

# Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Yuma, Arizona August 27, 2015



## Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduating Class

Standing left to right:

Matthew Sanchez, Woodrow Phillips, Lina Spaugh, Kimberly Cole, Chelsi Norris, Brianna Wall, Merry Klein, Justin Avery, Julio Recio-Acosta, Tiffany Lewis, Diana Cogburn, Antonio Salazar, Akhsik Yaghoubian, Rebecca Lizarraga, Andrew Cannegieter, Ruben Garcia, Lynn McGee

Sitting left to right:

Jesus Garcia, Timothy Collins, Skylar Hatcher, Christen Roe, Shawn Young, Joseph Grijalva



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# My Personal Recovery of Hope

By Woodrow Phillips



There was an incident that had occurred back in 2013, my children had been taken from me by the Social Services Department. An Officer of the Law had come to my residence looking to find my nephews because the father had gotten into some trouble. He asked to enter my house to get my nephews, and saw that my place was a mess with drunk people passed out on the floor along with numerous empty bottles and cans of alcohol containers. He told me that he was going to come back the next day for my children. I didn't think anything of it or take him seriously. So the next day they did come and take my children, but I

continued to drink with the expression of poor me poor me. It was not until that my spouse decided to stop the drinking, I decided to stop also two days later. Realizing that I had been selfish to my own needs and wants, the drinking, dragging my children from place to place chasing the alcohol.

At this point I decided to attend meetings as part of my reunification process. I enrolled in a program, started going to A.A. meetings at a local club and got involved in our community talking circle meeting and by chairing some of them. With each chaired meeting my spirituality belief grew.

Eventually I was able to get my children back after completing the recommended assessments. It was not until I switched jobs did I realize the direction in life I want to pursue, to become a counselor in recovery due to the fact of seeing that so many of my people suffering from these diseases. Many of them I know and by knowing what they are going through, I think of me being in that similar situation that I would be able to help guide them in a positive direction, one that would greatly benefit them and especially their children. Today I am focused on continuing my education to obtain an Associates' Degree in Chemical Dependency Studies and know I will struggle to achieve this goal but It will be well worth it to me.

# Gift of Desperation

By Justin Avery

I stood upon a window ledge three stories up with a rope secured around my neck, looking down upon the chaos and wreckage of my life. Despair had led me there. Twelve years I'd been a slave to an addiction, that despite its best efforts, hadn't killed me, yet. As I drunkenly decided to accept my fate, to give up on everything once and for all, desperation gave me a final gift. Hope. A sliver, a hint, a whisper of a promise, that maybe I could find a better way. It was that pause, that moment of hesitation that has made all the difference. Hope talked me down. A simple desire accompanied by an expectation was all I needed.

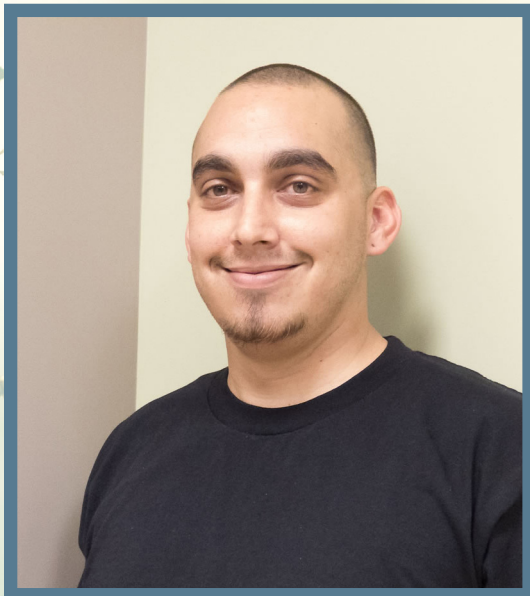
I had spent years lost in cycle of addiction. My twenties had been reduced to a drunken blur, highlighted with violence, destruction and pain. Alcoholism had consumed me. It robbed me of success, achievement, pride, and finally hope. I had been keeping my head above water, floating on apathy and self-taught helplessness. I had hardened my heart to the world, and denied myself any choice. How could I dream, when my nights were blacked out? Fear kept me from losing hope by convincing myself I didn't care. I expected nothing, did nothing and got nothing in return. At least this way, I didn't have to admit another failure.

