

# Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Tucson, January 26, 2017



## Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduating Class

*Back Row (L to R):* Rosemary Frederick, Jacob Palafox, Elbert Barcelo, Aaron Remmy, Roger Peek, Vincent Barney,  
Christina Haller, Daniel Stankovic

*Front Row (L to R):* René Corral, Isis Chavez, Laretha Beckham, Jennifer Reynolds, Sophia Gamez



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# A Turning Point

By Daniel Stankovic

The word hope for me means everything. My personal experience with hope began in prison 4 years ago. I was involved with a Bible study group and my friend and I decided to enroll in the S.M.A.R.T. (Self-Management and Recovery Training) group that was offered to us. There I realized that I played a part in all of my problems and in my addiction. I also realized that my mental health plays a key role in defeating my addiction.

Bipolar disorder coupled with my addiction was slowly doing me in. This was the major turning point in my life. I finally realized that I have a dual diagnosis issue, and only managing one without addressing the other does not work for me. I have to manage both because they are directly related and affect each other. The group helped me to learn more about myself, about self-management awareness plus recovery training, and also how to incorporate all aspects of the program for a better life overall.

This program is still an active part of my lifestyle today, and I plan to pursue a certification to facilitate S.M.A.R.T. groups as a CRSS in order help others to change their ways of thinking and change their lives, just as I did for myself.



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# I am Not Alone

By Christina Haller

My hope began when I was first diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1998. It was a relief to have a name for what I was going through and to know that I was not alone, although it took me awhile to get used to having a chronic illness.

I began taking medication, as well as attending classes in order to improve my symptoms. I also learned coping skills to handle my feelings. I took anger management classes, as well as starting counseling, and was able to work through the issues that were causing the anger I was feeling.

# My Personal Experience of Hope

By Jacob Palafox



My personal experience of hope occurred when I realized and accepted I was in need of help in 2008. I went into therapy and treatment, which saved my life. My partner of 27 years, Richard, my family, friends, El Rio SIA, Cope, Vocational Rehabilitation and the IHRSS Institute have played and continue to play a big part in my recovery and rebirth as an individual. Being a client and consumer of Cope, I decided to become a CRSS so I could be the altruistic person that I strive to be, and give back to the community. Since I started attending the IHRSSI, I have further realized, that I still possess the ability, desire, ambitions, experiential knowledge, and the experiential expertise to help others like myself as well as my community. I have also realized that I have the ability to empower myself, and I want to use this ability to help others better themselves and their lives as well. Thanks to IHRSSI, my goal is to enroll in community college and become a Behavioral Health Technician. I want to be the best that I can be for everyone I know and meet.

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# Hope Is All I Need

By Isis Chavez



The Beatles sang "All we need is love... love is all we need." But for me, I say that hope is all I need. What comes to mind when I think of hope is sunshine, flowers, and a bright light at the end of a tunnel. Hope is what gives me a good night's sleep and a great jump start in the morning. It gives me the drive and energy to make it through the day. Hope keeps me believing in a better tomorrow, regardless of how bad my today was. All I need is hope... hope is ALL I need.

# Hope

Jennifer Reynolds

I believe that hope is one of the most important gifts that we can give to another person. There is no doubt that in this lifetime we all encounter pain and suffering. But the good news is that we can use that as our testimony to inspire and encourage others to have high hopes.

I can relate to people with substance use disorders and mental illnesses, and my goal is to assist others so they will be able to gain control of their lives. I would like to help people with their issues and teach them to recognize their triggers. Many people struggle in recovery due to conflicts with their friends and family. I want to be there for them when others have given up.

I truly believe that by maintaining a positive attitude and providing support when people need it the most, I can change a life. There are many opportunities for success and happiness, but many are unable to recognize them due to learned helplessness. I would like to provide encouragement and inspire others to become the best they can be. Because I have had my own struggles, I know it can be difficult to always see the best in everything. I have changed my life and I can make a difference.



# How I Found Hope in Recovery

By Elbert Barcelo



How I found hope in recovery is a very true and sad story. My addiction began at age 14 with marijuana use. I smoked for a few years and then moved on to using cocaine. I lost a great deal of weight and became very dependent on the drug. I ended up in prison for possession and served one year at Arizona State Prison in Safford, Arizona. That is where I was introduced to heroin. I loved the feeling I got from it; it took all of my pain away.

After I was released from prison, I was the victim of a shooting. A doctor prescribed me an opioid pain medication, and I became addicted to the medication and the way it made me feel. When I ran out of my prescription, I experienced a very nasty and painful withdrawal. I called a friend to ask if he could get me the medication, but he told me he had something better and cheaper, which was heroin.

