

JOIN THE VOICES FOR RECOVERY

targeted outreach

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Voices of people who have been courageous and victorious in their recovery from a substance use disorder are a powerful tool for spreading the message of **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**. These voices are genuine examples of the importance of recovery, and they are truly representative of the wide scope of individuals who suffer from substance use disorders. Share these stories with colleagues, family, and friends to celebrate and recognize the accomplishments of people who have lifted up their voices to help highlight the value of investing in treatment. Use these stories to encourage others in need of treatment and to celebrate recovery.



Don Rothschild

Director, Advocates for Recovery, Colorado

At age 56, I began my road to recovery. This was after drinking myself out of my family, my home, and my profession as a petroleum geologist and exploration manager. I had to begin a new life, and though the road seemed long and hard, I knew I was still young enough at heart. Surrounding myself with those in recovery, I set out to help make changes in the workplace, not only to support a drug-free workplace, but also to help those who are struggling to re-enter a life of recovery to find help. Working minimum-wage jobs and with a student loan, I returned to college and began working my way up again. By the time I turned 62, I was employed as an employee assistance professional, beginning my profession at an age that others are retiring! I am now able to help more people in recovery to reach new goals. As for me now, I am reunited with my loving family, remarried to my wife, and have become a drug-free workplace consultant and substance abuse professional. At 76 years, I'm living life to its fullest and enjoying recovery.



Sherri Roff

Clinical Director, The Next Step, Inc.

In 1989, I was faced with a choice. Tell the truth and face the consequences or fall further into the black hole I found myself in. Fortunately, I was sitting across from a compassionate man who held my future in his hands, and I told him that I had been stealing money from work to support my ever-increasing drinking and drugging. I went to detox and rehab; he firmly believed I did not need to go to jail. In fact, he used his own money to pay back what I had stolen. It took several years to pay him back, but I did it. I saw him several years after that. We looked each other square in the eye and knew that we had both done the right thing. After several years and countless self-help meetings, I went back to school and got my master's and Ph.D. degrees in social work. Today I have the privilege of helping women get their lives back as clinical director in an intensive residential program, and I teach future social workers at a local college. I have a loving partner, a warm and safe place to call home, and a sense of humility that keeps me grounded in what is important. I am proof that treatment works and recovery is possible.



Susan Massara

Recovery Advocate

Life seemed normal to me before my car crash. I wanted to be cool and began drinking in my mid-teen years. I became a stunt car driver after high school, and I was also an alcoholic, although I didn't know it at the time. On November 30, 1979, I went out partying with 2 friends and we totaled my '69 Mustang that my dad had rebuilt. He put a lot of time, money, and effort into this car, only for it to be destroyed in mere seconds. I ended up being paralyzed and having to use a wheelchair permanently. No one else was permanently hurt or died, but I had a severe enough disability that it completely changed my life. After I got hurt, I was mean, bitter, and blaming, but I didn't realize I needed to take a look in the mirror. I didn't recognize I had an alcohol problem until 14 years *after* my car crash. It took quite a few years of therapy and hard knocks to get myself together, but I did. I finally went to rehab on my own and stayed as an inpatient for 1 year and outpatient for 6 months. It was the best thing that ever happened to me. I went to college, had a wonderful and sober social support network, and have remained clean and sober for over 13 years. I graduated with honors and then went on more recently to work toward becoming a Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC).



Carrie Lee Schwartz

Person in Recovery

Picture your average girl next door from a middle-class suburban family in the midst of a major crisis. Add a genetic disposition to addiction and a 16-year-old girl searching for an escape from the chaos in all the wrong places...you have me. I spent 2 years running the streets lying, cheating, and manipulating my way to my next fix. A run-in with the law forced me to take a look at my options in life: keep going and end up in jail, or seek help. The option of treatment seemed the obvious choice, but that hope died when my insurance denied funding for in-patient treatment. I decided to follow choice number two. I continued my self-destructive behavior for two more months before my run-ins with the law turned into handcuffs, leading to three days in county lockup. Following desperate attempts to get me treatment, my parents received news that I was eligible for a scholarship at the local treatment facility. I was bailed out on the condition that I attend a full 31-day program and complete it successfully. Treatment provided me with a safe environment to remove myself from the people, places, and things that are so dangerous for me. I was taught basic principles for living life sober and how to become a productive member of society. If I hadn't gotten the scholarship to fund my treatment, I can only imagine where I would be today.