I had paralyzed myself emotionally. Going through life, afraid of desire, success and accomplishing anything that could be taken away from me. All I cared about was the next drink. I lived on minimum wage jobs and hard labor. Funding self-destruction by any means possible. Drunks like me were a "dime-a-dozen" and easily replaceable. I saved myself from shame by setting my standards low. I kept a tight rein on other's expectations, using my Bachelor's Degree as a private piece of art. Romantic relationships were nothing more than the satisfaction of basic sexual urges. I took what I wanted, with my heart on the shelf. Love was something I wouldn't risk; the price was too high.



I would drift along, becoming more and more complacent, until my obsessive compulsive nature forced me to self-sabotage. I needed mayhem and turmoil to validate my existence. Driven by the idea that I didn't deserve the things I had. I would intentionally destroy them; to prove to myself I could rebuild. It was like trying to save a sinking ship by throwing rocks on top. When I inevitably failed, I'd lose hope. Until finally, I thought that I had lost it all.

The gift I was given on that window sill has me here. Being a sober, sane, well-adjusted human being, with talents and insight that are completely my own. Hope gave me the promise of another day, better than the one before. Little by little I allowed myself to dream, to believe that I could overcome my addiction. I've been inspired by other people's successes. Minor accomplishments fuel my desire to continue. Disappointments are fleeting, minor drawbacks only to be washed away by waves of renewed determination. The people I have surrounded myself with; my mentors, sponsors, my fellowship all have nurtured this growing force in me. I embrace the potential I have and recognize the positive contributions that I can make. With all my understanding and strength, I look to the future with Hope.



## One Day at a Time

By Matthew M. Sanchez

My experience of HOPE begins January 2015. I was put into the Crossroads Mission treatment center for four months. That was where I saw what I had become with the use of drugs and alcohol. I gave my family, friends, and my life away for my addiction. I was lost. I learned through the twelve steps how to forgive myself and make right of my wrongs when the time was right. In doing so I have a relationship with my family, I have friends who are clean and in recovery, and everyday I live in the solution rather than the problem. I have a Higher Power that guides me through my recovery one day at a time.

## Choices

By Joseph Grijalva

In 2007 while incarcerated I entered a reentry program. Before I entered the program I had a deep sense of helplessness and hopelessness. I blamed the whole world for the consequences of bad choices I was making. The program was facilitated by a D.T.S. who helped me realize that if I changed my belief system and my value system I could make better choices. I could change my consequences. I learned that change is possible with the power of choice. Once I made those changes I began to see some positive changes. I learned to take responsibility for my behavior. That's when I began to learn how not to be a victim. I began to have hope.



# My Story of Hope

By Merry Klein



I grew up in a single parent home with a younger brother who my mother did everything for. When I was about 13 years old, he tried to hang himself, and I found him, cut him down and asked him why, he had no answer. Then when I was 15. I started dating a guy 6 years older than me who smoked weed. I tried it, didn't care for it, but I smoked the weed to make the guy happy. When I turned 18, this guy broke up with me on my birthday. That was when I started feeling like I was nothing just like my mother had told me all my life. I started hanging out with stoners, as we called them back in the day. Then I meet a Marine that was 2 years older than me, and we dated for 6 months. He asked me to marry him 3 months later. I was 19 at the time we were married. Nine months later I had my baby girl. I was so happy! Then, we got transferred to South Carolina for 4 years. I was 8 months pregnant with my son when we moved.

My husband got out of the military and moved the kids and me back here with my mother and younger brother. I hated this move because all my mother did was put me down! She called me a whore because I had a hickey from my husband, and we got into a big fight. However I stayed with her because I could not afford to move out. So two years later, my husband and I got divorced. There was another let down in my life! Then I found out

my daughter was mentally slow. Her condition was a form of retardation, so I had to deal with that. After that, my mother finally told me somewhat of the truth about my father. She had me out of wedlock, said my father tried to see me when I was a baby, and she would not let him. So another let down!