I increased my usage of drugs; eventually overdosing and ending up in the hospital. Once out of the hospital, I felt driven to stay clean because I did not want to die or hurt my family. I stayed clean for 3 months before I relapsed and started using heavily once again. One day I was hurting really badly, and my daughter asked me to take her to the park to play on the swings. I was so sick I couldn't even get out of bed, and it hurt me so badly to see that I couldn't play with my daughter, so I decided to call the crisis number.

They asked where I lived and arrived in 20 min and took me to a treatment center. I was there for 5 days of detox, when a guy walked up to me and said he had an addiction but was now an CRSS. He talked to me about going to a 6 month rehab program called Casa De Vida. I took the offer and was there 6 months, then did 3 months of aftercare and graduated.

While I was in rehab, 90% of the staff were people with substance use disorders, and that gave me HOPE that I could become like them. That I could help other hopeless people find HOPE and remain clean. And that they would be able to live a life with freedom to be happy, and make the choice to say no to drugs and yes to a LIFE of SOBRIETY. Since I got sober, I have gotten my driver's license back, bought a truck, and paid all of my fines. The most unbelievable thing is that I regained my right to vote and had my felonies set aside. Now, I have HOPE and I know RECOVERY IS 100% POSSIBLE.

# The Power of Hope is Amazing

By Aaron Remmy

It is common among people whose lives have been challenged with mental health or substance use issues to come to a point where they think the possibility of recovery hopeless. I was such a person, deeply troubled through my teenage and early adult life. Therapy, medicine, and religion availed me not, often complicating life further with side effects, financial deficits, or negative social stigma which I internalized, further destroying my self-esteem.

In my mid-twenties my outlook on life was dark indeed. I had flunked out of college, and seemed unable to hold a job for more than a few months. My family had distanced themselves from me, and I only seemed capable of burning bridges. At the time I was staying with a friend, sleeping on his couch, since I couldn't manage finances either.

One day, after mowing someone's lawn, it occurred to me that I might be capable of earning a living doing just that. Since I had no equipment I worked it out to borrow someone else's, in exchange for free service. It was in that moment that the seed of hope was planted. I was extremely successful. While I didn't yet believe that I was capable of doing anything "normal", I had found the confidence to believe that I could be successful as a landscaper. I hoped to legitimize my work efforts by taking entrepreneur courses. The first course, business plan development, was exciting. I continued to take classes, and finally, it dawned on me that I was making good grades. I decided to take a chance at turning the coursework into an associate's degree by taking math and science courses, and ended up changing my major to engineering. During the next semester, while taking calculus, the director of the tutoring center approached me, and said that she would be honored if I would consider coming to work for her as a tutor.



She told me that my current professor had made a point of telling her about my capability and dedication. I don't think she expected me to start crying, but I did. It was just so overwhelming, that anyone would see a capable and worthy person in me.

The power of hope is amazing. I have since attempted and accomplished many things I thought myself incapable of; my life had been transformed. It finally became obvious, even to myself, that I didn't have to live it out as an addict or mental patient. I am just a person. I now believe the issue that had the greatest impact on my life to be low self-esteem. The people that had the most impact on my life through this period include my teachers, landscaping customers, students I helped through the tutoring center, and a friend named Cameron. My friend Cameron was the only person that

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## The Power of Hope is Amazing, by Aaron Remmy, continued

knew of my previous struggles. Like me, he had given up on living his life outside the role of a person with serious mental illness and addiction. Cameron passed away some time ago, and I want to honor him by telling of his involvement during this time period, and to show that my results are not unique.

Cameron met up with me one day at a gas station, and offered to come work with me if I ever needed a hand. He thought it would be good for him to get out and exercise, so I told him to jump in the back of the truck. That was a hard day for him, as he was intoxicated and became ill while working. Over time though, Cameron became my most valued employee.

Cameron had told me he was willing to work for two pouches of tobacco and a beer. It was obvious that he didn't value his contribution, and while I appreciated where his heart was, he was paid fairly. I was impressed that his skill continued to increase, while the pride in our work never diminished. Cameron had long wanted to be a licensed masseuse, and after around a year of him working for me, I challenged him to take the college entrance exam.

Cameron was really nervous about it. He hadn't made it through high school, and wasn't used to being around "normal" people. He passed the entrance exam, but Cameron quit work right before the final. He called me to let me know he had given up on his dreams, and wouldn't be coming to work anymore.

