

Dave Moore - One of Us - One with Us



An Article from Sunday's Virginian-Pilot - July 29, 2018 - About Dave and What He Does for the Community

DAVE MOORE was 13 when three events changed his life.

First, his family's flour and feed mill burned to the ground in Salem, a town in the western part of the state.

Seven months later, his father shot himself, leaving Moore's mother to raise five boys, ages 18 months to 16 years .

Six months after that, his mother drowned herself in a channel of water used to power the mill. Moore and his brothers were split up among relatives.

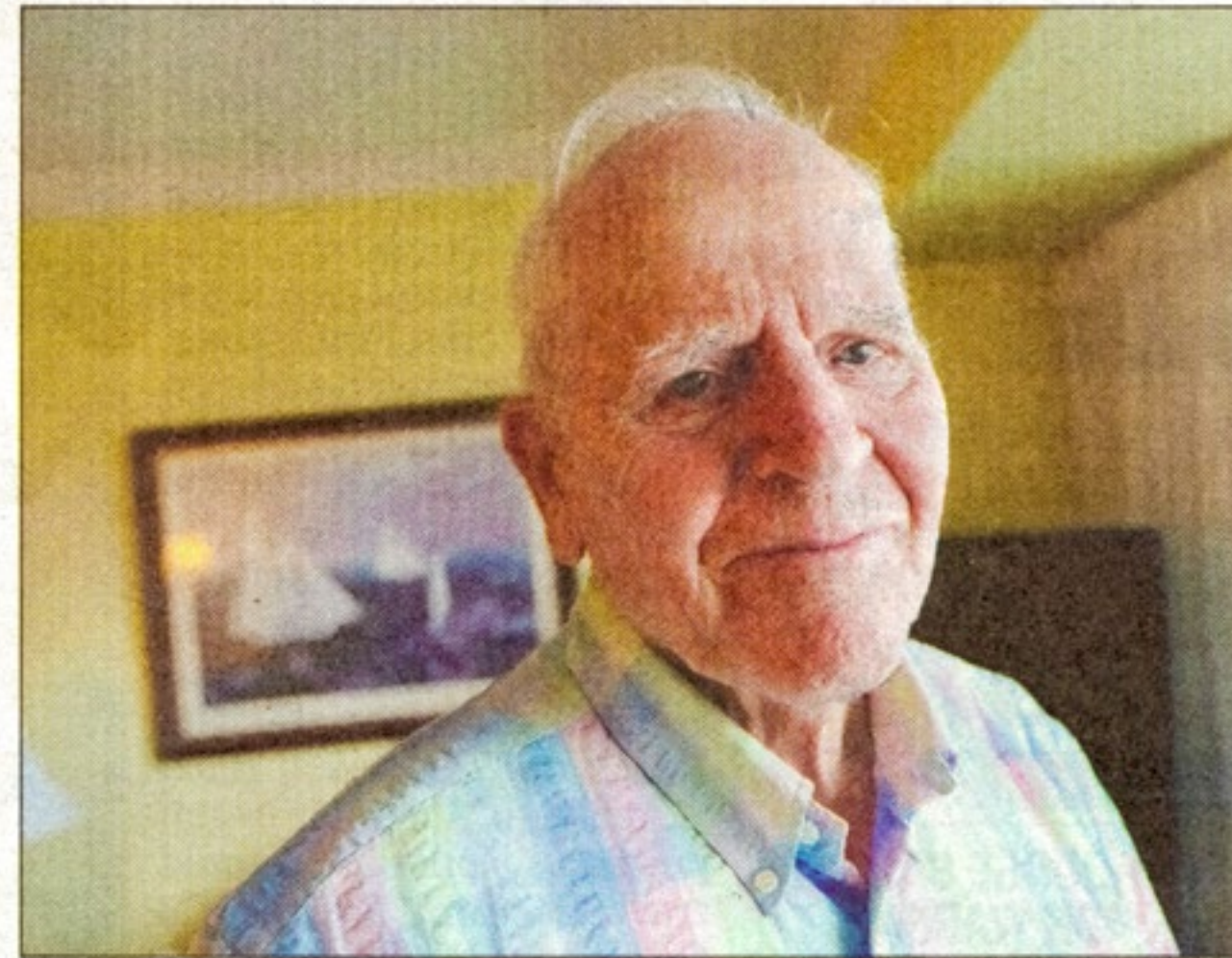
That's a lot for anyone, much less a young boy, and you can imagine the despair he suffered during the following decades.

