

# Workforce Development News

## Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Tucson, Arizona July 21, 2016



## Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduates

*Back Row left to right:*

Jennifer Compton, Suzanne Brior, Peter Moore, Vance Snyder, Jose Pallanes, Raymundo Daily, Arturo Gomez, Adrian Dean

*Middle Row left to right:*

Deidra Wudtke, Christopher Chavez, Wendy Fryar, Bridget Stoll, Danielle Wilson

*Front Row left to right:*

Stephanie Tellez, Tina Portell, Melissa Borrer, Rachel Benham, Dominica Callagy



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INTEGRATED CARE

# Hope

Adrian Dean

Scapegoating a child teaches them to avoid and fear accountability. I spent much of my childhood being criticized for both things I did do and things that had nothing to do with me. This environment of blame became a dodgeball game where I spent my time dodging and hiding, hoping to avoid being hit by further criticism. A child in this situation cannot help but build a shield of self-righteousness. In my case, I vacillated between a shield of self-righteousness and people pleasing. The kicker was it made all criticism, (destructive or constructive) feel like it was burning my soul.

Several years into my Recovery, I received an incredible gift. I worked on codependency issues with an experienced sponsor. She was a wonderful combination of validating and butt-kicking. Part of Recovery is examining one's character defenses. I say "defenses" instead of "defects" because I do not believe anyone is truly "defective." As this sponsor began to call me on my character defenses, I resisted.

As we discussed my relationship with an ex-partner, she asked me what my 'parts' were in conflicts. I said, "I didn't have any 'parts' in it. I was sweet." She said, "Yes you did." I said, "How would you know? You weren't there." She said, "Let me tell you how I know. Number one, you are human. Number two, you are a wounded human." She said most people are internally wounded. She was clear the process of healthy conflict resolution was not about blaming myself or the other person(s) nor is it about shaming anyone. She put it to me this way, "Sometimes you don't have a part in it. Sometimes you have a small part, a few medium parts and/or a large part and the same goes for the other person(s)." She said often both people have parts in it and if these parts can



be examined, then conflict resolution and authentic emotional intimacy have a chance. Making exploration of the truth a priority over blame, she taught me a practical, non-threatening way to view conflict. She taught me to ask myself, "What's my part in this?" and to wait for an internal honest answer. She also told me I can run the conflict by mentors/safe people (who are truly fair witnesses) to help me look at my part(s). At first, I was not thrilled at this process, but feeling a strong desire for better relationships, I gave it a try.

Creating a neutral space inside to explore and work on my "part(s)" in conflicts greatly improved my self-esteem and my relationships. It set me free! I learned I was not a terrible person for making a mistake. I began to embrace the tenth step, "When we were wrong, promptly admitted it," as a shame busting accountability action. The tenth step gives me the RIGHT to the dignity of owning my behavior, making an amends and then

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# Know Your Worth

Melissa Borrer



I was homeless and on drugs for eight years. May 7, 2008 was the day I decided to quit and the day my hope

began. I went through it alone and found strength through prayer and the choice of wanting to live instead of giving up. But something inside me had always told me that I wanted to help. I wasn't sure how to do it but that I needed to do it.

Here I am eight years later and the possibilities for me are endless. I'll soon be certified as a Recovery Support Specialist and that is just the beginning of my journey to helping this world and myself. Something I've always known is that I was destined for greatness. I don't know how or why but I do know that I'm GOING TO CHANGE THE WORLD.

A quote I have written about my last fifteen years I HOPE you enjoy it!!

"Everything happens for a reason and timing is everything. You may not see it now...but you will. You have to push through the pain, let it go and keep it moving. Without struggles...your hustle has no value. Know your worth."

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## Hope by Adrian Dean continued...

moving on. It released me from much of my self-hatred and morbid reflection. People seemed to become more comfortable with me as I owned my "stuff." The more I practiced this technique, the easier it becomes to look at "my part."

Over the years, I practiced this tool in different situations and types of relationships. I call it a practice because I don't do it perfectly. In all honesty, conflict still scares me, (though considerably less). I still feel defensive when issues are addressed with me. I still feel apprehensive when I need to address an issue and/or boundary with a person. Yet, the beauty is I move through defensiveness much quicker. I also find I can move through feelings of anger and frustration much quicker. Practice did not make perfect. It did increase skill and comfort.