I know I could not have been successful without the people who believed in me and encouraged me through those years. Cameron was surrounded by people who knew about the issues he struggled with, and not only were they NOT supportive, they were verbally abusive and downright demeaning to him. I believe how we see ourselves plays more of a role in our ability to recover from the adversities in life than the adversities themselves.

I miss my friend, and as an epilogue to his part in my life, I later learned that even though he quit work, he stuck with school. Being able to add to his life and encourage his dreams, as well as being encouraged by him, meant a great deal to me. I think it was because we both knew what despair we had been through, and overcome. Rest in peace, Cameron. The next chapter of my life I dedicate to you.

# When My Journey of HOPE Began

By Roger Peek



After my oldest brother was shot and murdered by my biological father; after years of

suffering with severe depression and suicidal thoughts; after years of feeling so alone and suffering with such horrible internal pain, I was touched very deeply and significantly by a story.

The story was of a person who lived on this Earth long ago. This person was a great teacher and healer, a guru of sorts. This person dedicated their entire life to traveling, learning, and teaching people the things necessary to live fulfilling,

healthy, meaningful and peaceful lives. In the end, this person was tortured, mutilated and murdered in the most horrific of ways; sacrificing everything because others who claimed they were authorities found this person to be a threat to their "system of control".

As I was reading the words that this person had said, I found a deep understanding and peace come over me. In an instant I knew what I needed to do. I worked hard, payed off my debts and saved up. Soon I found myself in massage school learning how to lessen the pain of others. This was the beginning of what now has become a life long journey of self-discovery. First it was a journey to "heal the world". When it became apparent to me that the world didn't really seem to want to heal, it then became a journey to heal myself. Through these journeys I discovered a place within myself which has always been there, and which was crying out for me to see the entire time. I knew that place from the time I was born, but had to go through what most others have to go through, and be led away from that place just to find my way back.

That place within is where all I have ever longed for and desired lives. That place

is where all wisdom, power, health, nurturing, compassion, empathy and love thrive. This place is within all of us. It is the only place to find real and lasting peace, purpose and meaning. It has always been there, waiting, wanting, calling out. It only takes hearing those calls through quieting the chaos of the world and the mind to return there; the place of True Self. The place that feels most like home, the place that has always been home.



# Hope is a Rainbow in Someone Else's Cloud

By Laretha Beckham

Hope is something that can be seen or unseen. It is something to believe in when I feel lost, powerless, or unsure. During my 3rd CPS case I was told I wouldn't get my children back. I was devastated and hopeless. I asked myself "Why even try? I'm never going to get my kids back, I can't go through this again." My attorney told me "It's never too late to get your children back home." Her support and belief in me caused me to recover my hope.

My turning point was meeting a Recovery Support Specialist at Marana Behavioral Health. She shared with me her experience of hope, and it was then that I knew I could change and that I didn't have to become a statistic. My newest inspiration of hope came from learning of Patricia Deegan in the institute, because she talked about her experiences in so many of the same areas which I have struggled with in my own life. Hope is a rainbow in someone else's cloud.



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## Get Busy Living

By Christopher Harty

"Get busy living or get busy dying." That's what my great grandfather used to tell me as a child. I spent three decades in my addictions not knowing how to live, but too afraid to die. One day I was looking at myself in the mirror I was using for drugs, holding a drink and cigarette in my hand. I suddenly got the feeling that if I didn't get busy living, then dying would be near.

Righteous indignation welled up in me. I silently thanked my great grandfather as I poured out the drink, extinguished the cigarette and washed off the mirror. The next day found me in an A.A. meeting receiving

my 24-hour chip. At my next doctor's appointment I asked for medication to support the treatment of alcohol dependence, and for nicotine patches. I also knew I needed a holistic network of support to be successful.

Often, while having a discussion with another person in recovery, I would get a sense that this would be something I would like to do as a career. Thus, I applied to the IHRSS Institute. I am now three days away from graduating and I feel more empowered every day to share my experience, strength and HOPE with those who are struggling to get about the business of living. Now the only reflection that the mirror holds for me is that of a healthy, happy, and grateful person.

# My Experience of HOPE

By Rosemary Frederick



On my road to recovery, there have been too many experiences of hope to count. In March of 2016, I received the diagnosis of Lung Cancer for the second time, after 11 years of remission. I had surgery, successfully removing 2 tumors. I was feeling very hopeful for a healthy, long life. After surgery I spent two months physically recovering in preparation for

the chemotherapy that was to come. After an MRI, CAT scan, blood tests, two blood transfusions, and a two week recovery from the side effects of chemo, it was finally time to get back to work. During the time I was in treatment I was not able to work; the money I had saved was depleted, and I had only my monthly benefits to exist on.

