

## **Coastal Horizons Center: Turning Lives around in Brunswick County**

**By Hilary Brady**

Coastal Horizons Center, a not-for-profit behavioral health organization providing substance abuse and mental health services, crisis intervention and criminal justice alternative services, has opened the doors of its new 7,000-square-foot facility in southern Brunswick County. Located behind Jones Ford on U.S. Highway 17 South in Shallotte, Coastal Horizons is positioned conveniently to service local residents, a goal that the organization has been passionately chasing for nearly seven years.

Coastal Horizons Center was founded in 1970, with its headquarters located off Shipyard Boulevard in Wilmington. After three decades in operation in New Hanover County, a need for expansion to the south became apparent. The group saw several clients from the Brunswick County area, some of whom were traveling as far as 45 miles in order to receive treatment.

In 2003 the grandparents of a young woman who worked as a clinician at the Wilmington office caught wind of the organization's significant and positive impact on the community. In 2006 those grandparents, Odell and Virginia Williamson, gifted land, a building, additional land for future expansion and funds to support a full year of operating expenses, enabling Coastal Horizons to spread its services to Brunswick County.

Coastal Horizons broke ground on its new facility in 2007, and the agency operated out of a temporary location in the Brunswick Medical Mall for a little more than a year prior to the building's completion. In November 2009 the staff and volunteers got settled into their new permanent home. Plans for a grand opening celebration are now underway, anticipated to take place in early spring 2010.

“Several years ago, we identified a need to provide services to residents in Brunswick County,” explains Margaret Weller-Stargell, Coastal Horizons Center's President and CEO. “We wanted to offer a place that they could go in their own community, somewhere closer to home. It's very difficult to describe how pleased we are to say that we can now provide immediate substance abuse, mental health and rape crisis services to this community. Put simply, I'm glad we're here.”

The Brunswick County office offers a wide range of services, including individual and group therapy for all ages, early intervention youth treatment programs, DWI assessments and treatment, a substance abuse intensive outpatient program (SAIOP) and community reintegration support, anger awareness courses, psychiatric evaluations, behavioral programs for at-risk children concerning gang activity, free testing for HIV and other STDs, as well as many other valuable wellness programs. The office's fully trained and licensed team includes Program Director Kate Gomes, LPC, LMFT, LCAS, CCS, a psychiatrist, counselors and other support staff.

One particular program of note that is newly available at both Coastal Horizons Center's New Hanover and Brunswick locations is a highly effective treatment program for opioid addiction. Suboxone is a medication that relieves withdrawal symptoms and cravings, while also restraining the chances of relapse. As opposed to the well-known treatment utilizing Methadone, Suboxone is an office-based program that allows people to operate on a normal, day-to-day basis. Rather

than being confined to an intense schedule of clinic visits, Suboxone treatment is done from home. In addition to the medication, there is also a therapeutic component to the program. Patients who struggle with opioid abuse also often struggle with psychiatric problems as well. Coastal Horizons integrates mental health and behavioral therapy into the Suboxone treatment program, increasing the effectiveness even further.

“Suboxone is a private and highly successful treatment plan,” says Dr. David A. Joseph, Coastal Horizons Center’s Medical Director. “I really enjoy doing follow-up with this program. My patients are no longer slaves to the opiates. They get their lives back.”

When asked about the new facility in Brunswick County, Joseph responded with a relieved comment: “It’s long overdue. There were very few facilities available to treat these patients near their home. Now they have somewhere to go. And that’s a good feeling.”

In addition to the substance abuse services and many other wellness programs, Coastal Horizons’ Brunswick County office also offers a full-service Rape Crisis Center. The Center operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Staff and volunteers are available at any time to help victims of sexual violence through all aspects of the crisis, following through to prosecution, at the client’s request.

“We are with them all the way,” explains Weller-Stargell. “I think that is a critical part of a person’s recovery. To have thorough assistance during such a difficult time.”

The Rape Crisis Center also offers free rape prevention and awareness programs, a hotline offering information and additional resources, counseling for all parties affected, law enforcement and court advocacy.

With Coastal Horizons Center’s wide range of valuable and necessary services now readily accessible to the Brunswick County public, the impact is being felt on all levels. Not only do the local clients welcome the agency to Brunswick County, but the professional community is pleased with its presence as well. The Department of Social Services, law enforcement and area hospitals, to name a few, are glad to now have quality local treatment and support services available to the community.

“It’s just wonderful to see this dream come to fruition,” says Weller-Stargell. “We finally have a clear and permanent presence in Brunswick County. There have been many people involved with the agency over the years that have maintained the original vision and purpose for Coastal Horizons — to provide a total array of services to people that are in crisis, dealing with addiction and with mental health issues. That we would be there to assist them in making better choices for themselves in becoming healthier people. I can’t tell you how happy it makes us to expand those services to yet another area in need.”

Coastal Horizons Center provides services in 33 Eastern North Carolina Counties and Durham County. With the completion of their new facility in Brunswick County Coastal Horizons continues to prove that there are no county lines they won’t cross to impact the lives of thousands of individuals during their most critical times of need.

For more information about Coastal Horizons Center, visit [www.coastalhorizons.org](http://www.coastalhorizons.org), call (910) 754-4515 or drop by 120 Coastal Horizons Drive in Shallotte.