

Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Sierra Vista Arizona, November 2014



Integrated Healthcare Graduating Class

Back Row (L to R)

Connie Charles, David Lee, Pamela Doty, DJ Barraza, Kimberly Price

Middle Row (L to R)

Stephanie Polk, Nancy Garcia, Kayla Peterson, Jacqueline Blakemore, Jennifer Osborne, Adrian Cornelius, Joseph Jackson

Front Row (L to R)

Marla Barcelo, Shannon Osteros, Melanie Lee, Molly Adams, Tanya Hammett, Lisa Carbajal, Stephanie Awrey

A Spark of Hope

By Jennifer Osborne



My personal experience with hope began when I broke free from a devastating abusive relationship in 2006. The relationship lasted ten years until the abuser was arrested for an unpaid traffic ticket. This gave me the chance to gather my children and whatever belongings I could and leave on a bus to safety with my family in Arizona. Being on my own then and taking charge of my life and my mental disorder was a turning point in my goal of recovery. I have been able to gain control as well as understand my potential of achieving things I had believed at the time were only ever going to be a dream. This bad situation has given me a better perspective for a healthier foundation for me and my children. Having my children in the way that I did was not the best way to start out a life for a child, but without them things would have been much harder for me. The support and love they share gives me strength to better myself in any and every aspect that benefits not only me, but them too.

Keep Hope Everyday

By Joseph Jackson

My personal experience of hope begins after the second time I left jail. I was not taking medication at the time and had got it into my head it might be a good idea to go to SEABHS and get back on medications as well as receiving other help. One of the people working there at the time was a great help to me because she saw hope in me and did many things to help in my recovery. It was a turning point for me because it permitted me to see that there are people in the behavioral health system that do see hope and do believe that recovery is one hundred percent possible.



“I Love Mommy and That Nuf”

By Connie Charles

On the afternoon of February 14, 1983 I contemplated suicide/murder. Suicide was of course for me and murder was for my 2 1/2 year old daughter. Some of that memory is blurry and other parts are very vivid. My child woke me up needing a diaper change while crying, “I hungry, I hungry.” I told her to shut up and go back to sleep. If memory serves me it was somewhere around noon. There were no diapers or food. I mean no food, nothing, zip in the entire place where we were. I tried giving her a bottle of water and she seemed to cry louder. She was hungry. I honestly could not have said when she or I had eaten last. What I did know was I had several illicit drugs in my purse.

There was no milk for my child but I had a variety of different highs for my addictions. I remember the bag of pills looked like confetti as I laid them out on the bathroom counter. I don’t remember how I ended up in the bathroom. I do remember assuring my child that everything was going to be all right. I was crying but felt so calm. I knew what I had to do to make me and my daughter’s life okay. There was no one to help us or guide us.

I was born into addiction, it was part of my culture and hers. I filled the tub with water while trying to sing Puff the Magic Dragon. I was putting her in the water when my daughter reached out and put her small hands on each side of my face, “No cry, mommy loves me. I love mommy and that nuf.”

Nuf is my driving force to keep me moving and Nuf is my calm in this world of no absolutes.



The Road to a New Me

By Kimberly Price



My moment of hope actually happened in two parts. In counseling and with my daughter. I had been working on being able to stand up for myself. I was verbally and emotionally abused by my family from childhood through adulthood, and then by my husband. I suffered from “learned helplessness” for so many years that I had forgotten how to be strong. I had been divorced over ten years and was really struggling. My daughter said to me, “You’re not helpless Mom, so why do you keep acting like you are?” The next time I talked to my ex-husband he tried to verbally bully me again like he had throughout our marriage. I was calm and cut him off mid-sentence and told him what I would and would not do. I politely but firmly let him know that I was done being pushed around. I felt so empowered and confident. At last I was on the road to a new me.