Shirley Hart

Tia Hart Community Recovery Program, Inc.

It all started when I began to drink beer at 15 and smoke marijuana at 16. Luckily, I was able to abstain from drugs when I was giving birth to my children, who were born healthy. But after my daughter died in a house fire, I began freebasing cocaine to deal with the immense pain, and I managed to hide my addiction. Eventually I was arrested for a DWI and taken to a correctional facility for women and then to a rehab center. When I was released, I realized that I had something to live for—that although my daughter was dead, I could not go back home the same way I had left. I needed to turn my life around. In memory of my daughter, I started an effective recovery group. I have been working this program on zero dollars and zero cents through the support of the community because they believe in the program and how it changes lives. I know it works because it saved my life. I take my recovery very seriously and I do it one day at a time, for over 6 years and continuing. Telling my story has freed me from the past, but most importantly my story has helped my family, friends, and community realize that there is hope and help for all of us healing from the effects of this deadly disease.



Audrey Smith

Recovery Advocate

Living happy, joyous, and free... That seemed almost impossible to do 8 years ago when I thought, felt, and believed I would die a crack addict and alcoholic. During my second and final prison sentence, I made a promise to God and a commitment to myself to live life on life's terms. Since that time, my life has made a complete turn-around. I am loved and trusted more, and my word stands stronger today. I am actually giving back to others. I went from a crack addict, liar, and thief to a beautiful woman of God. I now thank God each day for a praying family. I play a big part in my son's and daughter's lives. My precious gifts are my grand-boys, who only see the redeemed and sober "ganny." My mother is now my best friend. Today I don't define myself by my victimhood. Life gets better and far more realistic once you muster up the courage to take responsibility for your own life.



Gabrielle Antolovich

Executive Director, National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, NCADD in the Silicon Valley

I was a multi-addicted speed lover from the sixties. In 1978, I quit alcohol, speed, sugar, and chocolate, and was already clean from nicotine and caffeine. I had to quit everything because doing one substance led me to crave another. Although I was involved in recovery programs, it wasn't enough. I started working in the field of addiction. I was told I was the first recovering person to be hired in a government treatment program in Australia. It was an experiment because they heard it worked well in America. Since then, I moved to the United States and started working on the education and prevention side. It is an exciting, evolving field. Being multi-addicted is more common these days, and I am happy to say, it is possible to have long-term recovery from all addictions.



Brian Drummond

Student, Mentor, and Person in Recovery

For many years I was trapped in the illusion that I could successfully use and abuse drugs and get my life together at the same time. This state of mind led to disastrous behavioral consequences and, in time, to my incarceration. But I did not let this desolate scenario defeat me. Shortly after my release from prison, I attended a peer-led and peer-driven support group for formerly incarcerated individuals in recovery. The others in my group saw the faint spark of hope I had left and accepted me into their lives and hearts without judgment. I kept going back. My program provided me with a concrete support system and played a major part in my sustained recovery and my successful transition back into society. As I grew and developed, I began supporting new members of the group, just as I had been supported. Today, I have a positive outlook on life and I am a productive citizen who contributes daily to my family and community. I am currently working to complete college and I work as a clinical case manager for a social service agency in the field of addiction recovery. I am no longer trapped in the illusion of addiction; I am living the glorious reality of recovery.



Marilyn Cross

Aunt and Recovery Supporter

Addiction is not just the personal struggle of one individual; the suffering extends to family and friends. For years, I watched as my nephew, Brian, went from a fine, upstanding young man to a broken addict, powerless against the disease of addiction. Brian fell on hard times, confused and lost, depending on the use of drugs. He was jobless, homeless, living on the streets, and eventually incarcerated. However, after falling, Brian got up. He is here today because of the love of his mother, the support from his brothers and sisters, and the help and encouragement of the extended family he found in recovery. Just as the addicted are never alone in their pain, neither are those in recovery alone in the hope and joy of their transformation. I am a proud to be Brian's aunt and a voice for recovery.



