

On the Loss of a Great American and Formidable Recovery Advocate – William Stauffer

This morning, I woke up to learn of the loss of a great American who I never met but who had a significant influence over the course of my life and the lives of millions of other Americans. We lost Bill Moyers yesterday.

I would encourage readers to read what Jeremiah Gardner wrote last evening that has clips of what he meant to many in our field and what his efforts meant to the American Recovery Movement. Please read [Among the late Bill Moyers' many contributions to American life: advocacy for addiction recovery](#).



As Gardner writes about, five days [Moyers on Addiction: Close to Home](#) premiered on PBS, Bill Moyers said this:

"When our son's addiction took over his life, we did not declare war on him. We sought help for him. And the help that mattered, the help that made the difference, came from people who understood addiction to be a treatable disease," he told the lawmakers. "The sooner that we move from a military to a medical metaphor for addiction, the sooner we will see addiction for the public health challenge that it is, and the sooner our national drug policies will be grounded in reality." - Bill Moyers in 1998 in a hearing on addiction in the Hart Senate Building

When all this was occurring in 1998, I was just over ten years in recovery and working in a publicly funded outpatient drug and alcohol treatment center in eastern PA. It was not a great time for our field. The war on drugs was playing out as a war on our people. America was trying to punish people out of being addicted and it was very hard to advocate for recovery. We were seen as bad people. We lost around half of the treatment centers in America and most people who got help barely got anything at all as access to treatment was severely limited.

What Bill, Judith Moyers, and their son William Cope Moyers, one of the most respected families in America did was share how difficult it was to find help for addiction. I knew who Bill Moyers was, most Americans did. He was a deeply respected journalist who had served in the Johnson Administration. As [his obituary in the New York Times yesterday noted](#), His documentaries and reports won him the top prizes in television journalism, more than 30 Emmy Awards and comparisons to Edward R. Murrow. What they did in Moyers on Addiction: Close to Home, was share their family story on PBS in a five-part series. No one else had the courage to do what they did at that time. It was a critical turning point in our shift from focusing on pathology to a focus on resilience and recovery.

I could not have possibly foreseen in that time when I would get to know William Cope Moyers, their son and a man who himself had contributed immensely to the cause of recovery in America, but I did. And in [2021 I did an interview with William](#). I thanked William for his courage in allowing his story to be told in that era when such things were not done and asked him to thank his parents Bill and Judith Moyers for their courage in being open to share their stories. Their family helped change how we think about addiction and recovery in America.

Please take a moment to join me in honoring a great American and a man who helped change the trajectory of the lives of Millions of Americans as a result. Please read the excellent piece written by Jeremiah Gardner and if are able to leave condolences for Judith Moyers, William Moyers, Nell, and all of the Moyers family in their

time of loss and leave a comment below the piece written by Gardner on the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation website.

Thank you, Bill Moyers, for what you did with your life and your voice. RIP, sir.

Sources

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