



2023  
**ANNUAL**  
REPORT

---





# THE DARK OF NIGHT

## A TRUE STORY

I still remember the night times.

In the darkness of early morning, I would wake to a feeling of dread. The next few hours would be clouded by fear and shame. I would pray over and over for answers and help that didn't seem to come. I would eventually drag myself out of bed to struggle through another day.

My world had come apart a piece at a time.

Over the last few years, our family had faced the blanket of depression and the emptiness of loss. My work was demanding, and it was hard to turn off my brain at night and relax. Drinking became an escape for me and my wife, but we both felt the sting of guilt more than the high brought on by alcohol.

We faced every parent's nightmare as we saw our son being drawn deeper into darkness by the allure of alcohol and drugs. Occasional scary incidents became a pattern of dangerous behavior which led us at times to fear the worst: "What is going to happen to our son?"

Our life was a roller coaster with short-lived highs when things seemed to be going okay followed by debilitating lows of frustration, anger, and anxiety. Each day was a challenge, but night times were the worst, and hope seemed absent in the dark.

**Steve Ward**

Retired from IBM and Founder and Executive Director of STEPS Ministries



Years later, the fear and shame are gone. Now I look forward to every new day. The nights have become a time of thankfulness and closeness with God. Hope has returned to the dark.

STEPS Ministries was born out of the "Dark Ages" of those heart-wrenching personal events. Now, I care deeply for hurting families because I've been where they are, and I know how they feel. And I've learned something those families desperately need to understand: "Life can get better one step at a time."

Steve Ward

# HELP, HEALING, & HOPE FOR HURTING PEOPLE

## WHAT STEPS DOES



STEPS provides practical resources for hurting people to find help, healing, and hope.

- Most people are hurting, and the vast majority of them do not get help.
- Even substance and mental health issues are treatable and preventable.
- STEPS integrates proven principles into simple positive steps people can take.
- We deliver content and education in-person, digitally, and through collaboration.
- STEPS provides quick-and-easy resources with trusted guidance to help you make good lifestyle choices, reduce anxiety, and prevent problems before they get worse.

## WHAT STEPS DOES NOT DO



STEPS does not replace the much-needed and more intensive work of recovery specialists, psychiatrists, therapists, pastors, wellness trainers, or personal development mentors. What do those professions typically have in common?

- One-on-one, hour-long, in-person sessions.
- Silo-based focus on one aspect of wellness.
- Deep discussions of personal family issues.
- Individual talks versus reusable education.
- Long-term treatment or recovery process.

## HOW STEPS SERVES HURTING PEOPLE

STEPS provides online and digital resources with the convenience and confidentiality of your computer or cell phone. We offer easy-to-use content and one-place-to-go education that integrates proven cross-discipline expertise.

You learn practical steps you can take today so you see improvement by tomorrow, and our timeless content can serve people locally and anywhere for many years to come.

STEPS is an on-demand do-it-yourself life improvement coach for hurting people who want help, healing, and hope.



# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HELP, HEALING, AND HOPE?

STEPS provides practical resources for hurting people to find help, healing, and hope.

*"Karen is a busy mom managing a family with 2 teenagers. It's hard finding time to do everything she'd like to do or look ahead to what's coming. Her kids are facing issues and temptations, and she wishes she had quick-and-easy resources with tips on how to stay aware of what's going on with her kids."*

*"Michelle and James are discouraged. Their daughter Jasmine has gone from weed to alcohol and pills. They're scared, but they recently learned something important: Jasmine is hurting more than they are! They're looking for guidance on how to stay connected to her to support the daughter they love."*

*"When he was younger, Carson seemed happy and healthy. Now a high school Junior, his battles with depression and drugs have destroyed his self-esteem. His grades have plummeted, and his girlfriend recently broke up with him. Carson sees no hope for the future as he stares blankly at the bottle of pills."*

## HELP

STEPS teaches simple, practical steps people can take to make progress with personal issues and tough situations. This includes awareness of behavioral root causes to prevent problems before they become severe.

## HEALING

We bring encouragement to people who are struggling so they know they're not broken or alone. We increase connection in families so they learn that it's okay not to be okay, but they don't have to stay that way.

