



2022

**ANNUAL
REPORT**



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Steve Ward

Retired from IBM and Founder and Executive Director of STEPS Ministries



This will not be your typical annual report letter. I will start by being very real about my experience and passion for founding STEPS Ministries. I was a high-functioning alcoholic for over thirty years, and my older son struggled with drugs and alcohol for many years. We started those habits in high school.

In recovery, I saw that addictions and related issues are not only treatable, but they are also preventable, and the way to do that is to equip people to live effectively before their lives and families are torn apart. The most painful time of my life led to miraculous benefits for me and my family. It inspired me to leave IBM after 38 years to found STEPS Ministries five years ago, and that was the best decision I ever made.

Many people that you care about are hurting, even if they don't talk about it. I want you and them to know life can get better, and there are steps they can take that have worked for millions of people. It's okay not to be okay, but they don't have to stay that way, and STEPS Ministries is here to help.

Ministry is hard work, and real life is often messy. I know because I've been there, and I've talked to thousands of people who have been there too. I've now been researching, writing, speaking, teaching, and coaching in the areas in which STEPS serves for almost fifteen years. I am deeply grateful for the honor and privilege of bringing help, healing, and hope to as many hurting people as we can.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

At STEPS, we love doing what we do, and it is an honor, calling, and blessing for us to be able to do it.



VISION

Our vision is for all hurting people to find help, healing, and hope.



GOALS

Our goals are to help people improve their lives, grow closer to God, and prevent addictions and other harmful issues.



STRATEGY

Our strategy is to help people live life better by being proactive and intentional, developing resilience and peace, and taking positive steps to achieve wholeness (emotionally, spiritually, and personally).

