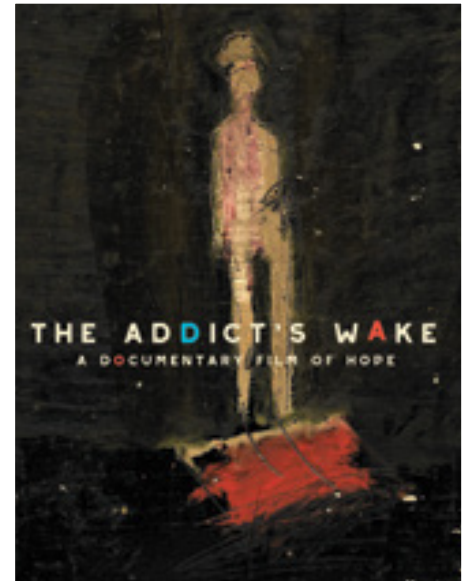




HOOKED ON HOPE

**Moody alumna
fights the opioid
crisis in a most
unexpected way**

BY ERIC ROMERO

Moody graduate **Lisa Hall MA '18** could hardly contain herself. As Moody President **Dr. Mark Jobe '84 MA '98** handed her her diploma in Applied Biblical Studies in May of 2019 and said quietly, “I know God’s got something for you,” she wanted to shout, “He does; I know He does. He already called me!” Twice, actually.

Lisa had been a Moody supporter long before her studies, so when her husband asked her what she wanted to do next once her boys had left home, her answer was immediate.

“I said instantly—‘I want to go to Moody,’” she says. “It was all online, but I don’t feel like I missed a thing. I really don’t. I worked so hard and loved it so much.”

However, returning to school as a wife and mother of two grown sons was also often overwhelming. During a hard class in 2016, she remembers thinking, *Lord, what am I doing? My friends are traveling, their nests are empty, and I’m putting myself back into school?*

That’s when she sensed God’s first calling—telling her to stay

the course because He had something coming for her to do.

Two years later, Lisa sensed God affirming her calling a second time as she finished her degree. “I felt like He was telling me, *I have something coming for you, and it’s going to be big*,” she says.

Little did Lisa know how big that something would be.

RECEIVING THE CALL

Lisa and her husband, Richard, relocated from Indianapolis to Nashville, Indiana, a tourist town with quaint shops and eateries.

While the move was intended to be “a quiet place to study,” all was not well in their new community. After a slew of fatal overdoses were reported in the news, Lisa posted her thoughts on social media and the next day took a phone call from a stranger who’d read her post—a phone call that would finally define God’s big calling for her.

Amy Pauszek, a film promoter and producer, shared her concern about the growing number of overdose victims in the area and asked if Lisa wanted to help make a documentary about drug addiction.

“She just asked me, ‘Do you want to tell these stories?’” Lisa recalls.

At the time Lisa had no experience in filmmaking. “This was definitely not on my bucket list,” she says. “To be honest, I really wasn’t much of a movie fan.”

Yet she remembers saying, “Yes, let’s tell these stories.”

SHAKEN TO THE CORE

As Lisa ventured into town and began her research, she encountered family after family who had suffered profoundly from the devastating effects of opioid addiction.

Lisa first met Pastor Cory Joy and his wife, Michelle, a fourth-grade teacher, who shared the heartbreaking news that their son, Caleb, 28, died in September 2017 from a heroin overdose. The drugs that killed Caleb contained fentanyl, a prevalent synthetic opioid that can be made easily and cheaply; it is up to 100 times more potent than prescription opioids like morphine, hydrocodone, and oxycodone.

Film Screening.
Lisa Hall with
Pastor Cory Joy
and director,
Michael Husain.

Lisa then learned of two other young men in Brown County that had overdosed in the previous 10 months—Dyllon Davis, 21, and Kyle Foley, 24. Two more would die in 2018—Tyler Colglazier, 31, and Nick Olivier, 24. According to police records, about 80 percent of the county’s arrests in 2017 were for drug-related cases, the majority involving heroin.

Between 1999 and 2020, the opioid pandemic in the US was responsible for 500,000 deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Recent studies also show that opioid abuse, levels of addiction, and overdose deaths are commonly higher in rural areas like Brown County, with a population of only 15,000, due to lower incomes, the prevalence of anxiety and depression, and the unaffordability of quality healthcare and recovery programs. “The stories these families were telling me really shook me to my core,” Lisa says.

‘DRINKING FROM A FIREHOSE’

Lisa took on the role of the film’s executive producer—the person responsible for all aspects of the production. But with no previous film experience, Lisa was overwhelmed.

“I knew this was solely from God’s hand,” she



says. “But learning to make a movie was like drinking from a firehose.”

Lisa’s first order of business was finding a director, and she had an acquaintance in mind, award-winning filmmaker Michael Husain. She soon added other members to the crew.

With a daunting production budget of more than \$180,000, Lisa began raising funds to make the feature-length film. “I must have had no less than five hundred conversations raising the money,” she says.

Slowly Lisa began to receive the funding she needed, primarily from families who had private foundations. The largest contribution was \$50,000

After more than two years of fundraising, Lisa and her crew began shooting the film in August 2019.