In 2002, my uncle died; a week later my grandmother died; then two years later my mother and another uncle died. Then I met my current companion who I thought would turn my life around, and it did for a while. After losing a job I had for two years, hard times hit me! My home needed a new air conditioner and a new water heater. So from that point on, I was trying to get monetary help with agencies around town. Because I have a special needs daughter, I called my aunt for assistance. Another hardship occurred when I found out my aunt had kidney cancer. I was thinking, "Why God? How much more can I take?" Then it happened! God was really testing my faith when my aunt died Thanksgiving 2012, and then my grandfather killed himself in October of 2013. Again I asked myself how much more can I take? I started sleeping more than I should.

Then in July of 2014, the crap really hit the fan! Someone called adult protective services on me saying I had no food and that my mentally handicapped daughter was not being taken care of. My whole world crashed when they took her away! I went to jail, and I prayed to God to let me get out and let me have my life back. I got out and was sent to Crossroads Mission on 3 years' probation. While at Crossroads, I began to understand why God put these obstacles in front of me, now I know why. I needed to get back on track. I got the hope and the help I needed, so now here I am getting ready to graduate from peer support training in 2015. I look forward to starting work. It took some time, but my hope for the future is bright, and I am moving up again.

# My Experience, Strength & Hope

By Kimberly Ann Cole

I am 42 years old. I would like to share my message with you in hopes that you may pass it along. On Thursday August 27, I will have the honor of graduating from a prestigious program, taught by three of the best instructors around. I am truly grateful for them. I am a person of addiction. I have been for what seems like, forever. I will be forever. I am also a person who suffers from a few mental health diagnoses. My past isn't all that pretty. Today, though I can look you in the eye and tell you that I have a choice. I have a choice to be free and happy. I didn't just hop up and get there, it has taken me 42 years to realize. It has taken all the ugly, unwanted, unhappy and self destruction to get me where I am today. Today I can look at myself and smile, today I love myself. It's so strange but welcoming. I walk with my head held high with a smile. Something I've never been able to do. This is all because someone that didn't even really know me, or care about my past gave me a chance at clean living environment. They had a hope for me that I didn't. I am forever grateful to my CRSS team. Love you all bunches and I won't ever forget what was passed to me to pass along.



## Hope

By Jesus Garcia

Hello, my name is Jesus Garcia. About a year and a half ago, I was lost, lonely, felt hopeless, and I was looking at 8 years in prison. After I lost everything in my addiction, and everyone disowned me and wanted nothing to do with me. The one person I neglected the most (my son) told me that he forgave me and he still loved me. All the dangerous situations and the struggles we went through, he forgave me! With the help from my mother, my son, and my GOD, I learned how to forgive myself. That was my turning point where I realized that I wasn't alone, it is not too late. That there was hope for a man with an addiction like me.

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## Never Lost Hope

By Brianna Wall

My name is Brianna & I'm writing this to share with you how hope has been a big part of my LIFE & living IN recovery! I started using hard drugs when I was 11 years old to hide the pain I was dealing with. It made me numb, it was my escape from reality. I used all the way up until I was 20 then I found out I was pregnant with my beautiful daughter Lily Anna Buckingham. She was born 7-29-11. I stayed sober till she was about 10 months old, then I ran into some old friends & started using bad. CPS eventually got involved & took her out of my custody. I then went on a rage, got myself caught up with the law, spent quite a few nights in county. I then came to realization of how messed up I was & how much I neglected my Lily lovebug. I wanted to change. When I got released I was put onto drug court & had to spend 4 months at an inpatient rehab. I got to see Lily once a week for 2 hours each visit. Then another court date came up for her & my rights got completely severed. But I will NEVER give up my



hope to get her back. She is what keeps me strong & she is what keeps me going! I may not see her again till she's 18 but when that time comes she will see that mommy never lost hope!

# My Personal Experience of Hope

By Lynn McGee



Many years ago (29) over two decades in fact I knew that deep within my broken self, I was different in many ways. I had a very secret and personal HOPE that someday I could be me and others around would no longer label me.

As years past, behaviors and addictions changed not just with in me, but to those around me as

well. When it seemed that much of my problems were over, they were just beginning.

Today I am a woman of integrity and recovery, two years ago, when a program called Mental Health Court was created.

Through this program I learned that I am NOT an addict, I am a person who suffers from addiction. The other things I learned were how to deal with bipolar and schizoaffective disorder and that I suffer from along with PTSD. I finished Mental Health Court, while being taught how to cope with these mental illnesses. Also along the way I got a support network, doctors and case management teams in my life. I have been able to understand that probation officers, judges and lawyers are all part of that support network as well.