"I remember when I was a child how shy I used to be. I had trouble expressing myself, I was really a shy little guy, with fears and anxiety," Dave tells a group of 11 in a Virginia Beach conference room.

This is an Emotions Anonymous group, and it follows the Alcoholics Anonymous format. There's a 12-step manual, for instance, and the Serenity prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."

Members also use only their first name to begin a synopsis of their week with a slightly different twist: "My name is Dave, and I am powerless over my emotions."

Most don't want to be identified, but Moore, now 82, agreed to let me use his name.



STEVE EARLEY | THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

He's retired, he explained, and wants more people to know about the organization.

It's a weekly support group that helps people handle emotions, especially these: Anxiety, Depression, Panic, Anger, Negative thoughts.

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health conditions in the country, affecting one in five people. In the right situations, anxiety can improve your performance during a stressful situation, but it can also lead to debilitating fear and even suicide.

Plenty has been written lately about so-called "deaths of despair," caused by overdoses, alcoholism and suicides.

Between 1999 and 2016, all but one state saw an uptick in suicides, with Virginia's rate increasing 17 percent.

The rise cuts across age, gender, race and ethnicity, according to a report released in June by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

One detail that caught my attention: In more than half of all deaths in 27 states, the people had no known mental health condition when they ended their lives.

It makes you realize how much people try to deal with on their own, maybe not realizing there's help available.

Moore struggled with depression and anxiety for decades, even while managing a successful 23-year Navy career, retiring as a commander. He didn't recognize the feelings as anything other than sadness and despair.

« *Dave Moore - One of Us - One with Us . . . Continued I* »

An Article from Sunday's Virginian-Pilot - July 29, 2018 - About Dave and What He Does for the Community

He ran a bike shop in Virginia Beach after his Navy retirement and had a major depressive episode: "Back then, we called it a nervous breakdown. I didn't sleep for six months."

He saw a psychiatrist, who prescribed medications, and in 1995, found an EA meeting at a church in Virginia Beach.

"I began to work on my depression and anxiety. It's not a quick fix. It works, if you work the steps."

He mentions two steps in particular: No. 5: "Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

He said talking about his difficulties, including the pain he suffered as a child, was freeing: "Verbally telling someone what happened, about all that baggage you are dragging around, once you express that to another human being, it's very releasing and freeing."

Now he's at a stage where he feels the need to pass the help along to others, Step 12: "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

Moore has helped set up meetings in other cities. There are now four in Virginia Beach and Norfolk. He goes to at least one a week.

He also reached out to me to see if I could let more people know about meetings. I'm a big believer in support groups. Sharing something out loud lightens the heart and creates bonds that help you through difficulties.

Moore wishes his 13-year old self could have had that.

"We got no therapy, no counseling. So I never dealt with the loss. I was always searching for relief from depression and anxiety and asking myself, 'What's going to happen tomorrow?'"

The people in the room come from all walks of life. Some have full-time jobs, others don't. Some share, while others simply listen. Some are "alums," as they call it, of the building where they are meeting: The Virginia Beach Psychiatric Center.

They share bits and pieces of their lives and tips for getting through: Escaping to an empty room at work to keep a panic attack from derailing their job. Celebrating milestones, like going 30 days without "self-harming" behavior. Breaking a downward, self-isolating spiral by attending the EA session. Coloring, even at this meeting, to keep calm.

« *Dave Moore - One of Us - One with Us . . . Continued II*

An Article from Sunday's Virginian-Pilot - July 29, 2018 - About Dave and What He Does for the Community

"That's my week," members say at the conclusion of their testament.

"Thank you for sharing," the rest say in unison.

Moore said one advantage of the group is that it's free, but he. also emphasizes that it's just one "arrow in the quiver" of mental health care that also includes medication, therapy and whatever treatment works for someone.

Matthew Wiggins, 46, also doesn't mind his name being used, and said the support of the group has helped him, along with lending his help to others. He'll answer his phone, he said, even at 3 in the morning.

Gratitude also is important.

"I'm a seven-time suicide, survivor, three times I flatlined on the way to the hospital," Wiggins said. "I'm proud to still be alive. I'm here, I'm alive and I'm grateful."



Elizabeth Simpson *Health Notes*

Health notes is a Sunday column highlighting local and national health topics.

If you have any health-related questions, ideas or suggestions, email them to elizabeth.simpson@pilotonline.com

*Elizabeth Simpson, 757-222-5003,
elizabeth.simpson@pilotonline.com*