionary at Tenwek Mission Hospital in Kenya.

by Dr. Darren and Joy Caparaso

We are known as the “City of Good Neighbors.” In Luke 10, when Jesus was asked “Who is my neighbor?” He shared the well-known story of the [Good Samaritan](#). I believe with all my heart that God loves Buffalo, as He does every city in our nation, and He has great plans for healing our land as He brings about His good purposes in the communities we serve and intercede for (2 Chronicles 7:14).

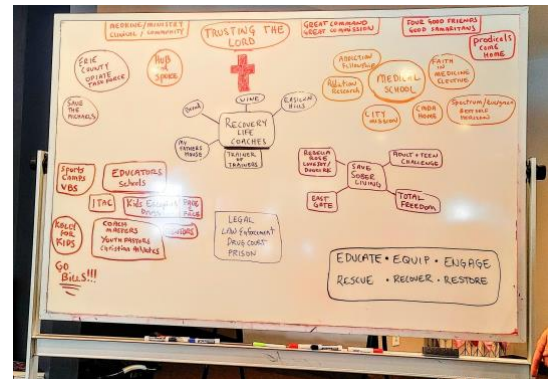
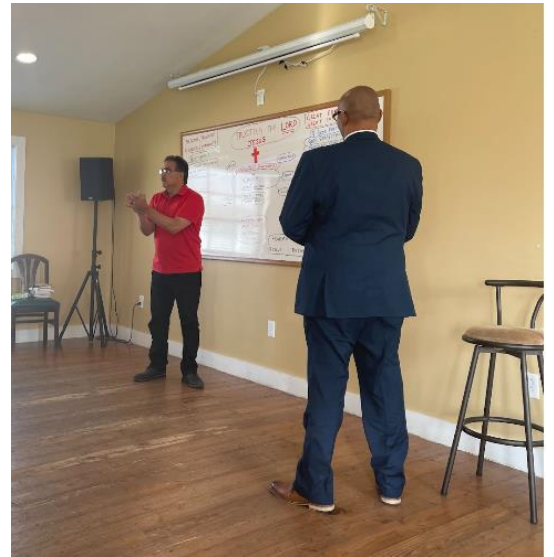
How big is the Father's heart? 2 Peter 3:9 says that He doesn't want anyone to perish. As all of our families and neighbors in each town, city and state in our nation face a devastating addiction crisis, we are fully convinced the Lord is sending help. He is using those willing to be compassionate Good Samaritans (Luke 10:25-37), to bring healing to the hurting, hope to the hopeless and life-long recovery to lives rescued from the chains of addiction, through a collaborative effort that incorporates a biblical approach.

Addiction causes inconceivable layers of isolation, pain and suffering, but we believe the church is the “*safe inn*” in the Good Samaritan story. We also believe that the abundant life spoken of in John 10:10 is living in healthy relationships in communion with God and community with each other.

Each one of us is being presented with a great opportunity to respond to the call of God, as we face the worst opioid crisis our world has ever seen. We are confronted with the stunning fact that for the first time in our nation's history, fentanyl overdoses have surged to become the number one cause of death for ages 18 to 45! [Embrace Recovery Buffalo](#) (ERB) intends to do our part to bring medicine (clinical intervention) and ministry (community support) together to be part of the solution. Our ERB vision is to **EDUCATE-EQUIP-ENGAGE** those willing to work together—Teaching Ministry to Medicine and Medicine to Ministry. People deserve the best medical and spiritual care.

In Buffalo we are continuing to implement a growing hub and spoke model of care, which includes collaboration between clinical and behavioral care teams and community resources. Clinical care plans include evidence-based lifesaving medications, along with skilled counseling. Our community care teams connect people and their families to a network of support and discipling groups in churches and organizations throughout our region. Our trained recovery coaches help guide and support people, who desperately need to know they are loved, along their journey of recovery, showing them **THERE IS HOPE for recovery and abundant life.**

The truth sets people free (John 8:32), and we intend to continue to help rid the ignorance, stigma and shame that surrounds the addiction crisis. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6, KJV). “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36, NIV).