Using this tool as lovingly as I can gives me hope. It helps create an atmosphere of equality in relationships where both people's feelings and perspectives matter (even when we don't agree). What a relief! Human beings often respond to dysfunction and pain with extremes. Prior to learning this tool, I felt I had to see people as all good or all bad. The middle ground felt too confusing and painful. I find when boundaries are respected and people are truly heard during conflict resolution, I come to understand myself and the other person better. I come to see myself and others as whole human beings, not all good or all bad. The part I really love is when both people come up with new ways to communicate. I usually feel closer to the person along with more hope for my own life.

# Hope

Arturo Gomez

Hope is a four letter word that we take for granted. We go to sleep with hope and wake up with hope, but do not comprehend what it really means. On October 4, 2010, I woke up with that belief, taking it for granted, not cherishing what it really meant. On that particular night, I went to work thinking how much overtime I will have at the end of the pay period not knowing that I would be in a car accident. I had a herniated disc that took me off of regular work to being on medical leave. I was on leave for about 5 months when I got news from work that I was let go.

I struggled with disability nearly four years. With each denial, my hope seemed to diminish a little each time. I was struggling to pay bills, my wife working extra hours to have enough for the bills but not for food. The food bank only gave us a bag of can food and a loaf of bread. My marriage was in dire need of help, hanging on a very thin string cut in half ready to break. Being married meant the world to me; I came from a divorced family, hence being married 'til death do we part was my world. Then came the dreaded day that my marriage fell apart, I lost all hope in life, I no longer had the life that I thought I would have 'til I grew old.

One morning, after waking up depressed day in and night out, I woke up with a strange feeling. Not knowing what it was at first, I made an appointment with the doctor thinking he would be able



to let me know what it was. Light bulb, it was hope that had returned to me once again. I was enrolled at Camp Wellness that day and made an appointment to return to school and start all over again. It turned out that I was still depressed thinking I had made a terrible mistake. I was one year into school when my recovery coach and employment at COPE let me know about this program. I was skeptical about this because I felt that I was dug deep in a hole. I was totally wrong, not only did this program help me but it gave me the opportunity to give back what I received "Hope."

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# Recovery is 100% Possible

Tina Portell

I had an amazing thing occur in my life about eight months ago. At that time, I had six months of sobriety off of the final drug that kept me from being totally clean and sober. Several newly recovering people with addictions were drawn to me for some reason, like moths to a flame. They would be compelled to sit next to me at places like the grocery store and talk to me about recovery. They wanted to know how I stayed clean and sober as well as how I overcome the battle of addiction. So I lovingly shared my hope, experience, and strength in recovery with them. Most of them came to me grasping at the straws of their sanity and not believing that they could stay sober for another millisecond. Amazingly enough, after we were done talking, they felt empowered in their recovery to stay sober.

I am now convinced the most powerful part of the message I conveyed to them is the hope that recovery is 100% possible and that they deserve a good quality of life for themselves. The role that this played in my recovery was that it was a complete solidification of my life in recovery. First, I learned the tools of basic recovery; then, I started living the way of recovery; and apparently, Father was telling me that I was now at that point in my recovery cycle where it was time for me to teach as well as share recovery with others. This was definitely a profound spiritual awakening for me. For some unknown reason, I became like a beacon of light that recovering people with



addictions kept getting drawn to. They would sit with me and we would talk about recovery.

Even using people who were thinking about getting into recovery were thus drawn. They too talked to me about recovery and we talked about ways they could get themselves into a safe and sober environment so they could balance themselves as well as focus on the task of getting clean as well as sober. This sort of thing occurred where I lived at

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## Recovery is 100% Possible by Tina Portell continued...

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the Hacienda Motel, at the Fry's near where I lived, at the COPE Mesquite clinic, and other locations as well. I took this as a clear sign from Father that He has a purpose for my life. I talked to my behavioral health representative at the time and explained to her what was taking place. She suggested the Recovery Support Specialist class and she said that it would be perfect for me. She explained what an RSS is and what they do and I loved it! She ended up helping me enroll into the class.

This was a monumental "turning point" in my life because before this occurred: I was the living dead; my heart was so hard it was like unto a diamond; and I had no hope for a future. This was manifested in my behavior of self-apathy and living only for the moment. But an interesting thing occurred; as I gave hope in recovery to others, I discovered that I was also giving hope to myself as well. Thus is the law of equivalent exchange. In this case, the exchange was hope. As I gave hope to others, without even realizing it at the time, I was giving myself the same amount of hope as I gave to others.