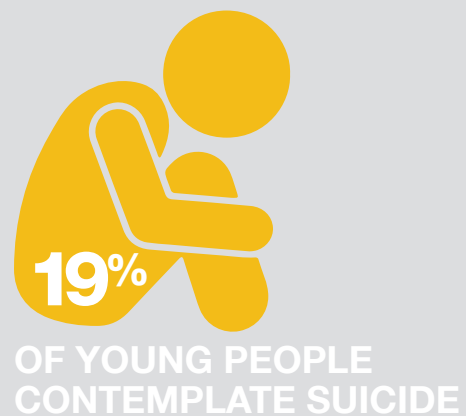
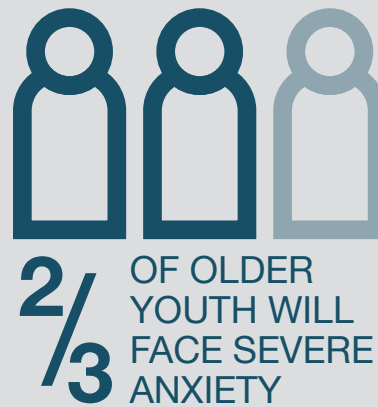
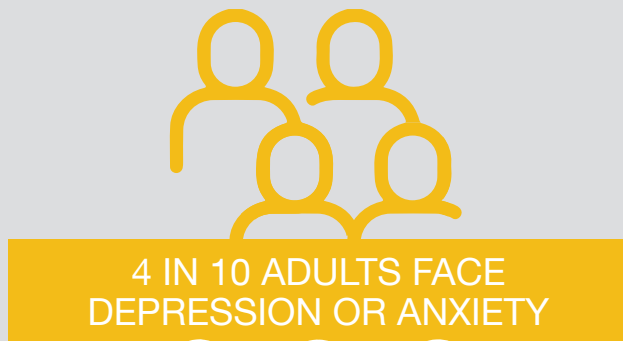
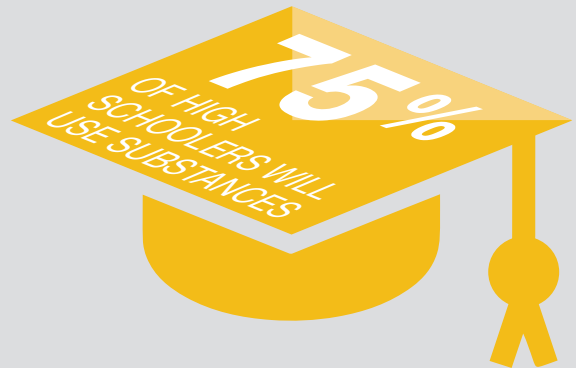
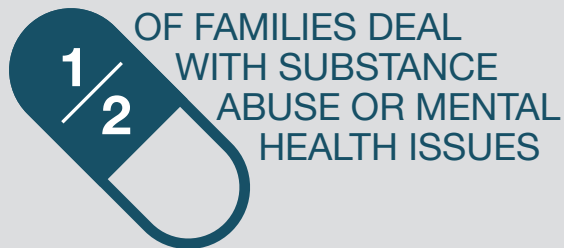
## HOPE

STEPS inspires people with a realistic assurance of a positive future. Our education creates hope with proven steps to build positive behaviors, emotional and spiritual understanding, and learning from what worked for others.



# STEPS SERVES HURTING FAMILIES, PARENTS, & KIDS

## FACTS EVERY PARENT NEEDS TO KNOW



Our family-oriented resources and education use our proven and well-received “P-A-C-E-S” methodology to help parents in 5 areas:

**PREPARATION**

for the stages their kids go through so they never have to say, “We didn’t think these problems could happen in our family.”

---

**AWARENESS**

of what’s really going on in their children’s lives to avoid struggling with, “We didn’t know their issues were that serious.”

---

**CONNECTION**

to their sons and daughters to prevent realizing, “Things changed, and we couldn’t communicate with them anymore.”

---

**EDUCATION**

as they and their kids face new situations to avoid the excuse, “We didn’t know what to do when they were struggling.”

---

**STEPS**

to take and a parenting plan so they never have to think, “We should have done something sooner, but we waited too late.”