The U.S.S. Sullivan in the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park was recently in national news as the ship was in jeopardy of sinking. The ship was saved by a collaborative effort to repair 53 holes and pump more than a half million gallons of water, removing contaminants, then steam cleaned and raised safely back up.



I believe it is prophetically significant that the motto of the [U.S.S. Sullivan](#) is ***"We Stick Together."*** We are reminded of the prophet Nehemiah, who called families of God to stand in the gaps around a city, defending and protecting it from those who would intend to do its inhabitants harm. Our prayer is that Embrace Recovery Buffalo, CMDA of WNY, the church of WNY and CMDA AMS would collaborate throughout our nation to courageously combat and overcome the addiction crisis, bringing hope and healing along the way. Together we are called to **RESCUE-RECOVER-RESTORE.**

During the visit of Dr. Mike Chupp and Rev. Bill Reichart, we had opportunities to visit some of our ERB faithful community connections such as: Kids Escaping Drugs, [People Against Trafficking of Humans](#) (PATH), [BestSelf Behavioral Health](#), [Save the Michaels of the World](#) and [Adult and Teen Challenge](#). We launched our time together at the University at Buffalo School of Medicine (UB) where Dr. Mike Chupp and Rev. Bill Reichart shared their hearts with UB medical students. UB is fighting addiction through research and clinical care. For nearly 50 years, UB's [Clinical and Research Institute on Addictions \(CRIA\)](#) has been a long-standing national leader in the study of alcohol and substance use disorder. UB has more than 150 faculty and scientists investigating addiction. UB is educating students from all the health science disciplines (medicine, nursing, social work, pharmacy, dentistry, and public health leaders).



Among our great friends and faculty at UB are fellow CMDA members Dr. David Holmes and Dr. Sarah Abdelsayed, who provide addiction care by offering a biblical faith-based approach. For many years, the UB Faith and Medicine elective has provided UB medical students an opportunity to see how faith can powerfully impact the lives of patients. The elective allows our students to visit ERB's Community Connections.



Our visit to [Kids Escaping Drugs \(KEDs\)](#) included learning about their residential treatment program and their successful educational community outreach called [Face2Face](#). The group had an eye-opening experience as to the staggering truth of what our and all children are facing in our nation. Another destination was [Adult & Teen Challenge of Buffalo](#), founded by Pastor David Wilkerson, with more than 200 residential programs in the U.S. The ministry has been faithfully restoring and changing lives with the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for more than 60 years. Our desire is to strengthen the relationship between CMDA of WNY and Adult & Teen Challenge.

Our journey culminated at Total Freedom NY, [Darien Center](#), which is a faith-based residential facility. After touring the beautiful country campus on a glorious sunny day, ERB presented the ministry. We then heard testimonies and enjoyed a phenomenal dinner that was prepared and served by the hands and feet of those getting set free with the gospel.



The Bible story found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke describing the four faithful friends carrying a paralytic tells our ERB story. I believe the four faithful friends were purpose-driven, dedicated and intentional, and they demonstrated perseverance with sacrificial love by punching a hole in the roof to bring a lame hurting friend to Jesus, **the Great Physician**. The faithfulness of the four friends resulted in the awesome healing of spirit, soul and body! Each friend did their part to complete the mission, and our prayer is that we may all have the courage and strength to do the same.



Which friend are you? Are you the educator, healthcare professional, student, law enforcer, recovery coach, loved one, counselor, neighbor, teacher, researcher, athlete, etc.? Together we will fulfill the Great Command (to Love) and the Great Commission (to Go!).



About the Author

Darren Caparaso, MD, is a family medicine and addiction medicine physician. He is also Co-director of Embrace Recovery Buffalo, a ministry affiliated with CMDA with the mission to help those struggling with addiction or life-controlling problems find compassion, hope, healing and lifelong recovery through a collaborative effort that includes a biblical faith-based approach. He serves as the AMS Outreach Coordinator.