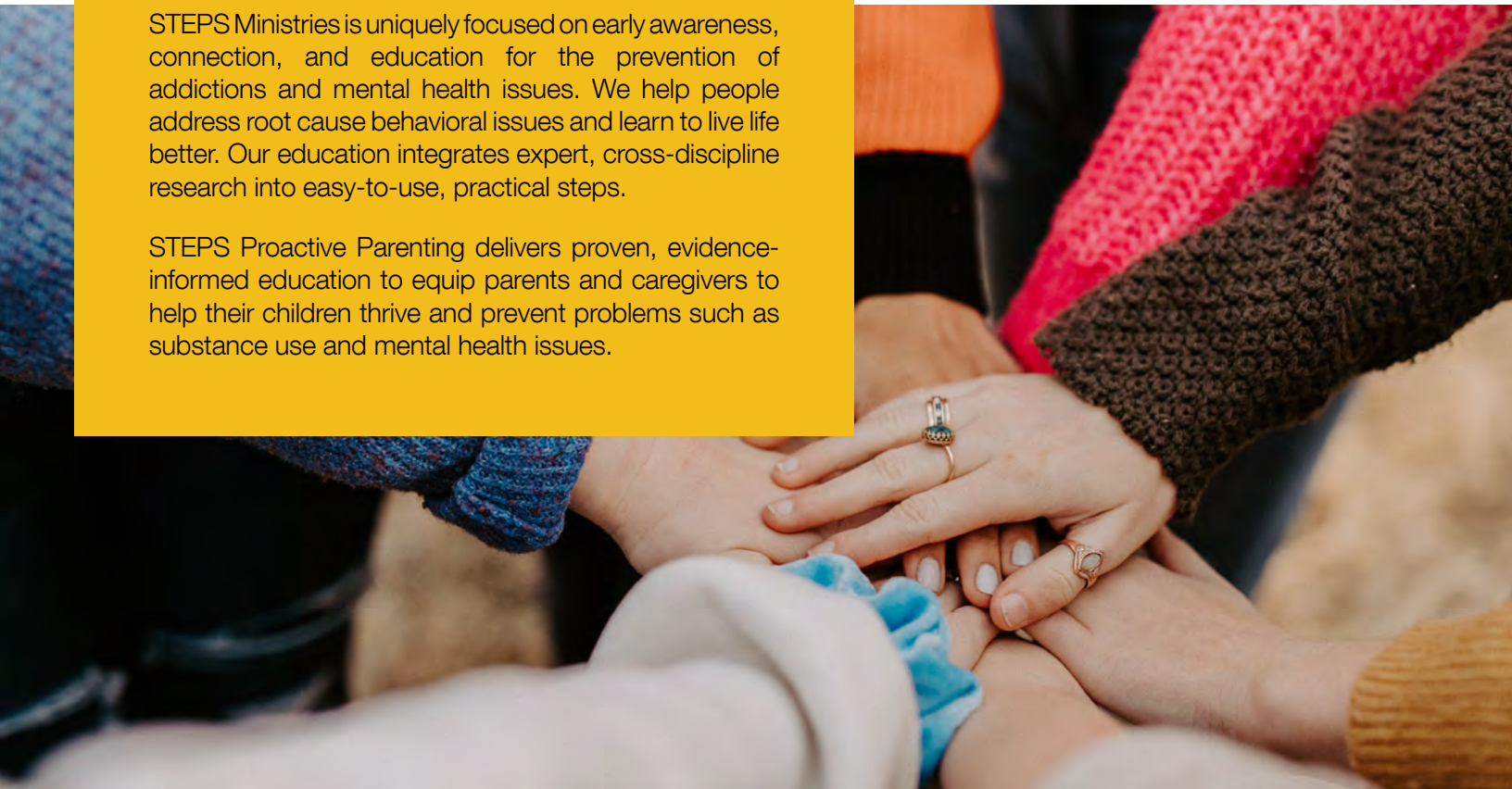


MISSION

Our mission is to serve people effectively and efficiently by creating useful and practical resources and education, communicating and sharing content in a repeatable and scalable manner, and reaching more people by generously collaborating with other organizations.

STEPS Ministries is uniquely focused on early awareness, connection, and education for the prevention of addictions and mental health issues. We help people address root cause behavioral issues and learn to live life better. Our education integrates expert, cross-discipline research into easy-to-use, practical steps.

STEPS Proactive Parenting delivers proven, evidence-informed education to equip parents and caregivers to help their children thrive and prevent problems such as substance use and mental health issues.



STEPS MINISTRIES IS VERY UNIQUE



Frankly, STEPS is not like most other nonprofit organizations. There are many reasons that is so:

- Our programs address the critical issues of substance abuse and mental health, and they address the root cause behaviors for teenagers and adults that can lead to positive transformational change.
- These programs do not duplicate existing community services because they are uniquely focused on prevention and utilize evidence-informed principles that have worked for millions of people.
- We integrate proven concepts from wellness, psychology, neuroscience, recovery, spirituality, and personal development into holistic education to help people change their lives one step at a time.
- About 90% of those struggling with substance abuse and related issues do not get help. Our online education is convenient, confidential, and offered judgment-free to counter shame and stigma.
- Our education is validated by an excellent user rating of 9.7 out of 10 and very positive feedback that validates the transformational nature of our training and content for both individuals and families.
- We can serve a very large number of people and scale efficiently by offering digital products and online education and partnering with other organizations to reach more people effectively.
- We have skills and experience from over a decade of research and preparation by our Executive Director and four decades of business experience, and we have built our team to scale our ministry.
- Grants and donations to STEPS in 2023 and 2024 will have a large, long-term impact because we are nearing a “tipping point” in our ability to scale and expand the number of people we can serve.
- Our online content, training, and books are universal and timeless to help people for many years.

**At STEPS, we don't feel called
to do what everybody else is doing.**

**We partner with many organizations and integrate
proven methodologies from experts, but we deliver
education in a unique, easy-to-use manner.**





RESEARCH DIRECTS OUR MINISTRY

Less than 10% of people with addiction or emotional issues get help. Practical prevention programs are desperately needed to provide resources to help people take positive steps before lives are torn apart.

There are three critical facts that show how we can transform families and communities for the better:

1. Substance use and mental health are massive problems, but many of those issues are preventable.
2. About one half of all families will deal with addiction, and 9 out of 10 people start using by age 18.
3. 80% of teenagers say the main influence on their decisions to use substances is their parents.

Proactive parenting is critical because substance abuse with teenagers has become an epidemic:

- 75% of high school students use substances, and 40% abuse them.
- Fentanyl has now become the leading cause of death for young adults beginning at age 18.
- The leading cause of death below age 18 is vehicle accidents, many affected by impaired driving.

There are root causes that teenagers struggle with that contribute to the risk of substance abuse:

- One half of adolescents have a mental health disorder at some point in their lives.
- Anxiety disorders have greatly escalated for teens to be 70% higher than adults.
- 1 in 11 young people attempt suicide, and 19% of them consider it.

These startling, sobering facts informed our strategic decision to focus primarily on Proactive Parenting in 2022 and 2023.