When I started RSS class, I still had no hope for a future. But now the law of equivalent exchange of hope has occurred once more in me. This class has provided me with the precision tools of recovery as well as wonderful new friends for my support group. In exchange, I want to give back by getting employed by COPE. My career goals are to give hope in recovery by spreading the message that recovery is 100% possible for everyone even when they feel no hope for themselves; tear down the stigmas that stifle us by educating as well as enlightening our communities about us so integration can be easier for us all with mutual understanding.

I want to be the voice to advocate for a system that is tailor-made to fit our recoveries on our terms, as opposed to the one-size-fits-all clinical-based system many of us are used to. I have learned through hope that I am much more than my co-occurring disorder diagnosis. I am a being with a purpose higher than myself. In conclusion, this is my definition of hope: "Hope is the breath of life that revives the death of learned hopelessness of mental illness and addiction".

## Hope a Part of My Toolbox

Deidra Wudtke



Hope came to me at a very young age. In my journey to recovery, up every mountain and down every hill, hope has always been with me. It carried me throughout each moment of despair and those of happiness. When I was diagnosed with multiple mental illnesses, it was my belief in my higher power and hope that I could succeed in finding a way to gain a balance in my life. Using the tools and resources given to me by my peers, I am now attending (RSSI) classes. With the knowledge I am gaining about my own mental illnesses, I can become a useful member of my community and obtain gainful employment so that I once again may have a car, job, and a home of my own. Thus I feel my journey to 100% recovery can be obtained always keeping hope a part of my toolbox.

# My Serenity Prayer

Dominica Callagy

My name is Dominica Callagy. I'm 23 years old. I have been clean and sober since October 3, 2013. What got me clean was being arrested and sentenced to 90 days. From there I was placed on probation for 3 years and had to complete 90 days at a half-way house. While being incarcerated I had time to gather my thoughts, set some goals and figure myself out. I became determined to stay sober and start a new life.

During my stay at a halfway house my boyfriend stayed very supportive and believed in me when no one else could. As a condition of probation I had to attend counseling. My counselor helped me realize who I am and what I want for myself. With that knowledge I felt confident in my sobriety. I was able to move home to my brother's house once I completed the half-way house program. That's when I decided to plan for a baby.

The moment the test came back positive my life changed for the better, I was so ready to have the responsibility of being a mom. I knew that it would keep my focus off of drugs. I knew I was no longer living for myself, I began feeling hopeful. My baby empowered me to reach my goals. The love I felt for her was so strong it was what I needed to keep me striving for success on my sobriety. I never endangered my child's life or safety; it meant



more to me than getting high. That was when my feeling of hope filled my heart. I believed in myself, I had hope for this life I have planned ahead of me will work out. My little girl is my inspiration without her life is meaningless, its hopeless. She is my serenity prayer.



# The Light of Hope

Danielle Wilson

Hope....The true power of that word was something I learned by finding myself at very dark and hopeless place in my own life. Many things had brought me to that place including abuse, depression, anxiety, co-dependency and ultimately substance abuse. I wasn't living, I was existing. My days were filled with things that made numb not just what I saw as the best part of the day but what I strived for all day. I was told that I had messed up my life beyond redemption and accepted that as my truth at the darkest time.

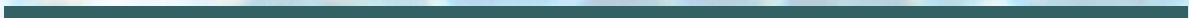
I met a woman who I knew to have had firsthand knowledge of the depths where I had fallen. She had found her way out and was working, living, smiling, loving and taking care of herself and her son. Although I couldn't find a light in place where I was, her light shined bright enough that I could see it....that was my hope moment....if she could do it maybe just maybe I could.

Something big started with that maybe. I looked at how she had made those changes and started my journey down the roads of recovery. I was fortunate enough to meet peers that supported, nurtured and truly understood the barriers I needed to overcome to be successful in my journey. Along the roads of my recovery I have been fortunate enough to meet peers who shared their hope with me until I grew to have it myself. They helped guide



me out of that dark, sad hopeless existence to a life in recovery.

When I was able I wanted to share the light of hope that I had been given because I know how instrumental it was to my own journey. I strive and continue to strive still today. My life today is so much more than the redemption I prayed for in those darkest times....it so much more than I dared to hope.