Sometimes, something earth shattering happens, and the tragedy of the substance abuse crisis really hits home. Our hearts break for all those suffering from bondage to addiction, but nothing hits harder than when you see its devastating impacts on your friends and family. We received a call early Sunday morning on Father's Day that no one should ever have to hear. The Father's Day party, which we had been preparing for our family members who were expected to be arriving soon, would not be coming at all. Instead, we heard the terrible words that our beautiful nephew's fiancé Ashley had passed away. It appears she died from a substance use relapse, which stopped her heart and broke all of ours.

Ashley was only 23 years old and had a zeal for life. She was a fabulous, devoted mother to a one-and-a-half-year-old sweet baby boy and a genuine friend who was soon to be married into our family. Now, our nephew and Ashley are not planning their wedding, but he is tragically planning her funeral. As our nephew shopped for their cherished baby boy's outfit, he said, "I thought his first suit was going to be for our wedding, not his mother's funeral." We know not every story ends in a success, but all things are possible with God (Mark 9:23; Mark 10:27).

One changed life at a time makes a difference! So please, let us not become weary in well doing (Galatians 6:9). As for our family, we believe that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13). Blessings to all of you.

—Joy Caparaso

Embracing Hope in the Aftermath of the Buffalo Mass Shooting

by Pastor Al Robinson

Saturday, May 14 was the day my daughter would be graduating from college with her bachelor's degree in biology. Excitedly, we drove to Houghton College to see my last child of nine walk across the stage. It was a time of celebration

and jubilation, and it sealed my promise to the Almighty that I would do everything I could to bring my children up in the Lord.

We arrived home filled with the boastful pride of all Christ has done. It wasn't long after, while I was in my lab intending to get work done, that I suddenly heard on my scanner, "Shots fired, shots fired!" In my mind, Buffalo's C District is a dangerous area that has a high rate of felonious crime, often involving murder. Knowing that this tends to be the norm angers me; nevertheless, it is what happens in this community. As the events unfolded, I heard the anguished voice of an officer say, "We have to secure the area, forensics is en route...there are multiple victims." My heart dropped in my chest as I realized that something far more terrible and insidious was unfolding. A blood curdling scream came out of my mouth calling my wife: "VIVIAN!"

Buffalo, New York had just experienced a mass shooting...for the second time. The first being a contumelious Joseph G. Christopher, who was finally arrested in April 1981 while being held at Fort Benning for stabbing a black soldier. He had hunted and killed 12 black men and one dark complexioned Hispanic male. I was a teenager attending an all-white school at the time. This terrible occurrence struck fear in the hearts of all black men in the state of New York. That same thick, dark, timorous fear overcame me during this uncertain time. I thought it would never happen again, that is, until now.

This premeditated [May 14, 2022 shooting spree](#) fatally wounded 10 innocent people and injured three more. Celestine Chaney, Roberta Drury, Andre Mackniel, Katherine Massey, Margus Morrison, Heyward Patterson, Aaron Salter, Geraldine Talley, Ruth Whitfield and Pearl Young all instantly lost their lives to the killer's directed head shots.

Three of these victims are tied to our church: Celestine, Andre (who just went to Tops to pick up a birthday cake for a party) and Officer Aaron (who returned fire, but his futile 9 mm rounds were met with body armor).

Buffalo, the City of Good Neighbors, staggered in the throes of such abhorrent evil. The world looked on as the greatest country in the world sunk, yet again, into godless nihilism. We all wanted to understand, "Why were these innocent victims targeted by this young man?"

We discovered the answers in horror as we read his 180-page manifesto. It was filled with references to critical race theory, his hatred for white people being treated like their lives are worthless and his desire to eliminate the threat: black people and immigrants. His diatribe ranted on why he selected Buffalo and how it has the strictest laws in the U.S. for gun control. He knew that the black folks he hunted would be unarmed. They would have no way to return fire. To his depraved mind, we were just crabs in a barrel. Easy pickings.

His abhorrent vitriol for black people like me simply because of my shade of skin, led to the killings. I have long been familiar with this form of hatred, since the early 1970s, when blacks like me first started enjoying our newly acquired civil rights. However, this horrible unprovoked racist massacre literally hit home.

