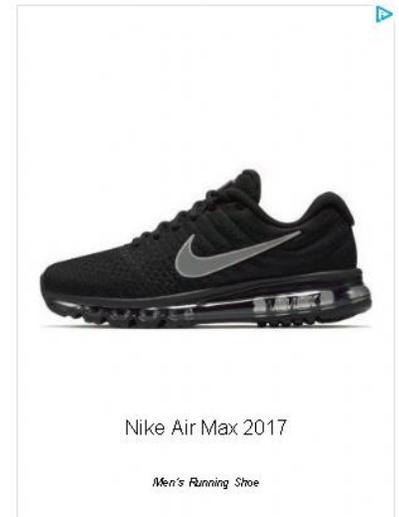


Shout Out: Caitlin Simpson, a regional director with Footprints to Recovery in Arlington Heights



Nike Air Max 2017

Men's Running Shoe

Caitlin Simpson is the regional director of clinical operations for Footprints to Recover, an addiction treatment center in Arlington Heights. (Courtesy of Caitlin Simpson)

[Karen Ann Cullotta](#) **Contact Reporter** Pioneer Press

As a counselor and social worker, Caitlin Simpson tries to provide a safe space in the northwest suburbs for those struggling to recover from addiction.

Pioneer Press recently chatted with Simpson, 35, regional director of clinical operations for Footprints to Recovery in [Arlington Heights](#), who detailed her work with the nationwide drug and alcohol treatment center to tackle the nation's growing opioid epidemic.

Q: How did you decide to open a treatment center in Arlington Heights?

A: We opened our center two years ago in Arlington Heights because we knew that heroin addiction was a massive issue in Chicago and the suburbs, and that there was a significant amount of use and overdoses. We also knew that opioid addiction is not just an inner city problem, but affects individuals in the suburbs and rural areas, too. There is nowhere geographically that you will not find this problem, which is very tragic.

Q: How do your clients arrive at Footprints to Recovery?

A: Many of them come to us after completing the initial stages of detox at a hospital, and they need a soft landing. Sometimes, that can mean partnering with other organizations that can provide them with Suboxone, Vivitrol and methadone during the maintenance period to help them with lingering withdrawal symptoms. We want them to have a successful chance of recovery.

Q: What are some of the most common cases you treat involving addiction to prescription medications?

A: It often starts when someone is prescribed a painkiller for chronic pain, for example, a back problem after a car accident. But after a while, the natural response of the body is to develop a tolerance to the painkiller, so they start taking more and more to get the same high. At a certain point, a doctor will cut a patient off, and they then try to get someone else to prescribe the medication, or they buy it off the street. And sometimes, when they're totally cut off from anyone who will give them a prescription, they turn to heroin, which is really cheap.

Q: Why do some people become addicted to painkillers and others don't have any problems just taking them when needed?

A: About 80 percent to 90 percent of people who become addicted to opioids have had some type of childhood trauma, like a family divorce, that they are still dealing with emotionally, and which continues to drive their addiction, and is what led them to start using in the first place. We see people from all walks of life, and all races and socioeconomic demographics. Parents, professionals, first responders, like police officers ... addiction does not discriminate against anyone. About 90 percent to 95 percent of the time, the addiction comes with co-occurring mental health issues, and they are using opioids to numb the emotional pain, sadness and anxiety by using.

Q: Your job sounds very rewarding but also difficult. What drew you to this field?

A: I had an internship right out of college at an addiction treatment center, and I knew immediately that this was what I wanted to do with my life. I love what I do every day. My

mission is to serve our clients, to be an innovative agent of change and to help stop this epidemic.

Shout Out is a weekly feature in which we introduce our readers to their fellow community members and local visitors throughout suburban Chicago.

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