Barbara Genna

Recovery Advocate

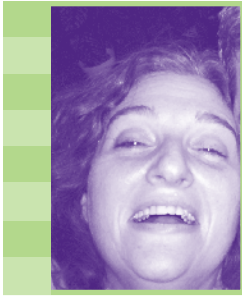
My story holds many similarities to those who came before me. I started drinking at age 3 because my parents thought it was “cute,” and by the time I was 8, I was the proud family bartender. I fell in love with the numbing effects of a painkiller prescribed for my ear infections at age 10. I vividly recall the moment my father was told if he didn’t stop drinking he was going to die. He died less than a year later. I was 13 and my own active disease progressively ran the next 24 years of my life. I used drugs when I said I wasn’t going to; I drank when I swore I’d never do it again. I meant it with every fiber of my being, and still I continued on my path of self-destruction. I knew that if I didn’t get some serious help, I was going to die, and probably within a few days. My mind had become insane. Today, my disease is under arrest, not by my own will, but by the loving support, guidance, and hope so graciously given to me by others who understand this illness. We do recover, with appropriate treatment for the appropriate length of time. Through education, advocacy, and outreach, I now strive to serve the needs of the recovery community by providing a voice to those in the recovery process.



Debbie Dettor

Coordinator, Maine Alliance for Addiction Recovery

At 15, I began experimenting with alcohol and pot with the neighborhood kids. I was riveted by the experience, striving to quiet the anger and fear I felt growing up. My lifestyle propelled me in many directions until I began recovery in 1985. Then, the world I thought I knew crashed around me as I realized the ways I was destroying myself through my alcohol and drug use, my actions, and thinking. After years in recovery, it became clear that my drinking and drugging were never about relaxing or socializing, but fueled by the part of me that wanted to die. I thank my counselors and therapy group, 12-step supports and my Higher Power for teaching me to meet these fears, and for helping me change how I relate to them. Today I don’t need alcohol or drugs to flee from their shadows. My recovery journey continues to deepen my experience of self and my fullness of living.



Leslie Miller

Recovery Advocate

I wasn't done yet! I was having a great time in my cocktail dresses and business suits, drinking to excesses at cocktail parties and thinking I had arrived. I had my first taste of cocaine with a coworker after work to celebrate a successful business deal and spent the next months chasing that first high and being disappointed over and over again. Because I have multiple sclerosis, that's what saved me from going where I really wanted to go, since that disease kept stopping me dead in my tracks every time I reached a limit. I just kept trying to fill that hole inside and avoided knowing the real me and feeling my true feelings at all costs! I didn't know I was hurting my children, my friends, my relationships, and most of all, myself. I thank God that He saw fit to use my daughter and a man I was dating to help snap me out of my denial. Today, my life isn't a lie...I am truly having fun, married to someone who's been in recovery for 14 years, and enjoying a close relationship with my 24-year-old daughter who lives in another state. My 19-year-old son is still living at home and finally learning what having his mother being fully present in his life means.



Mark Sarneso

Recovery Advocate

TREATMENT WORKS. We should be shouting this from the highest rooftops as well as at the halls of legislatures across the country. Time and time again, research shows that for every dollar spent on addiction treatment, \$7 is saved in health care and criminal justice costs. What a great investment for our elected officials to make in improving the quality of life for those they serve!

Call your elected officials today and demand that they support this life-saving and fiscally prudent course of action. TREATMENT WORKS. Believe me, I know. I have worked in treatment for 29 years!



Laura Goode

Recovery Advocate

My drug addiction began at age 13. I wanted to be "in" with the crowd. Being "in" meant trouble with the law. I experienced loneliness and alienated the people I loved. Treatment gave me a foundation for recovery. However, returning to school provided no environment for recovery. I researched and found "Sobriety High" in Minnesota. I am now a Sobriety High graduate, and am involved in the planning for recovery high schools in Massachusetts. Now I am 21 years old with

3 years of recovery, and want other young people to have the same experience.