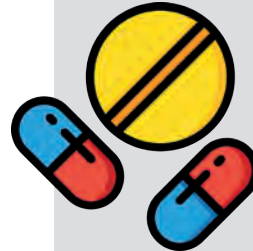
**FACTS THAT ALL TEENAGERS NEED TO KNOW**



When driving, alcohol slows your brain and reactions.

In a 1-second delay, a car at 60 MPH travels 88 feet.

That's enough for accidents, injuries, and deaths.



A few grains of fentanyl can kill you.

It's often mixed into other drugs.

Taking any pill could be deadly.



90% of addicted people started before age 18.

Drugs alter your brain which causes addiction.

Every year you delay using lowers your risk.

# TWO STORIES THAT REPRESENT MILLIONS OF OTHERS

Here are two stories of people our ministry has served

## MICHAEL AND SUSAN'S STORY

Michael and Susan are good parents, but one of their kids was getting in trouble, and they were worried. As well as frustrated, angry, and scared. They went to a parenting seminar looking for answers and help. Afterwards they said, "We came wanting to help our child but quickly realized we needed help as well. We were encouraged to embrace our calling as parents, while also feeling freed from perfection."

It was a breakthrough to start looking at the problems their daughter was facing by understanding her

world and the challenges and temptations that were contributing to her issues. Michael and Susan now realized, "We learned about pressures our child may be facing and how she may seek relief from pain. And how we can be aware and come alongside if destructive behaviors take over her life."

The couple changed their perspective about how to improve their parenting by becoming more proactive. Things have gotten better, and they now enthusiastically declare, "The information on how to prevent our daughter from going down the wrong path was extremely helpful. It gave us a lot to think about and intentional steps we can take to become better parents. Thank you!"







## DANIEL'S STORY

Daniel was an awesome kid: smart, popular, and a good athlete. He had good parents and a happy life, although later he remembered the occasional times of insecurity and anxiety that he had faced as a child.

His family moved just before he went into middle school, so he had to find a new set of friends. Being an extrovert and risk-taker who liked having a good time, he started hanging out with the “cool kids” he met. Later in middle school, the group started drinking. Daniel had no idea how the course of his life had just changed.

Four years later, he was a Senior in high school who had dealt with: a habit of drug abuse and

selling pot and pills to friends, running away, getting kicked out of school, jail, and six weeks of residential recovery. After another six years, his experiences had also included: periods of depression, being in jail several times, dropping out of college, a year in residential recovery, and attending funerals of three of his friends.

This story, unlike hundreds of thousands of others, ends well. Daniel is now an awesome young man with a great job and a wonderful wife. He deeply understands that he has become the man he is meant to be not in spite of the problems he faced, but because of them.

And he knows he's one of the lucky ones.

# 2023 HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Our ministry's heart is to care and operate like we're giving help, healing, and hope to one hurting person at a time. But we also want to reach and serve as many people and families as possible. Just during 2023, STEPS reached and served:

- Tens – Individuals and organization leaders we worked with one-on-one.
- Tens – 10+ courses, education sites, and presentations designed and delivered.
  - 5 Online Toolkits (each has 10-12 videos, 5 articles, 20 support articles).
  - 3 Content Portals for organizations and PACES for Parents learning center.
- Hundreds – 78 articles, 100+ learning videos, and 10+ products and tools developed.
  - All content and education is built to serve people anywhere for years to come.
- Thousands – People taught with seminars, webinars, web content, and digital products.
  - Over 10 seminars, speaking engagements, and events held with excellent results.
  - Seminars were rated 9.7 out of 10 by attendees with excellent written feedback.
- Tens of thousands – Views or opens of articles, social media posts, videos, and web pages.
  - 551 social media posts and over 180 videos and blog articles published during 2023.
- Tens of thousands – Other people reached in media articles and radio and podcast interviews.
- Hundreds of thousands – We had 552,820 digital touches with social media and digital advert impressions.