That feeling of confidence only lasted a while and that was because I was only working on what went on outside of me. My self-esteem was still extremely low. I still worried if I was worth fixing or was just “existing” enough. Within a few days of each other, a close friend and my counselor both asked me the same questions, “You believe in God and that He loves all of His children, right? Do you really think you are less important to Him than any of His other children?” I had my “Ah ha!” moment. If I was important to God, I am important enough to do more than just exist!

A Never-Ending Path to Reinvent Myself

By David Barraza

My story of Hope is one I intend on continuing to write for the rest of my life. My story of hope is maintaining my confidence so I press myself to accomplish goals and dreams I've set, and to overcome "symptoms" of ADHD. For me, education is a vital part of hope, because the more I learn how to utilize my resources to accomplish these goals, the more effective the results.

I notice I have a tendency to lead myself into a state of comfortable idleness in which I get absolutely nothing done. I realize my issue is taking initiative and maintaining my willingness to follow through. It's a problem I have in most aspects of my life. I leave friends in the dark. I see opportunities for friendships emerge and yet the majority of the time I don't take advantage of these opportunities. Instead I tell myself that I don't require anymore associations with others simply because of my sense of independence.

I fluctuate from having bursts of motivation, to being passive and underestimated, resulting in a sort of unhappiness. I used to smoke marijuana for about 7 years, day after day, and recently (about 8 months ago) I completely dropped it. I felt I should quit because I needed to start doing something productive. I needed to get a new job, and I needed to be able to pay off the fines I owed so I could finally get my license back. I completely quit on my own and that is something that makes me proud.

But having quit, I find myself idle again. Perhaps this is why I attended the RSS class because I am generally interested in the topic of mental health. I am positive I can learn things so I can overcome these "obstacles" that I face and find hope to get the ball rolling. Overall, my sense of hope is to strive for a never-ending path to reinvent myself, to better my own situation and to help others along the way to overcome the resistance they deal with and that I've dealt with.



This is Me and I'm Okay

By Molly F. Adams



Yes I have hope. I don't know when it began because I have so many different parts of my life that I have recovered from. How do I describe the one that made the difference? There have been various different people throughout the years that have inspired me to be okay with me.

Throughout my life I have lived with bouts of depression. I have gone through counseling for domestic violence, sexual abuse, incest, and posttraumatic stress syndrome. My learning disability is one of my major issues because it encompasses everything in my everyday life that I do or try.

One of the biggest breakthroughs with my learning disability is that I learned that I'm an okay person. I have a different way of decoding words and several other things. When I realized that I wasn't the same as other people, when it came to reading and interpreting things, it made my life so much easier because I could look at it as "this is me and I'm okay".

When it comes to reading, some days I can and some days I can't. When it comes to writing, the computer is wonderful. It has spell check. "Ha ha". Do you realize how many words can come up when you're trying to figure out one word? I have to hear how the word sounds to know if it is what I am trying to say. Of course by using spell check sometimes makes people who read what you write laugh at you even more because you put a word that looks like it might be right there and it changes the whole connotation.

Once again, hope, I have lots of it. I don't always use it, but I do know that every day I make a difference for the people around me because I have experienced in my own little world a life of total chaos. I can share that with them and hopefully help one other person say "oh wow! I am okay."

My “Ah Ha!” Moment

By David Lee

I believe that my turning point or my “Ah ha!” moment was when I took a test for dyslexia around 2 or 3 months ago. It was then that I realized that dyslexia is often confused with ADHD. That was a moment of deep introspection and contemplation. For many years I was treated with medication for ADHD and wasn't getting the results that I felt I should have gotten, I was disappointed. I looked back to when I was first given medications and the hope that I had for my recovery.

At the very least I believe that I do have ADHD because my loved ones and doctors tell me that I do. My loved ones tell me that they notice a difference when I take the medication. My attitude is much calmer and I am more in control of myself. I am more rationale and able to stay on task and things of that nature. However the biggest relief that I was hoping for was for my mind to be clear to the extent that I could get better results at work and at home. I can't say for certain this has happened.