2022 HAD MANY HIGHLIGHTS

In 2022, STEPS launched a community-wide integrated program in Walker County, Alabama which has the highest state-wide rates for drug overdose deaths (CDC) and shorter lives and poorer mental health (AL.com). We were awarded a grant to pursue these efforts by the Walker Area Community Foundation.

Our focus in Walker County and elsewhere was on STEPS Proactive Parenting and these five key areas:

CONTENT

- Published over 50 useful articles, many that included related videos and podcasts.
- Greatly improved the PACES for Parents online learning center and STEPS website.

EDUCATION

- Developed a new “Biblical Parenting” curriculum and began teaching it through churches.
- Seminars received a rating of 9.7 of 10 with excellent feedback showing lives being changed.



SOCIAL MEDIA

- Grew to over 50 posts reaching about 20,000 people per month and on pace to continue growth.
- Expanded our focus on short videos (Reels) with some videos reaching as many as 15,000 people.

DIGITAL OUTREACH

- Delivered 570,000+ ads with links to parenting resources to 14,000 households in Walker County.
- Ran campaigns to boost Facebook posts, deliver Google and Facebook ads, and promote content.

COLLABORATION

- Built and executed a community-wide program in Walker County working with many organizations.
- Reached out and worked with churches in Walker County and Birmingham to serve their parents.

During 2022, we significantly expanded the STEPS team to reach and serve more people effectively.



PARENTS GIVE US GREAT FEEDBACK



We collect feedback on STEPS seminars. The results have been excellent with an average rating of 9.7 on a scale of 1-to-10 on the value, relevance, and usefulness of the education.

"The information is eye-opening. This should be mandatory for all parents! I liked the entire presentation. I loved the research and the heart behind it. It's simple, relatable, and can really help people. Let's get the word to as many as we can."

"This is the beginning of the spread of a powerful, wonderful message, not just for those in the middle of dangerous addiction but for parents who do not fear this for their child."

"Loved everything. I wish everyone could hear this. It was so practical at every stage."

"This seminar touches on all aspects of parenting and living life to the fullest as a family. The wisdom and insight encourage parents to study their children and develop a plan!"

"I really liked the personal testimony drawing from life examples and experiences."

"Loved the orientation toward grace and the personal stories related to the material. Thank you for caring enough to share your story to help others."

"Very helpful information! Please continue these seminars, all parents should hear this."

"This seminar was the best investment of time I have made recently, and I can recommend this session to other parents without hesitation."

2023 WILL BE A VERY EXCITING YEAR

The Walker Area Community Foundation expanded our parenting grant for 2023, and we will continue the integrated program there. We will also bring that program to the Birmingham metropolitan area and develop the processes and systems to then scale it in Alabama and nationally. In Birmingham, there are 127,000 kids and teenagers ages 10-19 who have used addictive substances. We can target the parents of these young people using similar techniques as those we used in Walker County during 2022.

Our focus in 2023 in Walker County, Birmingham, and beyond is STEPS Proactive Parenting, and we will also build other programs in addiction prevention and life improvement. Plans in our key areas include:

CONTENT

Aim integrated content at targeted problems people want to solve; build easy-to-use products, articles, and videos; greatly increase our videos; and enhance how people use content on our platforms.

EDUCATION

Build short courses in 10 key areas; expand reach with training videos and webinars; ramp up quality and efficiency in creating education; and offer self-learning and facilitator-led training options.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Execute for massive social media growth; increase use of videos on all channels; launch YouTube and TikTok channels; and reach more people through social media groups and influencers.



DIGITAL OUTREACH

Distill lessons from 2022 campaigns; build processes for SEO, metrics, and feedback; partner with a few digital content marketing experts; and build an ongoing parenting digital community.

COLLABORATION

Build a Walker County Advisory team for partnering; hold integrated programs in willing Birmingham communities; build automated programs for organizations; and find a few national partners.

STEPS has built the content, processes, and resources to continue to scale effectively and efficiently, and we are poised to make leap-ahead growth in the next two years in the number of people we can serve.



HELP, HEALING AND HOPE: A FAMILY STORY

Don and Christy are good parents and doing all they can for their kids, but their daughter and son have struggled as teenagers. Emma, 18, has been getting more and more out of control. She struggled with anxiety which led to abusing pills (Xanax,) and her parents are afraid her drinking has become an addiction. They've found her passed out and she runs off sometimes. They also worry about her harming herself and are afraid to leave her alone.

"We want to help Emma see she has a good future if she takes positive steps. But she has become angry and disrespectful, and this led to frustration, uncertainty, and sadness for us. We needed help and to hear from someone who has been through these sorts of challenges," Christy says.