So, how does one find peace and healing in the face of such an evil act and tragic loss of life?

As souls sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and members of the body of Christ, we immediately sprang into active service. Situational assessments were quickly made, and we soon discovered that our church family was impacted and would be grieving the loss of three innocent children of God. The weight of this experience was seemingly unbearable. There was no other way to acquire strength BUT from the Lord. He miraculously mobilized a love in our community that staggers the human mind. Through this shared tragedy, a unity was birthed, which I have never seen in more than five decades on this planet. God's love still shines over Tops Plaza on Jefferson Avenue, and His amazing love is spreading! My exhortation to you is that in all that you do, endeavor to exhibit the character of Christ. Even in the dark moments, when you think God isn't looking or present, ***He is!***





About the Author

Pastor Al Robinson is Senior Pastor of Spirit of Truth Urban Ministry as well as President of The Rebecca Rose Recovery Centers of WNY (a biological women sober living facility and rehabilitation), and The JA Hauser Addiction Research Institute. He has pastored the Lovejoy community since 2010. They entered the battle against addiction in 2015 when they developed the East Lovejoy Community Task Force. This specializes in frustrating drug dealers in their distribution of illicit drugs. Al is a NYS Certified Trainer of Trainers for CARC as well as a City of Buffalo Certified CPTED Practitioner (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design).

Upcoming Events

Monthly Online AMS Workshops

Join us each month at 5 p.m. PT, 7 p.m. CT and 8 p.m. ET.

- [August 10](#): “12 Step Programs from a Christ-centered, Faith-based Perspective” with Dr. Don Middleton, creator of [Him & Them 12 step program](#)
- [September 7](#): Embracing Recovery: Christ-centered clinical practice with collaborative faith-based community outreach
- [October 5](#): [Racial Disparities and Bias in Addiction Medicine](#): Recognizing and addressing racial disparities in the addiction recovery space

Other monthly topics suggestions include:

- Utilizing peer-recovery specialists/coaches in addiction recovery support, care coordination and outreach.
- Testimonies from people in recovery who now reach others with a message of hope and redemption/ rehabilitation.
- Understanding the concept of harm-reduction as an integral part of the step-wise recovery process.
- What is MAT and is meditation assisted treatment true recovery?
- Addictions, dependencies and compulsions. No one is immune.
- Our calling as Christians to bring a message of hope and deliverance to those held captive by addiction.
- Spirit-led prayer and intercession, plus its role in deliverance and transformative change.

Additional clinical and behavioral topics to follow. [Email us](#) to propose a topic or be a guest speakers. Topics and speakers are subject to change. Email announcements with Zoom links will be sent out in advance to confirm topic, date and time.

Addiction Medicine Section Intercessory Prayer Meetings

Every second Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. ET, 7 p.m. CT and 3 p.m. PT.

[Zoom Link](#)

Meeting ID: 884 5252 7299 Passcode: 872122

Every fourth Tuesday of the month at 9:30 a.m. ET, 8:30 a.m. CT and 6:30 a.m. PT.

[Zoom Link](#)

Meeting ID: 870 4161 7350 Passcode: 202396

Connect with AMS

We are excited to invite you to join hands with the Addiction Medicine Section. We have been blessed to work with some amazing men and women of God to launch the section, and we are humbled to see how God is growing it.

As we near the one-year anniversary of CMDA AMS, we are looking for people of impact and vision who have experience in the addiction recovery space and feel called to expand their outreach in this arena.

Currently, we are in the process of girding up our leadership team, developing workshops, spreading the news of our launch and bringing in laborers and intercessors. We look forward to your future involvement!

Learn more about our [mission, vision and leadership team](#). You can also engage with us directly via the AMS discussion forum on the [CMDA Go app](#) or [Contact AMS](#) via email to take advantage of our twice monthly prayer times, during which you can fellowship with us online via Zoom, as we seek God's ongoing direction and intercede for the great task we are all faced with to set the captives free.

Our leadership team would love to meet you!