# This Fabulous Experience of Hope

Peter Moore



What is hope to me? I'd like to start out with it being an acronym: H-healing O-overcoming P-perseverance E-encouragement. Each letter having its own meaning, and collectively embodying that which I continually seek and share.

Without delving into every sordid detail of my downward spiral into the depths of my self-inflicted despair, I'd like to focus on what the culmination of situations, experiences and ultimately my saving grace that pierced through the thick veil of my self-induced deception of what I chose to falsely believe was the only avenue of relief, which was my addiction.

Since my early teens I had grown to believe that I should be able to do whatever I wanted as long as I didn't get caught. And if I did, then I could blame everything and everybody else

for their lack of care and involvement in my life. And not taking the time to not only point me in the right direction, but hang in there with me until it took hold. If I had written a book of excuses, it would've been a best-seller.

I foolishly thought I was a unique individual which rules and laws and statistics didn't apply. I didn't even consider myself a dope fiend, I was a dope fan. If there were drugs in the house, I'd get up and applaud. Then try to outdo everyone there in consumption.

After too many years of addiction, incarceration, rehabs and recovery groups I was believing that this thing called recovery was something I would never obtain, and was settling myself into the remainder of my life being either cut short by overdosing, or spending my last year's bitterly looking out at a world that never understood me nor cared enough to help me change.

Little did I know that it was I who had the telescope turned around backward, and that the answers I sought were right in front of me the whole time. And that this thing called recovery was not only something I could obtain, but sustain it to a degree that it could be shared with others.

It was through my finding my "higher power" in the person of Jesus Christ, and the breakthrough moments with my wife, Cecilia, and her coming to a place of really desiring to not only understand who and what I really am, but her authentic willingness to travel this journey with me, and I with her; that the seed of true hope sprouted and started to grow and bloom in my life. This hope started opening different doors of opportunity to learn and share this fabulous experience of hope, and building my desire to become more involved in this

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# Grateful for that Sliver of Hope

Chris Chavez



My personal experience of hope began when I was forced into rehab by my probation officer. I had the choice between rehab or an extensive stay in prison. I was lost

and hopeless. I felt only capable of causing destruction and chaos.

I had my first glimpse of hope when I was six days clean and saw a childhood friend that was the speaker for our meeting. When I talked to him after, he told me he had one year clean. I told him my situation and all he said was "you're in the right place".

A few weeks later I started working with my sponsor and explained to him everything going on. He explained to me how the destruction and chaos could benefit someone else and yet give them the same hope that was given to me. I knew recovery was possible at this point because I had seen the proof.

This was my turning point, before this I was spiritually and emotionally bankrupt. Now I had that sliver of hope that started my journey of recovery. It was that hope that I became open minded and willing. I would never be where I am today if it wasn't for that hope. I couldn't do it for anyone or anything including my children, parents, or self. Now I just want to be able to give that same little bit of hope to someone else. I am extremely grateful for that sliver of hope that changed my life.

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## Hope, by Peter Moore continued...

community of recovery. To the point of moving in the direction of it being a career move for me, and my wife. But more than that, it has become a calling in my life. A vocation like no other I had ever experienced.

I now know, and believe that recovery is 100%

achievable. And I also know and believe that without the manifestation of hope in my life I would not be where I am today.

Hope has allowed me to heal, overcome, persevere, and encourage. I hope my life will be a testament to that.

# Hope Snuck Up on Me

Jenny Compton



My personal experience of hope has been that it is essential to both my survival and my success in life and in recovery. Hope has been defined as the faith that at least some of our difficulties can be overcome and that a happy life is ultimately possible.

Hope snuck up on me and I remember I exactly where I was when I realized my life wasn't over yet. I hadn't let myself be optimistic about my future in so long and I was in a very dark place for a couple of years. Like other students, I have had periods of complete hopelessness followed by wonderful feelings for the future. I'd like to describe an abbreviated version of my story.

My husband and I were moving back to Scottsdale, AZ and he decided to leave me in Kansas and go by himself. He closed and emptied our bank accounts. All I had was my supportive family, my cat and a couple other things that didn't make it in the moving truck. I was back in the room I grew up in, no money and no job. During this tsunami of bad events,

my mom got sick and was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer and went through endless surgeries.

From that point, I just snapped, I went off of my medication and hung out in very bad neighborhoods, doing lots of drugs. Watching my mom's cancer and chemo and the strain it was putting on my dad was more than I could handle. I floated from job to job, usually getting fired for something stupid. After endless surgeries, chemotherapy and thirteen weeks in intensive care, my mom died in January 2009. My emotions went downhill from there and I was doing heavily drinking and drugs.