# SEE WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY ABOUT STEPS

*"I highly recommend STEPS Ministries. It's a wonderful organization, and they do great work. They educate and enable people to understand the dangers that are out there, particularly with their children. I like the way that they are very intentional about education." (Board Member)*

*"As a writer, Steve Ward provided great insight to our readership in an easy-to-understand format with specific tips on how people can improve their parenting. Steve is also a natural on the radio and shares his passion for helping others in a concise, easy-to-understand way." (Media Executive)*

*"I would like to wholeheartedly and enthusiastically recommend STEPS Proactive Parenting to you. Our church and staff firmly believe in and strongly support them and what they do." (Church Senior Pastor)*

*"STEPS has a unique approach to prevent problems by helping people before lives are dangerously impacted." (Nonprofit Executive Director)*

*"The delivery of health care in the US is shifting from treating symptoms of disease to preventing it altogether. STEPS is a great example of this approach and is built upon real world experience honed over decades that allow it to speak with authority." (Board Member)*

*"Steve presented to our civic club and really helped change the way we think about addiction. It's obvious that his knowledge and passion for helping people is making a difference in our communities." (Business Leader)*

*"STEPS Ministries is leading the way on prevention. They provide resources and education to help identify healthy behaviors and practices for children and families before trouble arises." (Board Member)*

*"Steve has provided helpful guidance and instruction to families who struggle. He is a gifted speaker who has led several seminars in a variety of venues at our church." (Church Youth Pastor)*

*"STEPS Proactive Parenting is instrumental in helping people and families in the areas of awareness, education, and connection for the topic of addiction." (Business Leader)*

# ACTUAL EXAMPLES OF HOW STEPS SERVES PEOPLE

See how we serve people, families, and organizations on the STEPS website: [LifImprovementSteps.com](https://LifImprovementSteps.com)

Select from the items on the top menu to check out all the interesting areas below.

## TOOLKITS

3 ways STEPS serves (Proactive Parenting, Life Improvement, Addiction Prevention)

- Online Toolkit (example): [LifImprovementSteps.com/ParentingTeenagers](https://LifImprovementSteps.com/ParentingTeenagers)
- Content Portal (example): [LifImprovementSteps.com/Proactive-Parenting-St-John](https://LifImprovementSteps.com/Proactive-Parenting-St-John)

## OTHER AREAS

- **Blog** – 19 categories with hundreds of useful blog articles to use and share.
- **Videos** – New channel of published videos, and we have hundreds of others.
- **Books** – 2 published books, and we have content and plans for several more.
- **Who We Are** – About, Boards & Staff, Testimonials, Stories, Ministry Description.
- **Organizations** – How STEPS provides resources to companies and other organizations.
- **Collaborate** – Examples for groups of speaking topics and media articles and interviews.
- **Donate** – How you can help, how donations are used, STEPS stories, make a donation.





## 2024 BRINGS NEW AREAS OF SERVICE & GROWTH

Here are 10 exciting areas STEPS will focus on, expand, or add to our ministry in 2024:

- 1. “Family Wellness & Personal Life Skills”**  
New initiative to offer resources to the whole family.
- 2. Escalate impact on parents of teens**  
Scale the growth of proven parenting of teens education.
- 3. Reaching and equipping teens directly**  
Help youth live on purpose and fulfill their potential.
- 4. Parents of kids in elementary school**  
How to use proactive parenting to raise great children.
- 5. Parents of young people in college**  
Mentoring older youth to equip them to handle real life.
- 6. Wellness life skills family training**  
Help parents themselves and other members of the family.
- 7. Caregivers in the parenting role**  
Grandparents, other family members, and adopting parents.
- 8. Disadvantaged groups and families**  
Pilot a new program to help diverse, under-served areas.
- 9. Multiplication via collaboration**  
Partner with groups with Content Portals and Online Toolkits.
- 10. Segmented ministry campaigns**  
Build targeted education and outreach for selected segments.

# STEPS HAS A STRONG FINANCIAL FOUNDATION

STEPS finances are in very good shape coming out of 2023. We opened and closed the year with cash reserves covering 5 months of operating expenses. We have diversified income, efficient and scalable operations, and a sustainable operating model.

In 2024, all the major sources of income are expected to grow. STEPS has identified solid revenue sources to cover 90% of our 2024 operating budget. To reach and serve more people,

we will plan to a growth budget that is 20% higher than the operating budget.

STEPS has a large amount of proven methodologies, content, products, and education we can use over and over for years to come. We can leverage that content efficiently through scalable digital outreach to reach more people and by multiplying our impact through collaboration with other organizations.

The program expense ratio for STEPS is greater than 80% which is a very positive indicator. New and incremental donations and grants are applied almost entirely to reaching and serving more people.