I have been out of Mental Health Court and off probation for six months now. I have been able to assimilate and join into my community, functioning daily as I share my experience. I believe it is my duty and HOPE to share this message to others along the way.

Today this is my message of HOPE.



# The Rocky Road of Recovery

By Chelsi Norris

Hope is defined as a desire accompanied by an expectation of or belief in fulfillment.

In a cold empty, soul-sucking vehicle called addiction, I drove the road of self-destruction. Paved by my fear, pain and hopelessness, fueled by the cloaked exploitation of others, and myself, I found myself at a fork, self deprived of all caring, feelings and emotions, not knowing which way to go, or if I even had the desire to carry on. On the right, a well lit, rocky pothole ridden road, and to the left a smooth paved road, no blemish seen that led into a pitch-black darkness.

Over the years, this darkness had become my security. I knew it well; it allowed no one in, nor would it let me out. I was held captive in a prison of my own making. It was not until someone told me that I already held the key to my freedom that I realized my prison existed only in my mind. I was told of the road to Happy Destiny and that there were indeed others like me that too had freed themselves.

I was told this road would not be easy; in fact it was damn near impossible to navigate alone. I was told that that never again would I be alone, that my Higher Power would be my compass, my fellows my guides, and if I choose to follow that



path, I could never be forced to live in that self constructed dark prison.

Armed with the wisdom of living in captivity, and my newly gained knowledge of a new way of life, I decided I would make the necessary changes, and accept the help required to navigate the rough and rocky Road of Recovery, finally for the first time filled with Hope that recovery was indeed possible.

# Desire, Wish and Hope

By Shawn Young



I suffered from the “never ending” hopeless battle of substance use. It really was a helpless battle because I lost my will and desire to live life. One day after years of addiction my niece and nephew asked me why I don’t play with them anymore and why I was always sad. I told them I was sick and they told me they “hoped” I would get better. The light switch turned on in my head and I all of a sudden had the will, desire, wish, & hope to become a better person. That hope lead to a wish to get sober which lead to a willingness to accept help. I read somewhere that hope was to wish for something with expectation of its fulfillment. Well with my hope I reached my expectation of abstinence and fulfilled my life with sobriety.

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# Happy and Successful

Lina Spaugh

I’m 24 years old. I’ve been in a prison of drug addiction for the last ten years of my life. In 2014, I found myself in county jail, facing a minimum of five years in prison. I lost my home, my daughter, and my family wanted nothing to do with me. I was lost, hopeless, and helpless. My personal experience of hope started in January 2015 when I was accepted into the Drug Court program. I was

put into a four month treatment program at the Crossroads Mission. It was here that I learned that people with drug addictions could turn their lives around. I never knew recovery was possible. Through Drug Court and Crossroads Mission, I learned people can live happy and successful lives in recovery; I found hope.

# Celebrating Recovery

By Andrew J. Cannegieter

There are many stories about an individual's personal experience with Hope. This one is mine. It has been said, "It's not till a person stops digging, do they realize they've hit their absolute rock bottom". I now am able to attest to the validity of this statement. Once the shovel was out of my hands (figuratively speaking) the God of my understanding allowed me to see and reach for a whole slew of recovery resources. I once unknowingly chose to live miserably with the problem. Armed with a new outlook, education, tools, and an amazing support group, Andrew J Cannegieter now exists happy, joyous, and free --celebrating his recovery every day, with every breath.



# A Better Future

By Ruben Garcia

To all the people that in one way or another have been there for me to help me recover from my problem, I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. I got the chance to find out that a lot of people in this world are interested in helping others that also have the same issues that I had in my past. Those people encouraging me to stay clean and do the right thing from now on. Since God sent me gracious people, I have made an extremely recovering outcome to my life also this helps me build a better future for myself. I appreciate everyone's guidance and support. I will try my best to do everything in my power to stay clean and move forward and not look at my past's mistakes. I am dedicated and



committed to my job, friends, and my family that have been there for me even though at times I didn't believe in myself. They still love me and backed me up at all times.