RELEASE OF *THE ADDICT’S WAKE*

In June 2021, Lisa released *The Addict’s Wake: A Story of Addiction in Brown County* at the Heartland International Film Festival in Indianapolis, winning two film awards.

The film delivers a painfully real and compelling look at the shattered lives Lisa had come across in Nashville and the surrounding neighborhoods. It includes residents who were mourning the loss of a loved one, in the grips of heroin addiction, or walking the challenging road to recovery.

Fortunately, not all stories of addiction end with an overdose, but those can be heartrending too. Take Cole Crabtree who was able to survive through years of drug dependency—only to lose everything else in the process.

“I was a slave to the drug,” Cole says in the film, after his addiction to prescription hydrocodone led to heroin and the loss of his wife and family. “There are so many things in my life that I’ll never get back.”

FINDING HOPE

While *The Addict’s Wake* shows the destructive power of addiction, it is, at heart, a film about not giving up. “Hope is the main theme throughout the film,” Lisa says.

For example, the documentary features Daniel Alton, the drug dealer and user who sold Caleb Joy the fatal dose of fentanyl-laced heroin. After Caleb’s death, Daniel was arrested and faced a myriad of felony charges. Ashamed and shunned by the community, he spiraled into a deep depression, contemplating suicide.

“I had hit rock bottom,” Daniel says.

But Daniel didn’t stay there. He sought help for his addiction, started undergoing regular drug testing, and got a steady job. Noticing how Daniel had turned his life around, local law enforcement told him he could avoid jail if he stayed clean. Daniel did so—and in a heartwarming moment, grieving parents Pastor Cory and Michelle Joy affirmed Daniel and his

from a private fund, but even small donations were meaningful, like the tip money from a waitress who “just wanted to help in some way.”

Though Moody may not have taught her about film production, she says, “I think my experience at Moody really showed me that when we’re obedient to God, He’ll open the doors.”



Offering Hope.

Lisa at a table promoting her films at a recovery conference.

dramatic turnaround at a public anti-drug event on the one-year anniversary of their son Caleb's death.

ADDICTION AT CHURCH

Considering no place is immune from the effects of addiction, Lisa tried to show the film in churches, but interest was low. "I have had such a hard time getting this in churches," she says. "I'm devastated by their unwillingness to be in the mucky muck, because it is mucky."

One exception was her pastor, David Norris of City Church for All Nations in Bloomington, Indiana. "Over thirty-five people in my life, some close to me, some not, have died a premature death—most of them through drugs of some kind," he says.

He was eager to show the documentary at church. "I'm glad we did it," he says. "I thought it was really, really powerful."

The movie led to a surge in attendance at the church's addiction recovery group, with an average of 150 people attending every Monday night. Their group promotes sober living, a supportive community, and a new identity in Christ.

"The gospel is huge for us," Pastor Norris says. "I mean, it's huge for us because that helps with their identity, being a new person in Christ. That identity is a massive component to not only being sober but staying sober and living in a new way.

"We've seen people come and go," he says, "but we also see people stick and really have a transformed life and become a leader and a totally new person."

The church is also investing in transitional housing, Lisa says. "I'm so proud of my pastor. I tell him this all the time: You are being the hands and feet of the church. You're doing exactly what Jesus modeled."

RAVE REVIEWS, MORE RESOURCES

In 2022, *The Addict's Wake* won Best Documentary at the Louisville International and Hoosier film festivals and the Indie Spirit Award for documentaries at the Sedona International Film Festival.

Due to this positive recognition, Lisa was able to garner more funding—including an \$85,000 grant from the state of Indiana—to make three additional versions of the film. These new, shorter films targeted specific audiences, including one to educate middle school and high school students, another to train police and other emergency personnel, and a

condensed version of the original that aired on PBS, available in 110 million US households.

"We designed the films to be used as tools to help communities create consistent, encouraging messaging to showcase that recovery is possible," Lisa says. "We've been able to foster incredible communication with these films. It's about turning pain into purpose to help others; that's what's going to heal our communities."

***"I'M NOT ANYBODY
SPECIAL. I'M JUST
SOMEBODY WHO CARED."***

—LISA HALL

Lisa has screened at least one version of the film in more than half of the 92 counties in Indiana and about 25 counties in other states. Many recovery organizations and drug-free coalitions have used grant monies to bring the films to their towns and neighborhoods for a screening event.

"Interest in films has remained steady, and more and more communities are requesting the educational and law enforcement films as well," Lisa says.

'SOMEBODY WHO CARES'

Spurred on by God's commission and a steadfast belief in her cause, Lisa says she just wanted to make a difference.

"I'm not anybody special," she says. "I'm just somebody who cared."

As the battle against addiction rages on, a US medical news publication recently reported that overdose-related deaths fell from 110,000 in 2023 to 80,000 in 2024, the lowest figure in five years. This decline has been mostly attributed to the increase in availability of Narcan (naloxone), a medication proven to rapidly reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

Despite this positive trend, there's still much work to be done. "I can't reach every community," Lisa says. "But I'll keep following God's lead until more and more begin to thrive." ■

For more information about the film, visit theaddictswake.com.