I cannot count how many disconnect notices I received from TEP and Tucson water. I had created stress for myself by accumulating a large amount of credit card debt. I tried my hardest to avoid having to borrow money from family. In late November I had been speaking to a bankruptcy Attorney and a debt consolidation company, both of whom charged exorbitant fees. As I contemplated my options to handle this situation, I was contacted by another company. After a fifteen minute conversation with a very kind woman, we discussed my debt and created a budget. I was still underwater, but we tried to reduce my expenses, with suggestions like using the food bank to cut down on my grocery bills.

With fees waived, and a livable monthly payment on the debt I owed, I have to say I am now on my way to living debt free. All of my hopes have been answered. I have a healthy long life ahead of me. With friends, family, and strangers praying for my recovery, I can now work again. I can celebrate with all the people in my life. Of course, at the very top of the list is GOD, with his grace and mercy. I thank him every day.

Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have.

# My Hope

By Kevin James

Hope has been essential in my recovery. I have been in recovery for about 30 years, but nothing had really changed until I started this program, the IHRSSI (Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute). I have learned so much about my substance use and my mental health. Out of all the programs and Institutions I have been in and out of, this program is designed for me and so many others. It is unbelievable.

The IHRSSI covers everything I had ever asked myself about my journey, plus how others like myself have a 100% chance of recovery. I learned even more than that, like the history and background of Peer Support. Watching the video which showed thousands of

unmarked graves and unnamed bodies in boxes, I understood how we cannot let this happen again. Now we have so many great people who led the way to thank!

Through those who give myself and others help to fight these diseases, I have found hope. I want to thank the few people I have found. Ms. Beverly McGuffin, Program Director, Mr. John Anglin, Ms. Rita Romero, Mr. Dave Delawder; all special people and great instructors. Thank you. And to the people I haven't been able to thank, you have been wonderful peers and coaches. I hope that I will be as good as you all.

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# Hope

By Vincent Barney

I define hope as a feeling of light and goodness that breaks through during a period of darkness and struggle. Hope whispers, "You will overcome this hardship". It reassures us, soothing our minds by reminding us that life will improve. Hope is a factor in giving us motivation.

I was first given hope when I was at the Salvation Army, when I sat down with Major Courtney Stratton. She shared with me that although her younger son had grown up around men in recovery his entire life, he rarely engaged in conversation much less interacted with these men. She told me that she had noticed he looked up to me, and that

children can sense goodness in people. At this point in my life, I did not believe that there was any good left inside of me. The fact that others saw good in me gave me hope to change and grow into a better man.

This sense of hope was impactful, and a drastic turning point in my recovery process. Since I have experienced intense hopelessness, pain and despair, I am able to understand the plight of human struggle that cannot be taught in textbooks. I am living proof that hope can begin a transformational recovery process. Peer Support is incredibly valuable because it utilizes a person's experience, struggles and hardships to inspire hope in others who are struggling. I believe in the underestimated power of hope.

# A Gift Called Hope

By René Corral



My journey of hope began when I lost hope. My life felt as if it was coming apart. My relationship of 5 years came to an end, I lost the job that I been at for the last 6 years, and lost my apartment. I was forced to move back in with my parents. These were all fractures in the wall of my life. What really made that wall break down was losing my car, and then the loss of my dog, Foxy.

At the time I felt that there was nothing keeping me alive. All I felt was the anger of losing all that I had accomplished in my life, and the deep sadness of losing someone I had cared for and loved. It was at this time that I attempted suicide. After this, a friend of mine gave me a gift called HOPE, which changed my mind and my life. Because of what my friend did for me, I am able to say that I now have a beautiful wife, who supports me through my hardships, as well as two amazing kids.

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# My Picture of Hope

By Sophia Gamez

My pictures of hope is seen through the struggles of pain, years of self-deprivation, disasters, and desperation for affection. I was looking at my life from a skewed perspective. I did not want to take personal responsibility for my own actions, but only looked at the faults of others. Feeling as if I had no place for myself in this world made things even worse. It all led to a near death experience. I was hospitalized, labeled, criticized, and discriminated against - I felt like the world was going to end.

Using my resilience, and through counseling, I learned to take accountability for myself. I had to come to terms with what I had no control over in my life. What I had overcome had frightened me to the core. It made me realize the things I did have in my life - family and friends that love me, children that needed me, and a father that actually cares about me. I saw that all



along my children's father had always believed in me, and that I have MYSELF. This is my picture of hope. This is what keeps me going; this is what will help me become more effective in my career, in the community, and most importantly, within myself.

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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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