Finally, thankfully, I was arrested for committing a felony after doing a strange synthetic drug called bath salts. I lost all hope for the future until I was sent by the court into the county's Therapeutic Community as an alternative to prison. There I met CA Koch, who took a genuine interest in me and made me feel that I still had a chance at a good life. I started running every day. My medication was working and I knew finally, there was hope again for me.

The icing on the cake was my probation officer, Dave Hall and another amazing person by the name of Annie Nero. She was my court-ordered Peer Support Specialist. Annie never gave up on me and almost forced me to believe that good things would happen but I had to set goals and action steps. It was hard work but I stayed happily sober and was released from probation nine months early.

Annie helped me research Tucson before I moved here and she suggested I try to get a job in Peer Support. She even said she would write me a recommendation. I couldn't believe that this job exists, specifically for people like me. People were believing in me again.

# The Way I Found Hope

Jose Pallanes

I found hope this year through my family and Palo Verde Rehab Program. I tried to get sober earlier in the year with the help of my mother and daughter, and wasn't successful. I tried again, but this time with the help of this program and I had my peers, and family supporting me too. Everyday still brings its own challenges. The beginning of my recovery was a not easy; in fact it was and has been a difficult process.

When I saw that I was harming myself and the people around me, it opened my eyes. I was working in scaffolding before I started my recovery; I had to be very aware in that line of work. I wasn't able to uphold my responsibilities because of my addiction. The day I noticed that I was in danger to myself and everyone around me, it opened my eyes. I then knew that I needed help.

When I tried the second time to recover, I was successful. I found hope through COPE. With my class, my RSS, and all my family's support I was able to find hope. My RSS gave me hope and confidence. My confidence level became higher knowing that I was going on the right direction. The hope that I found in my everyday life, all my broken shelves, I was able to fix. I am so grateful to have found hope, and to have the help and support from my family, and everyone around me.

The reason I want to be an RSS is because I have lived through the



struggle of being an addict. I've gone through so much and I am still standing. Now I am standing taller and happy. I want to be able to give hope to other people that are going through a rough state in their lives. I will be able to let them know that it is possible to change. To know that I can touch at least one person and help them see and find hope, and then I know that I made a difference. It would give me so much hope within life, and make me feel that I succeeded and was able to help someone who was the way I was.

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# My True Hope

Rachel Benham



Hope has many different definitions but one definition I read that stood out to me the most was, "An optimistic attitude of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes related to events and circumstances in one's life." Not too long ago I was stuck in a hopeless state of mind and wasn't until some circumstances, of my own, that I like to call miracles happened that gave me hope and changed my life forever.

The day hope came back into my life was on September 15, 2015. I was incarcerated August 27, 2015 and had lost all hope. My permanency review for my son was

on September 15 and my lawyer told me to be prepared for the judge to put in orders for severance and adaption. As I walked into the court room in my orange jumpsuit and shackles I felt scared, disappointed and hopeless. As I walked in I saw my dad in the audience. Two weeks before I was arrested I had seen my dad and his last words to me were "I hate you and I never want to see you again." I thought my dad had given up on me so to see him there in the court room still supporting me made my heart ache, in a good way. I then began scanning the court room and saw so many faces I had turned away when all they wanted was to help me. I began to feel a little less hopeless at this point.

After about five minutes the whole court room rose for the honorable judge. We were all asked to take our seats as the judge began to speak. She began by stating how well I had done at the beginning of my case but that I took a wrong turn and went downhill very fast. "Normally at this point," she said, "I would put you up for severance and adaption. But I still have faith in you Ms. Benham and I am going to keep you in the reunification process. I suggest you turn things around and turn them around quickly." That was the point in my recovery that I felt hope again.

Three weeks later I was released from jail and entered into treatment. My story of hope was seeing that the people who really care about me never gave up on me and that my true hope was never losing my son.

# Hope

Suzanne Brior

It has been a long arduous journey of trials and tribulations to finally stumble upon my path of self-discovery and hope. One that no one should experience.

The moment that I realized that there was hope for me came at the very darkest time in my life. One, no one, ever thinks could happen to them. My son who was 6 at the time was taken from me. I had been using drugs for years and it caught up with me. My worst fear realized that my son was being escorted by two strangers to a car. They told me he was going to be put into the system and it was up to me if I even got him back at all.

