



HOW 1 FAMILY TURNS PAIN INTO PURPOSE

A SCHOOL FOR EDUCATION AND RECOVERY

I have a special place in my heart for anyone who's been through a personal tragedy. But I am especially touched by people who persevered through that tragedy and went on to help others. No one exemplifies that more than my friends, Taylor and Kerri Rhodes.

We've known the Rhodes family since our boys were small. When our kids were young, the Rhodes family and our family bonded through Little League baseball. One year, when my son, Andrew, and the Rhodes' son, Taylor Jr., were on the same Little League team, we coached together. Taylor Sr. then went on to coach the boys' travel baseball team. Man, those were awesome times!



"KERRI AND TAYLOR MADE IT CLEAR AT TAYLOR JR.'S CELEBRATION OF LIFE THAT IT WAS NOT THE END. IT WOULD BE THE BEGINNING OF CHANGING THE CONVERSATION AROUND ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH IN THIS COUNTRY. THEY ARE GOING TO FOCUS THEIR ENERGY, RESOURCES, AND PASSION ON DOING THEIR PART TO ELIMINATE THE STIGMA TOWARD THOSE WHO SUFFER FROM ADDICTION AND MENTAL ILLNESS."

Unfortunately, Kerri and Taylor tragically lost Taylor Jr. in June 2019 to an overdose of fentanyl-laced heroin. It was a crushing tragedy for our community and everyone who knows the Rhodes family.

"It started with a shoulder surgery and a bottle of Percocet to manage his pain,

and that was the beginning," recalls Kerri. Taylor Sr. says, "Taylor's brain lit up, and according to Taylor, it was the first time he felt 'normal.' He didn't feel depressed, and from that moment forward, he was in the fight of his life."

Over the ensuing five years, Kerri and Taylor fought a daily battle to get Taylor Jr. the help he needed. What they discovered was that the available options were either not up to the task or nonexistent. "It was fragmented and siloed," recalls Taylor Sr. when referring to the care Taylor Jr. received from the various treatment and rehabilitation centers. Most of these centers focused on the substance abuse and excluded the underlying mental health conditions from which Taylor Jr. suffered.

Compounding the situation was the fact that Taylor was in high school trying to stay on course to graduate without getting adequate support from schools that were simply ill-equipped to support a student

suffering from a substance use disorder. The school system's approach has been to suspend, expel, or put these students on homebound instruction because there are no in-house programs or resources to address addiction, and up to this point, it has not been recognized as the brain disease that it is.

The tragedy the Rhodes family lived through is unfortunately all too common, but the way they have responded has been anything but. Kerri, a mental health clinician with 28 years of experience and a counselor with Henrico County Public Schools, says, "I tell myself over and over that what our family has been through will not be for nothing."

And that is where the rest of the story begins. Kerri and Taylor made it clear at Taylor Jr.'s celebration of life that it was not the end. It would be the beginning of changing the conversation around addiction

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and mental health in this country. They are going to focus their energy, resources, and passion on doing their part to eliminate the stigma toward those who suffer from addiction and mental illness.

As Taylor Sr. explains, "Our plight, our journey from now until the time we are no longer able, is to spend our energy trying to help those who are facing the same struggle that we faced." Anyone who knows the Rhodes family knows they are up for the challenge. They are fighters, and they are stepping into this arena with both feet.

That's why I was so happy to see their journey connect them with my cousin, newly elected Virginia Delegate Carrie Coyner. Carrie proposed a bill in the legislature this year to create a pilot program to address the needs of students who struggle with addiction or substance use in our schools: a regional "recovery high school" in Chesterfield County that would serve all Region I schools. If House Bill 928 passes, the recovery high school will exist in partnership with health agencies, local and state governments, police, legal agencies, and Chesterfield County Public Schools.

But this isn't a new concept, as there are over 40 recovery high schools across the United States. While every school functions a little differently, their goals remain the same — to help students maintain recovery and access their education in a safe and nurturing environment. The proposed recovery high school will offer daily counseling, access to resources that support and strengthen students' emotional health, and a comprehensive recovery program. Ideally, this would support the health and well-being of every student while they make progress toward earning their high school diploma and possibly reintegrating back into a traditional education setting.

Taylor Sr. has summed up his family's daily mission as one that honors Taylor Jr. "Every day, I try to honor Taylor because he's worth honoring." The recovery high school project is just one aspect of what the Rhodes family is doing to honor their son and fight for our community. I, for one, am so impressed. To learn more about their story, I hope you will watch this six-minute production published by Weill Cornell Medical Center and share it with anyone it might help: [Youtu.be/2h7Cz37DzjM](https://youtu.be/2h7Cz37DzjM).

There is also a Facebook page in memory of Taylor Jr. that shines a spotlight on Taylor's fight and the family's mission to turn their pain into a greater purpose. To see what they are doing, ask to join Taylor's page, which can be found at Facebook.com/groups/712476749181691.

-Kevin W. Mottley



JOIN US FOR THE CHURCH HILL IRISH FESTIVAL!

A CELEBRATION THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

I love St. Patrick's Day, and while my family doesn't have any particular traditions related to the holiday, our history is deeply rooted within Irish heritage. My ancestors fled England during a time of religious and political upheaval and found sanctuary in Ireland before moving to America in the 1700s, so I feel connected to Ireland and its culture. While there are St. Patrick's Day celebrations all over Richmond, there is one in particular that I'll be attending, and I think everyone should be aware of it too: the Church Hill Irish Festival.