Steve Brugge

Recovery Advocate

On August 29, 1983, the walls of my cellblock were sweating past stories of loss, pain, frustration, and hopelessness. As I laid there, I sweated the uncertainty of tomorrow, when I would go to a treatment center. Anxiety and fear dripped from my forehead. The familiarity of jail was in some ways comforting; I had no understanding of what treatment meant. A trusted friend picked me up to transport me to the foreign land of treatment. Though I wanted to postpone my entry, my friend said, “you must come now so that you don’t have to live this way anymore.” With trepidation, I walked into treatment and was welcomed with enthusiasm. I checked in and handed over my cardboard box filled with all of my possessions, and they said “don’t leave before the miracle!” Thirteen years later, I am still clean, a father, grandfather, husband, and recovering addict. A moment of grace changed my destination and my life.



Susie Austin

Case Manager at Workforce Development Center, Recovery Advocate, Mother

I had been addicted to methamphetamine for many years. I was a 40-year-old mother of 3 small children and found out that I was pregnant while in treatment. I was a sick broken shell of a woman. In 1998, my family and I received tickets for a vacation—through a family intervention, I entered a 28-day treatment program. With the clothes on our backs, we started over, looking for a healthy life of recovery as a family. It is now 8 years later and I am living proof that recovery works and proud to say that I am in recovery. I feel very privileged to be able to share my story and help others to see how wonderful life can be. Recovery advocacy is an extremely important part of my life, as it should be in everyone’s life. The opportunity to be able to help someone realize they are an asset to society and a good person with a devastating illness is something I feel is important. My hope is that as more treatment becomes available, society will finally treat the illness and not punish the symptoms. I am proud to be a part of the faces and voices of recovery.



Lynn Bratley, M.Ed.

Founder and Artistic Director, Improbable Players

I started my organization to inform people about alcoholism and drug addiction through theater. All the young professional actors in the troupe are clean and sober, and all the plays over the years have been developed from their experience, strength, and hope. After each performance, the players tell their real stories: we have been privileged to put a face on recovery for over 50,000 people each year for the past 22 years. My own story, which once seemed so ordinary to me—a story of closet drinking, nightly blackouts, and endless promises to quit—became the basis for the first play, still performed today; it tells a timeless story of addiction and the hope and reality of recovery.



Tom McHale

Recovery Advocate

The memory of my last drink is still vivid. I was attending a class reunion and was handed a glass of beer before I could say no. I raised the glass to my lips and I let it flow. It was like a knee-jerk reaction, but I wanted to escape the moment—I had just seen my ex-girlfriend with her new fiancé. I have the disease of alcoholism, and getting drunk isn't going to solve anything. Ultimately, I ended a 22-year drinking history that had started when I was 12. Putting down the bottle was a whole lot easier than adjusting to all the changes that came with that decision. Drinking was a part of who we were; it bound our lives together. Every major and minor event was intrinsically linked to alcohol. Giving up the booze meant giving up my identity. It meant letting go of friends, changing the places I went, withstanding the jeers, and developing a new lifestyle I knew nothing about. Those early struggles paved the way to a rewarding and satisfying life. Through education and support, I was able to construct a lifestyle that produced tangible results. I have a great wife, a career I enjoy, and I am involved in my community.



Gregory Andrew Williams

Spiritual Evangelist

Recovery begins in the heart! At age 18, I left my parents' home and became an alcoholic. That is how I identified myself. I made it my mission to visit alcoholics in their wooded enclaves, buy gallons of alcohol, and sit at their feet. To me, these were the most mistreated and despised people I knew. My father ingrained this "spirit" of empathy in me. He lugged our family of 10 up and down the East Coast to live and work among migrant laborers. To date, I have logged thousands of hours in addiction and recovery—over 30 years—acquiring the lessons and pains necessary to achieve the strengths, hope, and faith in a power greater than myself. I am now that "disaster evangelist" who travels into the beaten paths of active addictions telling the story of salvation and deliverance through Jesus Christ. While I have been clean for over 3 years, I dwell not on that space in time but the spirit of redemption in my heart. I am now absolutely sure I understand what God wants me to do.