We are in great shape across all our major sources of income:



## FOUNDATIONS

STEPS received revenue from 8 foundations in 2023, 7 are expected to be annual supporters, and 3 of them increased their gifts. Foundations were 65% of total income.



## DONATIONS

Relationships with monthly supporters and repeat one-time donors were healthy and some increased their giving in 2023. These two areas accounted for 28% of total income.



## OTHER SOURCES

In 2023, revenue from products and services increased significantly. Together with churches and other individual donors, these areas added up to 7% of total income.

# WHO IS ON THE TWO STEPS 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.

## BOARD OF ADVISORS

**RICHARD E. SIMMONS III**

Executive Director at The Center

**TOM MAYFIELD**

President at M3 Resources USA LLC

**DON MENENDEZ**

CEO at White Plume Technologies

**TOMMY BRIGHAM**

Chairman of the Board at ARC Realty Co.

**HARRY PEARSON**

CEO at OneAscent Financial

**LIBBY LASSITER**

President at Bayer Properties, LLC

**JOHN LOVOY**

CEO at Infomedia and Uptick Marketing

**JOHN THOMAS**

Senior Vice President at Colliers International

**JIM BOB MCALLISTER**

CEO and Co-Founder at KEYSYS

**DAN STEEVER**

Dan Steever LLC, former CEO/President (several)

**JENNY WALTMAN**

CEO & Chairman at Grace Klein Community

**JIM WEAVER**

COO at The Onin Group

**TROY DUELL**

CEO at Centurion Labs

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**TOM MAJORS**

Board Chairman, Client Executive at Merative

**SHERYL MATTON**

Enterprise Marketing at Secureworks (retired)

**JUSTIN WORTHINGTON**

Principal at Red Street Investment Company

**RICHARD MOBLEY**

Founder and Principal at The Seven Four Group

**JEFF HOWARD**

Founder and CEO at JLH Exponential, LLC

**MARK HENLEY**

President at Green Light Ventures, LLC

**JAMES GANNON**

President at Birmingham Mosquito Control

**BILL HART**

Director of Development at Banks Academy

**ROB BAUGHER**

Owner and CEO at Baugher, Inc./Remodel It

**ALLISON JONES**

District Court Judge at Walker County, Alabama



# HOW ANYONE (INCLUDING YOU) CAN HELP OTHERS

It's easy for you to be part of our ministry to bring help, healing, and hope to hurting people:

## 1. Use and share helpful STEPS resources

Help your family and other people you know simply by forwarding useful blog emails or Liking and Sharing social media posts.

- The impact of that one simple act of service to offer help, healing, and hope may make more of an impact on their lives than you will ever know.

## 2. Serve hurting people by supporting STEPS

There are several easy ways you can donate to the ministry on our website [Donate page](#) or contact us to discuss the options.

- Your kind gift will go directly to helping STEPS reach and serve families including parents, children, and youth and perhaps people you know.





### **3. Volunteer to help in 1 of these ways**

Be part of something bigger than you by using your talents to impact the lives of others with flexible expectations for a few hours work from home when convenient to you:

- Give feedback on our content by sharing your input.
- Connect STEPS to a church, organization, or individual.
- Spend 2-to-4 hours a week to help reach out to organizations and individuals.
- Use your gifts to serve such as: outreach, marketing, content, social media, digital marketing, video/audio production, fundraising, and other areas.



STEPS brings help, healing, and hope to hurting people.

[LifImprovementSteps.com](https://LifImprovementSteps.com)

**WHO WE ARE**

[LifImprovementSteps.com/AboutSteps](https://LifImprovementSteps.com/AboutSteps)



# INFORMATION AND HOW TO REACH US



Learn about STEPS and how we (and you) can bring help, healing, and hope to hurting people.

## **STEPS MINISTRIES WEBSITE**

[LifeImprovementSteps.com](https://LifeImprovementSteps.com)

## **WHO WE ARE**

[LifeImprovementSteps.com/AboutSteps](https://LifeImprovementSteps.com/AboutSteps)

## **EMAIL OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STEVE WARD**

[stevecward@lifeimprovementsteps.com](mailto:stevecward@lifeimprovementsteps.com)

## **MAILING ADDRESS**

STEPS Ministries at 1401 Charleston Court  
in Birmingham, AL 35216