The event is held on Saturday, March 21 and Sunday, March 22 and takes place at 25th and E. Broad Street in Church Hill. During the festival, children will learn the importance of the holiday beyond little green leprechauns through games, face painting, and crafts related to the Emerald Isle.

In addition to the fun activities for kids, there are over 30 Irish-themed vendors in attendance every year. The Ladies of St. Patrick's will be serving their famous "Irish Surprise," which includes corned beef, cabbage, and mashed potatoes. Rare Olde Times, a well-known Irish pub that I am known to duck into once in a while, will be serving their best fish and chips. Along with these vendors, St. Patrick's Grill and Curbside Creations will also be selling local cuisine. This year will even feature Guinness tastings from a local Guinness Ambassador for all the beer lovers out there!

While you're enjoying all the St. Patrick's Day-themed activities, you'll also be making a difference, as all proceeds benefit the St. Baldrick's Society and their fight against childhood cancer. The Church Hill Association, the Church Hill Crime Watch, Richmond Hill, Child Saver's Clinic of Richmond, St. John's Church, the St. Peter's Meals Program, St. Francis Home, the Greater Fulton Neighborhood Resource Center, and many other local causes also benefit from the event's proceeds.

Free parking will be available at 16th and E. Broad Street. Parking and shuttling will also be available at the Stone Brewery in Fulton with drop-offs at 24th and E. Broad Street and 26th and E. Broad Street.

So get your tickets and help make a difference this St Patrick's Day before the event sells out! You can find more information at ChurchHillIrishFestival.com.

WINTER WORKOUT MOTIVATION

Spring arrives on March 19 this year, but it may be a few weeks more before we begin to enjoy sunny, warm weather here in Virginia. The colder, rainy conditions can make it harder to work out and reach your fitness goals, but staying motivated in this last stretch of winter will allow you to enjoy your spring and summer to the fullest. Here are some ways you can maintain the drive to stay in shape before spring arrives.

Mornings can be cold during the winter and early spring months, and the temperature can make it seem like staying in bed is the better option over working out. To stay motivated, it's best to do everything you can to set yourself up for success in advance. Start with adjusting your thermostat up a bit higher the night before. This way, you're not as hesitant to get in that early morning run. It also helps to put your running clothes near your heater so they're warm and ready for your morning jog.

If any of your friends or family members love to work out, invite them with you! Having a workout buddy is a foolproof way to stay on track because you can't bail or make an easy excuse for yourself. Plus, it gives you something to look forward to, and having someone to talk to during a run or in between reps will make the hour fly by.

As you begin your winter workout journey, share your progress and goals on social media or with your friends. Like sharing your New Year's resolutions with family members, your friends and followers will hold you accountable to your workout schedule and the progress you've made.

Do you have any helpful tips or tricks to stay in shape? Let me know next time you're in the office! I'm always looking for new ways to keep up my workout routine from December to April.



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ORANGE GLAZED SALMON

Keep dinner light, simple, and easy with this paleo-friendly recipe.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 salmon fillets (10 oz total)
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp ghee
- 1 tbsp garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp fresh rosemary, chopped
- Zest from 1 orange
- 1/3 cup fresh-squeezed orange juice
- 1 tsp tapioca starch

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 425 F, and line a sheet pan with parchment paper.
2. Salt each fillet with 1/2 tsp salt. Bake for 6–8 minutes.
3. In a saucepan, combine ghee and garlic and cook over medium heat for 3 minutes.
4. Add rosemary, zest, and juice. Cook for another 3 minutes.
5. Stir in tapioca starch until lumps disappear and mixture thickens.
6. Plate salmon and top with orange sauce.



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GIVING BACK TO LOCAL COMPANIES

ON NATIONAL MOM AND POP BUSINESS OWNERS DAY

March 29 is National Mom and Pop Business Owners Day, which is huge for small businesses everywhere. Mom-and-pop businesses are the backbone of the U.S. economy; Small Business Trends reports that mom-and-pop businesses account for 64% of gross domestic product (GDP) and generate 78% of all new jobs. Furthermore, no matter what turns the economy takes, small-business owners are less likely to lay off their employees than big corporations. Mom-and-pop businesses support all communities, and you can support them by celebrating this unofficial holiday!

GIVE YOUR LOCAL ECONOMY A BOOST!

Shopping locally has a massive impact on your community. Local businesses return three times the amount of money to the local economy than larger corporations do. With that big of a returned investment,

your community can support even more small businesses that generate a wealth of jobs and keep the cycle going.

In addition to the economic boost, products from small businesses are usually higher quality, which makes them a better value for your dollar. Take this day to shop for birthday and holiday gifts for your loved ones that will bring them great joy and last a lifetime.

GET SOCIAL AND SPREAD THE WORD!

While small businesses utilize every form of marketing available, social media is essential for their success and growth. After shopping at your favorite mom-and-pop business, share that experience on your social media! When you write a post on Facebook or take a picture for Instagram, be sure to tag the business and use relevant hashtags so your



friends, family, and everyone else in your community can shop there too.

Writing reviews on Google Reviews and Yelp helps establish validity for the company. When another potential customer looks for reviews, they know they're getting quality products and services from a well-established pillar of the community. The local businesses that are active on social media may post deals and sales for that day only, so keep your eyes peeled and be sure to follow all your favorite businesses!