# HOPE IS

By Shane Bassett

Hope is a judge who sees things in you that you don't see in yourself.

Hope is not being sent to prison.

Hope is chance after chance after chance!

Hope is finally believing in yourself!

Hope is learning to say no.

Hope is taking care of yourself before you try to take care of others.

Hope is learning to let go of the negative and learning to embrace the positive.

Hope is getting up no matter how hard you have fallen.

Hope is learning to always move forward,.

Hope is always rising above and trying to better yourself.

Hope is one year clean with many, many more to come.

# Mercy and Grace

By Christen Roe



As I look back on those dark and hopeless days of being stuck in a bottomless pit surrounded by my addiction, I had no hope! I was an addict just like any addict, living a life of destruction. As I was living a sinful life I was always trying to escape

the pain from being mentally and physically abused by the father of my four children, who was a very severe and mean alcoholic that used as well. During our 14yrs together our whole life was a downhill spiral with lots of drugs and partying. My drug of choice was crystal meth and boy did she break me down. I always thought I was a pretty good mother even though I would hide out smoking dope most of my days, leaving my kids on the back burner to fend for themselves. Well the day eventually came when DCS came knocking at the door to tell me they were taking my children and that was the day I had hit my all-time bottom. Today I am still real early in my recovery but I can say that I now have HOPE. I have been in full compliance with DCS fighting for the return of my children. I have also taken my peer support training and am now a CRSS, Certified Recovery Support Specialist. Soon I will be starting my new job where I will be able to help others and to let them know that recovery is possible. I thank God every day for my new way of living and all his mercy and grace!!

# God's Power and My Determination

By Julio Recio-Acosta



My hope was when my son Isaac was born. He turned my life around 180 degrees, that's when I realized I was not alone any more. I started to think now on what to do to make this change. So I started to think and make right choices, I thought to myself, I am not alone. I told myself I have to forgive myself to make this important change. I ask God for forgiveness and he forgave me this sinner. With Gods power and my determination I was able to make this change. Now I am able to continue doing the things that are necessary to form a future for my son and me.

# Removing Fences

By Timothy Collins



My Mother married my Step-father when I was eight. I grew up exposed to the cliché reputation that bikers have, I started getting high by the time I was ten. I was eighteen when I started my in and outs of prison. When I was forty five

I became Clean and Sober in May of 2010, ... it wasn't until October of 2013 with a passing of a close friend that I learned about recovery. I walked in the doors of Transitional Living Center- Recovery when it was just The Living Center, they taught me a simple way to be 'meet people where they are at in life', ... All through 2014 I took a Peer Support training class, I took classes on Mental Awareness Medical Aid both Adult and Youth but became idle in my recovery early 2015 and with the help of the family I gained through TLC and my fellowships I bounced back from those challenges, now I know this is what I want. My main frustration is wanting to share what's on my mind but don't for fear of offending which ever fellowship I am at and I end up sitting quietly against the wall, and that is a danger to me and I can't be the only one, ... so I have made it my mission in life to remove the fences each fellowship has and merge them into one simple recovery for anyone anytime. It's time to take the next step forward, if it has been done it's time to expand and make available to all. Until then I will do my part in helping change the world, ... one person at a time.

# Roots of Hope

By Akhdik Yaghoubian



I can't say when it happen, how and ... , but I can say that it was there and it is there like always, even if I don't pay attention or deny it. In my life journey I imagine myself as a tree. A tree who forgot its dreams and potentials. Life became disappointing and sometime pointless, hardship came and almost cover all my leaves, I forgot how to feed my soul and spirit. When I found my roots under the ground I knew there was something extraordinary powerful that was keeping me up. Yes, my brain, but still I couldn't find something to make me be cheerful and be able to listen to birds and see the baby birds in the nest. When my brain was wandering, all of a sudden something thrilled the whole tree, I heard the chirping birds something colored the world. My roots absorbed the water and I found the Hope.

# Hope

By Diana D. Cogburn

My personal experience of hope came to me in the form of a treatment team made up of strong, supportive women in recovery. They believed in me until I could believe in myself. Instead of a "depressed-drug addict", I became a new person in recovery.

I have come to know what it is to be an active participant in my own life as well as rejoining my family and friends. I felt that this was something I would never get back.