If nothing else, in my estimation the role the ADHD diagnosis has played is to isolate my condition so I can better hone in on it. I would have to say not only is this a mental disorder (ADHD) but also this is a co-occurring condition with the dyslexia. The problem is back when they diagnosed the ADHD and dyslexia they weren't as advanced as they are today. I remember having to struggle with school and homework and having to take tests for learning disabilities which could have been a product of ADHD or dyslexia. Again I can say that my approach to life is a lot more even keeled.

Unfortunately diagnosing and treating mental health conditions has come a lot further than diagnosing and treating learning disabilities. There is very little help for adults who suffer with dyslexia. There is no insurance coverage, no clinics, and it's hard to tell if the people who say they have the fix-all for dyslexia are legitimate or not. Every program seems to come with a very high price tag. Unfortunately I can't say that my problem has been solved with any amount of clarity.



My Support System: The Backbone of My Recovery

By Melanie Lee



My own personal experience of hope began when I moved from Phoenix, Arizona to Benson, Arizona and became a client of SEABHS (approximately 2 years ago). SEABHS has been the backbone to my recovery.

A little background is that the services I was receiving in Phoenix were much different than what SEABHS has offered me. In Phoenix I felt I wasn't being listened to when I saw the psychiatrist who tried to keep me on medications that gave me bad symptoms and I wound up in the hospital catatonic and passed out. My husband found me on the floor when he came home from work one day. I didn't have much of a support system from the facility in Phoenix. The appointments were just about prescribing the medication they wanted to prescribe. There was no listening to me. I felt hopeless. I suffer from mental illness and have a diagnosis of psychotic disorder and I am classified as SMI. I am not sure of my diagnosis anymore because it has changed through the years. The medications that were prescribed for me in Phoenix made me gain a lot of weight which contributed to my low self esteem. Xyprexa and Risperidone were two of the medications I can remember that gave me horrible symptoms.

It wasn't until I was finally put on Abilify that things began to turn around. I was able to concentrate; I wasn't gaining weight but also wasn't taking off the weight from the other medications. The last straw was when I ended up in the hospital for three weeks and was court ordered to treatment. I had lost my medication and was unable to obtain any more so I was experiencing severe withdrawal symptoms. It wasn't until a couple stopped on the streets who offered help, called the paramedics and I ended up in the hospital. I got treatment with medications, but still no counseling services. This is where I was then placed on court ordered treatment and because I was living in Benson with my husband they transferred me to SEABHS. SEABHS was a welcoming environment. They offered services to me that I was never offered before and talked to me like I was a human being. Services such as: groups; being able to exercise in the facility; an interview for a job to keep me busy; and counseling services. The case manager was approachable and made me feel comfortable and helped me develop a plan of hope for my recovery on my ISP. My case manager helped me set goals. Today I am healthier than I have ever been and hope to stay that way. When my case manager said I could be employed and told me that I don't have to stay on medications for life if I don't need to, that gave me hope for recovery. This was the turning point for me in my ability in my belief that I can expand my role in this lifetime beyond that of a person with a labeled mental illness and being SMI.

I interviewed for a Receptionist job at SEABHS through SEAWORC and at first didn't think I would get the job. But three weeks later I was hired. Working through SEAWORC has given me a firsthand view of what others might be going through when they first walk through that door. This is one of the things that has helped me with my recovery and to know that

Continued on next page

A Newfound Confidence

By Pamela Doty

My personal experience of hope began in September, 2006. A little over two years after my real (adopted) mother's passing away. My days of self-medicating had come to an end. This was the only feasible decision I could make, my decision alone. I set out to find all the resources I needed in order to begin my self-recovery. I put my fears of seeking a higher education aside. I was now a college student. My teenage son Matthew would be attending Buena High School. This was the plan. I moved to a better part of town; away from the dark side and temptations. With this in mind, I would now make something of my life. Through perseverance I learned I could be so much more than a person living with a severe mental illness and substance abuse. I was now a college student, a single mother, a daughter to the only father I have known since the age of five. The time has arrived for me to step up to the plate and show my father he could be proud of one (out of three children he and my deceased mother had adopted). Eight years later, reflecting back, I am happy I chose to turn my life around when I did. For that reason so many opportunities became available to me. I walk with a newfound confidence and pride in myself. With the continued love and support from my son, and



family, I was able to make something of myself and my decision toward my own self-recovery.

