



## Ross County Christian Academy provides on-site counseling for students

**Megan Becker**

Chillicothe Gazette USA TODAY NETWORK

CHILLICOTHE — Ross County Christian Academy (RCCA) has partnered with Mares Cares Counseling to provide on-site counseling for students every day of the week.

Head of schools Valerie Jones said when she came to the school in January, she spoke with teachers and students about how she could improve the school. She said one high-need area was mental health.

"These kids have been through a lot with COVID, the lockdown... all the interruptions to schools, everything you can think of. They've been through a lot," Jones said. "I started looking at what can we do, because obviously we are not trained mental health professionals, we are educators."

Jones reached out to Trish and Alvin Mares with Mares Cares Counseling, who were more than happy to partner with the school. Rev. Jessica Warth and Jessie Wallingford began working on campus at RCCA this school year.

"The students there are very loving and very hungry to be built up and to have someone to talk to," Warth said. "The parents have been very receptive as well and open and excited to have us there."

Jones said Mares Cares and RCCA's missions are "very aligned" and the counselors are a natural fit with the school.

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The counselors are available to the students and the teachers for full sessions or for quick chats. Right now the counselors are both seeing about a dozen students per week, but they are still receiving referrals from educators and parents.

Jones said meeting with counselors on campus is beneficial for both students and teachers because minimal instruction time is lost.

Jones said since Mares Cares has come to RCCA, there have been better days and weeks for the students.

"That helps everybody. That helps the classroom. that helps the student, that helps the teacher, that helps the parents. So we've seen the benefits of it already."

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PROVIDED BY VALERIE JONES