I remember waking up one day not long ago with such an overwhelming sense of hope and joy. Just being glad that I was alive. I do not ever recall having such a profound sense of hope before.

After completing the CRSS Institute I feel that I can help others to regain the hope and purpose in their lives and not feel that they will be forever labeled and held back by the diagnosis.



# Change

By Rebecca Lizarraga

My experience with hope has been very challenging. It occurred around the time I was 38 years old. Before, that I did not realize I had an illness, so bad that it caused me to hurt the ones I love and made me a violent person. I have changed the behavior. It has been very long journey from me. Ever since I can remember I have always had trouble coping with anxiety. In high school I was told I had a disability with learning, because of my lack of focus.

Many things have happened since then. I received therapy and a lot of peer support. I thought to myself it was taking forever to see the outcome. However, what I did not realize was that it takes as much time to unlearn something as to learn something. I strongly was against taking any medications because of all the horror stories I heard about it. I was fortunate enough, though that my therapist would accompany me in the process in helping me to explain my symptoms to the Psychiatrist.

During the process I asked many questions. I was concerned with the side effects that it would entail. I emphasized that I wanted to be in lowest dose if possible. Within weeks after receiving much therapy every day and the therapist monitoring my health. I realized I started focusing more on important issues. It took a nervous breakdown for me to realize I needed to start paying attention to my needs. During the short time that I was provided respite for myself, both my daughters stay with trusted people. I remember just breaking down to my knees and opening the bible book. I did not know what to do at the time or seek my resources. It was the longest 2 days of my life. I stopped eating, crying alone at the apartment with no one to talk to. My mom was no longer alive and that my only sibling lived in California. Anyways I had been away from anything having to do with religion for quite some time, since my mom had died. I decided to walk to church.

I remember entering the church and afterwards the priest noticing something was wrong with me. I had no one to turn to. He looked at me with such genuine concern. He asked me what was wrong and I burst into tears. Next he asked me to go chat with him, so I did. I remember letting everything out that had been bottled up inside of me for years since my moms' death. I was surprised because of

what I thought about the Catholic Religion priests only reach out if you ask them. This one did not. I had told him that my children were taken from me and many other things. I literally felt worthless.

I thought because I felt worthless there was no reason for anyone to care even at the church. I was also skeptical because I thought after I spoke to him that would be the end of it and I **WOULD NEED TO CONTINUE WITH MY PROBLEMS ALONE**. The priest ended up asking me where I resided. I told him, but still did not believe he would follow through with visiting or even talking, since I was not an active member and he had never seen me there before.

I was very wrong, he did reach out to me, he called me, he visited me, he took me to out to eat. He did what no other had done for me in a long time, without me asking just on his own. He gave me **HOPE! HOPE! HOPE! AND THAT WAS WHAT I NEEDED IN MY LIFE**. Still afterwards he would call and check up on me. It was awesome! I asked nothing of him and he gave me everything in return. He gave me hope to change my life to be a better mom to be in touch with my spiritual well being. I will never forget him for that. He will always hold a special place in my heart

He reached his hand out to me and picked me up from the ground. Even after time had passed he continued providing support to me and my family and would come visit with us all. In conclusion to this entire essay the priest was someone taking the time to care and listen when I was at the worst point in my life and am very grateful to that. I was not sure about how to reach out for help or who to contact. He gave me the **HOPE** I needed to start my recovery with an open mind even though it meant taking medication. The medication and the therapies, plus spiritual guidance changed me and I would not be here today if it would not have been for being able to talk to someone in crisis, when I needed it. Having everyday peer support and therapy also was a big part in my recovery. This is my story in my belief of what **HOPE** represents.



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*The Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute is administered by the Workforce Development Program in the Department of Family and Community Medicine (DFCM) at the University of Arizona. The Institute is funded by Cenpatico Arizona. Cenpatico Behavioral Health of Arizona (Cenpatico) services are funded through a contract with the Arizona Department of Health Services/Division of Behavioral Health Services (ADHS/DBHS) and AHCCCS.*

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Workforce  
Development News

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*UA Workforce Development Program promotes recovery and expanded opportunities for people with mental illness, substance use, and dual diagnosis by employing a collaborative approach to advocacy, service, education, and research.*

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