They had no hope as they told me those stifling words that seemed to not be real. All I knew was I had failed. I failed myself, and most of all, my precious son whom I'm supposed to protect with my life.

I immediately was told what to do, when to do it, and how to do it by these people telling me I had a huge problem. Instantly I denied it. I resisted, but this had to be done for my son. I didn't want to be put in that category of people who have substance abuse problems and lose their child. It's was unthinkable. I was being labeled and put into the category that is known by everyone to be the worst possible thing you could do if you we're a parent.

As I began my treatment plan and working my program, all I could think of was this bottomless pit in my soul. My baby was gone and I was nothing. I did what I had to but with my head



down and mouth closed at first. But I started to realize that I needed help. I needed this. This is what I had been waiting for. Someone to hold their hand out and guide me to be the person that I was meant to be. I didn't know what I could be. I was discovering that I had a voice and that it could be heard. That what I said did make sense and mattered. Best of all I was not alone in this.

I was lost and suffering. After 9 months of not having my son and 15 months of sobriety, hard work on myself and getting a handle on my life, I now have my son back and my life that I ways knew I should've had.

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# Always Having Hope

Raymundo Daily



Hello, I am Raymundo Daily I have had the time to experience many challenges in life that would want to just thank you for taking some time to read this. Choices affected my family, friends and loved ones, and relationships with others as well as my education and career. Overcoming trials of having a mental illness and your daily life struggles and not having anything to help you because you always feel like you're failing. Trying many times like a roller coaster over and over.

While I had a turning point in my life in January 2015 I was just done with giving up and said I am going to keep trying and really get to understand who I am and accept it and understand my diagnoses. My turning point was my family; just wanting it better for all 6 of my sisters and 3 of my brothers; just wanting to show them that change was and is possible and recovery is possible.

So I started doing everything that I could do to help and cope with different things and strategies. Always knowing and having faith that my life had so much more meaning than just me being on medication. Always being in the same cycle was much more than I saw for myself well. This 1 year and 8 months has been many challenges, but I have to continue moving forward to make positive changes. Slowly, always having hope, that one day I will be fully recovered from many challenges I face daily. Thanks to the many supporters in my journey in life from the past, present and future. My God, all my great parents of wisdom and guidance my grandmother, my case manager from Cope, Michael, and my therapist. A huge role on a new chapter and me succeeding is myself always believing in the greater good . I am going to leave this quote I wrote "Having hope is a challenge that we all face it's not just believing it's something so much more real you feel inside you that you want and desire a change".



# Comfortable in My Own Skin

Stephanie Tellez

My journey of Hope began about 6 years ago when I realized or maybe, finally admitted, that I was powerless over alcohol, and that my life had become unmanageable. I would then go through 3 rehabs in 5 years! I was desperately searching for something to silence the peanut gallery in my mind. I followed suggestions; I studied the 12 steps religiously; I got a sponsor; I went to church and prayed to my higher power; I went to meetings; became a self-proclaimed expert on the Big Book of alcoholics anonymous, and I still was missing something.

I was frustrated, depressed, felt helpless and resigned to a life of repetition. Recover, Relapse, and Repeat. It wasn't until I entered a Rehab for the 3rd time that the change began. Some have said it was because I wasn't ready: every person's story is different, and I had been ready for a long time. The gift of desperation was evident on my face, in my posture, in my tears and my grief. I firmly believe the difference this time was the people.

The staff, including the Peer Support person, who did not try to "fix" me, or give me a list of things I must do to stay sober, but instead, walked up beside me and offered me a hand and said, "let's figure this out together". I will be forever grateful for the compassion, the empathy, the genuine care, and concern for me as a human being that was in pain. They loved me until I could love myself. They empowered me to come to my own realizations and they encouraged me to become comfortable in my own skin and be responsible for my thoughts, actions



and behaviors. They reminded me of all the great things I had accomplished and all the great things I still had to look forward to. They asked the right questions and they listened.

The peer support that was offered to me by those with skill, empathy and genuine compassion for me as a person was and is what inspires me to continue in my education to one day, give someone else what was so generously given to me, and that is the light, the sun, the courage, the tools and the perseverance to succeed, with the belief that Recovery is 100% possible and to me, that is by very definition, HOPE.

