

Catholic Charities volunteers honored for their service with PAL

Laura Keener
Editor

A Taylor Mill couple, Tony and Tina Garera, is among this year's Heroes Against Heroin award winners and were honored, Sept. 4, at a banquet held at the Metropolitan Club, Covington. Transitions Inc., an organization that offers residential and intensive outpatient treatment to those recovering from addiction, sponsors the awards. The Gareras were recognized for their volunteer services with Catholic Charities – Diocese of



Tina and Tony Garera

Covington, in starting and facilitating the PAL (Parents of Addicted Loved Ones) support group.

"Tony and I were very surprised by the nomination. We were very humbled to be amongst some of the greatest advocates in this fight," said Mrs. Garera.

Other award categories and winners included: Elected official — Judge Robert Peeler, Warren County Ohio Court of Common Pleas; Business — AdvancePierre Foods, John N. Simons, Jr., president and CEO; Professional — Dr. Mina "Mike" Kalfas, The Christ Hospital Health Network; and Nonprofit — St. Elizabeth Healthcare, Garren Colvin, president and CEO.

Mrs. Garera said that for her and her husband facilitating the PAL support group not only helps others but also helps them as they recover from their own son's heroin addiction.

"Tony and I do not believe that we needed an award for our efforts. We do this because it is our passion, and, we, too, find healing in helping these families. We agree that if being recognized for what we are doing can open doors for others to receive help, we graciously accept," she said.

Having a loved one struggling with addiction too often leaves families with an overwhelming sense of shame. Comments from family, friends and even first responders and community leaders often stigmatize and criminalize addicts, suggesting that the addict, and/or their upbringing, are responsible for their illness and that their life isn't worth saving. So when a teenager or adult child is struggling with addiction where does a parent seek solace? With whom can they share their pain? Where can they find out about treatments that help? A good place to start is PAL.

"Our hope for our ministry is to make sure that every family that has been shattered by the disease of addiction can receive help and healing," said Mrs. Garera. "We want them to know that they are not alone on their journey. Their lives matter to us."

The PAL support group meets every Wednesday, 6:30–8 p.m., at Catholic Charities, 3629 Church St., Latonia. There is no cost to attend and no registration needed.

The support group began in June 2015 and its participants have increased regularly. Laura Jackson, counselor,

Is someone you love struggling with addiction?

Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL) support group meets every Wednesday, 6:30–8 p.m., at Catholic Charities, 3629 Church St., Latonia.

There is no cost to attend and no registration needed. For information visit www.covingtoncharities.org or call (859) 581-8974.

Catholic Charities – Diocese of Covington and one of several people who nominated the Gareras for the Heroes Against Heroin award, said that the increase in the size of the group is not only a testament for the demand and effectiveness of the program but also a tribute to the Gareras.

"Tony and Tina have faithfully been helping loved ones survive the heroin epidemic with care, compassion, dignity and respect," said Ms. Jackson. "Because of their compassionate heart for the growing number of people, including their families, suffering in innumerable ways from heroin addiction Tony and Tina have helped parents find a space where not only do they feel valued but also know that their loved ones are valued as well."

For more information on the Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL) support group visit www.covingtoncharities.org, click on the calendar and then click on PAL or call (859) 581-8974.



Tony and Tina Garera, founders and facilitators of the Catholic Charities – Diocese of Covington Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL) support group, were honored Sept. 4 with a Heroes Against Heroin Award, sponsored by Transitions, Inc. Pictured (from left) are: Kimberly Wright, recovery advocate, Transitions, Inc. and member of the selection committee; Tony Garera, Tina Garera, Holly Specht, NKY Hates Heroin and Jim Betting, CEO for Transitions, Inc.