"The STEPS seminar and articles helped us learn how we can be more proactive in our parenting. That guidance helped us understand our emotions were normal for parents with a child who is struggling. Every parent will benefit from the life-changing principles in this ministry," Don stresses.

Don and Christy's younger son, Jason, is still figuring things out including how to deal with the temptations he faces. Recently, they had to pick him up from a party where the police had been called for underage drinking. They believe he may have experimented with pills as well.

Christy says they are learning through STEPS training how to help him deal with situations in a healthy fashion and prevent problems before they become serious.

"We now have a more realistic expectation of what's going on with him and that it's okay for us to think about taking care of ourselves as well," she says.

"The STEPS ministry has been a real blessing to us! We wish we could have been exposed to this teaching a lot earlier in our journey. The guidance and proactive ideas were a big help and the release from control and perfection were a huge comfort to us," added Don.

STEPS FINANCES ARE STRONG

Finances for STEPS are in very good shape. We continued to grow every year for the five years we have been in operation. We incur zero debt, and our spending is variable versus fixed overhead which makes costs manageable. We

closed fiscal year 2022 with cash reserves for 5 months of operating expenses.

We have a sustainable ministry due to growing and diversified nonprofit revenue from these sources:



Highlights of our continued financial strength are that foundation revenue continues to grow very well, our Boards offer a significant foundation of funding, and we have a broad and varied base of supporters. The tangible success of our STEPS Proactive Parenting program will continue to encourage growth in our support. We have the opportunity to earn revenue from the sale of digital products and education and books in the future. Each year, our fourth quarter fundraising campaigns help us close the year strongly.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Tom Majors

Healthcare IT Executive and Chairman of the Board of Directors, STEPS Ministries



The delivery of health care in the US is shifting its focus from treating symptoms of disease to preventing it all together. This approach uses education, awareness, a holistic view of the individual, and access to experts and resources to produce better outcomes at a lower cost. STEPS is a great example of this approach and fits well with public health and employer initiatives concerning addiction.

STEPS is built upon real world experiences honed over decades that allow it to speak with authority to individuals, families, institutions, and companies concerning addiction and its prevention. Simply put, STEPS will help you develop the courage, competency, and commitment to take on the challenge of recognizing and confronting the power of addiction in yourself, family, friends, and employees.

I have been on the Board of Directors at STEPS since it was founded in 2018 and have seen them put the breakthrough concept of prevention into practice by delivering high-quality education, products, and services to individuals and organizations. I have known Steve Ward, the founder and Executive Director, for much longer. I know his heart is to reach and serve hurting people, and I have appreciated how he has applied his 38 years of business experience to running STEPS effectively and efficiently.

STEPS is a deeply compassionate ministry and a very well-run nonprofit organization that is making a difference. They have proven content, established processes, and scalable operations positioned to reach and serve tens of thousands of people. They have little overhead, and new grants and donations are applied directly to their programs. We hope you will join the “Prevention Movement” and help us provide help, healing, and hope to hurting people.

WE HAVE TWO WONDERFUL BOARDS

STEPS is honored and blessed by the encouragement, leadership, and support of an awesome set of community leaders who share their passion and expertise to help us serve people effectively.

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ALLISON JONES

District Court Judge at Walker County, Alabama

OUR DEEP AND HEARTFELT GRATITUDE GOES TO

The foundations, organizations, and individuals who entrust us with their kind support, and we promise to be very good stewards of that trust.

STEPS Board members, staff, and volunteers who offer their wisdom, talent, and heart to help us be much more than we could be otherwise.

Our collaboration partners with whom we pursue a common goal to reach and serve as many hurting people as possible by working together.

TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO...