My Support System by Melanie Lee, *continued from previous page*

there is hope for me. I am not just a person with a mental illness, I am a person who can accomplish things even with my label and the stigmatism that comes with it.

Today I am a much happier person when I am contributing to the community and working. I also was able to have a surgery done (gastric bypass) to help me start losing the weight I put on with the other psychiatric medications. I have lost over 70 pounds since April 15th, 2014 which has given me hope and contributed to my self esteem and recovery.

I am now forced (I am not really sure if that's the word I want to use) to eat a much healthier diet with high protein, low amounts of sugar, low carbs etc. to keep me healthy. I feel I have much more energy now with the weight loss and have higher self esteem. If I don't eat the right foods, I get a

tummy ache or literally throw up which is what is called dumping. I have been encouraged to join groups, get counseling, exercise, eat healthy, keep my appointments with all doctors and medical personnel involved in my care. When I lost my insurance due to financial issues, I was worried I was going to have to go on a medicine that I took previously before with bad symptoms because of the cost of Abilify, but that didn't happen because I had the support system behind SEABHS. My prescriber Connie Slay said "Oh no, we just have to get prior approval and you have come so far and are stable and this medicine doesn't cause you to gain weight we are going to do what we can to keep you on it." That gave me hope in my recovery because I didn't want to have to change something that was working for me. It's all about the support network system that has given me hope for my recovery.



Courage to Change

By Tanya Hammett

The day that changed my life and made me realize that there was Hope was the day that my mother, sister, and children all wrote me letters, and took them to where I was living at that time. When I finally had the courage to read what they had written to me was the day I knew that I was still very much needed, and was the day I changed my life around. I got myself out of the situation I was in, and from that moment I wanted to put myself into rehab. I turned myself in to take care of my outstanding warrants. While I was in jail I talked with the substance abuse counselor and he helped me find a place to go which was a Christian based rehab. After completing my time in jail I was out not even one week when my mother and sister drove me to rehab where I stayed for 3 months. Since then I went back to school for my Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and I am now employed with SEABHS. I went from using drugs for 9 years and losing everything in my life even my kids, (during this time I wasn't around my family anymore and living out of different houses) to finding myself again, having my kids back, and having my family in my life again. I thank God everyday for my family never giving up on me, and I thank God everyday for my life and where I am at TODAY. I have been free from drugs for 3 years and 9 months and living everyday with so much HOPE in my life that this is possible.

Simple Courage to Go On

By Stephanie Awrey

Hope is seeing the face of an older woman whose life has been ravaged by drugs, alcohol, abuse and more abuse. Every experience is etched in lines and wrinkles on her now lovely face. She is clean, sober, facing life head on. She is hope.

Hope is visiting a domestic violence program where mothers and children that have not laughed in years, or maybe ever, laugh and play and sing together. Even amidst all the chaos a shelter often produces, there is a sense of safety and peace that begins to seep into even the most abused woman. Hope is seeing trust in the eyes of the children instead of fear.

Hope is working in a social services setting and being noticed by a fellow worker when feeling truly overwhelmed. Your colleague just knows, no words need pass and she gently pulls you into a real hug. The kind of hug that feels real and solid and you know she has felt as you feel now.

Hope is going into a methamphetamine infused house to check on a member and feeling frightened but going anyway because it's your job. As you knock on the door, a fellow worker drives up, she's got your back. The fear that destroys hope is depleted. Hope represents change, a new and positive life and sometimes the simple courage to simply go on.



IHRSS Institute Graduates



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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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