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## A New Path

Vance Snyder



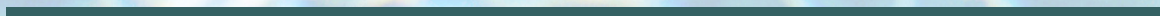
Becoming aware of this class through my therapist at COPE, my first inclination was why would I want to become a member of this "circus"? I mean there was more ink on the workers at COPE that the Black Hills in Sturgis.

That being, of course, the world's most famous motorcycle rally. I was reluctant but said why not take a look inside the tent?

Well, curiosity got the better of me so I bought my ticket and waited for my turn to view the greatest show on earth, taking a chance to see what the show could reveal to me. At first peep, I had my doubts about the varied group assembled, but I was willing to listen closely and intently. As time went by, I realized that there were no tigers; no dancing bears; no ringleader; ok there was Bev. But a group of people working together and willing together to help other people try to get by and make a difference.

Now that the class is coming to a close, I realize how I have affection for this class as a whole. Each and every person has given a bit of themselves that will help us to build a foundation of the new path in people's lives.

Where will this path take us? Who knows, but I am pretty sure it will be a memorable one. And to think, this all started with going to see the clowns.



# My Oasis of Hope

Wendy Michele Fryar



*Valley of Achor (muddy, turbid, gloomy dejected); as a door of hope... Hosea 2:15. Passing through the Valley of Baca ( valley of weeping)... make it a place of Springs. Psalm 84:6, 2 Corinthians 1:4 God comforts us in all our troubles so we can comfort others....-Hopeful scriptures taken from the Bible*

I had just got out of a devastating consecutive two month lock up in a mental hospital at Shandin Hills, in San Bernardino California, where the doctor, advisors, even my very own appointed advocate, expressed clearly that I shouldn't be on my own again. (She was so shocked when I was released!)

When I got home, I desperately began calling a woman's rehab facility daily looking for a bed, without success. When people I knew would suggest I try 'The Oasis House'; a clean and sober living facility in my community. I told my landlord and he agreed that would be a good idea for me.

I was very thin. I was terrified and was drinking Ensure drinks, instead of eating, (I felt too sick to eat solid foods) When I entered the Oasis House, I suddenly felt hope and healing power from the people around me. I lived in a room with several women. Although kind of annoying and crowded, living with all these different women, at the same time, they gave me comfort and hope!

The bathroom had many different shampoo/ conditioner bottles all around the bathtub. I started to relax, (feeling comfort by being with these people, they could relate to me! and not feeling very alone as I usually did) and eat, and feel better, and felt hope start creeping in, feeling reviving life coming back into me.

I followed the directions, 90 meetings in 90 days and no visitors at all for the first 30 days. A few months later after beginning my recovery in spring, 2005, I had an apartment, my youngest son back living with me, and I was attending Jr. College. Today, eleven years later, I treasure dearly being clean and sober.

My youngest son is now in college! I'm blessed and very grateful. I'm even going to be a grandma soon, in September by my daughter! My desire today is to comfort, and offer consolation to people and offer hope as a living example. The gift of hope is such a most precious gift and I believe we should offer it whenever we have the opportunity. I feel that the R.S.S. program is a God-send and an AWESOME opportunity!

I have suffered in life as a result of participating in addictions of drugs, alcohol, gambling, sex, shopping, as well as others, like coffee and even sugar! I have suffered with behavioral health issues such as PTSD; from childhood trauma, depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder. Day by day living many times does not feel easy, but I am greatly content in my recovery, to recover, more and more, get better, grow, and heal each day and share hope with others. Thank You, for letting me refresh my thankfulness for the gift of hope and recovery.

# Hope

Bridget Stoll

About twenty seven years ago, I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety by a kindly psychiatrist named Dr. Dennis Westin.

In a sense, I was relieved this affliction had a name. This alone gave me hope. So perhaps I wasn't such a bad and terrible person after all. This illness always seemed to be telling me that I was.

So it wasn't all my fault after all, though I knew I had a responsibility to myself, my family and my community to do something about it. I was given medication which helped a lot, though it was not a cure. The bottom line was, I couldn't get better by myself. I had to get help.

I realized that taking medication was just a start. I had, and am still learning, how to care for myself as a person with a mental illness. The truth is I still have a long way to go when symptoms start to show themselves. There are still many actions I need to make a habit of when I can feel myself getting ill.

It's in taking these actions that gives me hope. When I take the actions, I feel better, and that gives me hope.

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Workforce  
Development News

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**Beverly McGuffin,**  
EDITOR

**Patricia Philbin,**  
DESIGN

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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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