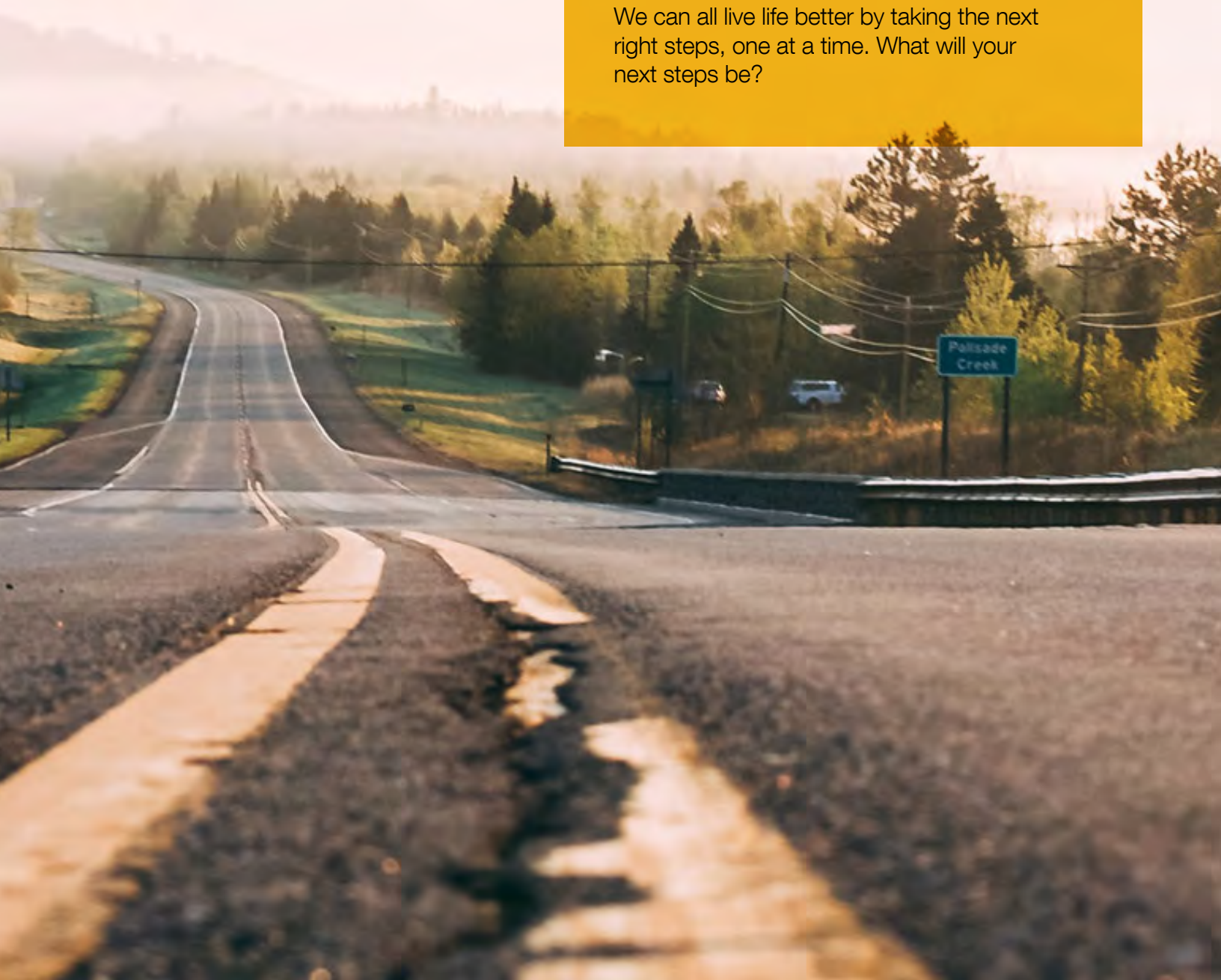
- Improve and sometimes save the lives of hurting people and educate and encourage those who care for them to deal with life's problems effectively.
- Keep families together by helping parents equip their kids to prevent or lessen the impact of substance abuse and related mental health issues.
- Bring help (practical steps to move forward), healing (encouragement for those in pain), and hope (God's grace and assurance of a positive future) to reach hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of hurting people with resources that fit their needs.

NEXT RIGHT STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

All of us - not just some of us - are surrounded by hurting people, and we all hurt at times ourselves. You can become part of the "Prevention Movement" and help people live life better and prevent addictions.

1. Sign up to be encouraged by helpful weekly blog articles:
LifImprovementSteps.com/GetTheBlog
2. Learn more from past STEPS newsletters:
LifImprovementSteps.com/Steps-Ministries-Newsletter
3. Serve hurting people by supporting STEPS on our donate page:
LifImprovementSteps.com/Growth

We can all live life better by taking the next right steps, one at a time. What will your next steps be?





INFORMATION AND HOW TO REACH US

Below is how you can get more information about STEPS and what we do to reach and serve hurting people.

Explore our website and make sure you check out resources to help hurting people you know.

STEPS MINISTRIES WEBSITE

LifeImprovementSteps.com

STEPS PROACTIVE PARENTING PAGE

LifeImprovementSteps.com/ProactiveParenting

WALKER COUNTY PARENT RESOURCES

StepsProactiveParenting.com/WalkerCoParents

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