

Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Tucson, Arizona, September 1, 2016



Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduates

Back Row left to right: Crystal Vaughn, Gerald Barlow, Jennifer Riecke, Alan Lucas, Krystal Rugg, Michael Dunson, Carol Hurley, Earle Gough, Debbie O’Gorman, Suzanne Murphy, Barbara Moneymaker, Josie Juarez

Front Row left to right: Anna Browning, Luzyvette Lopez, Gennifer Shafer, Sarah Warren



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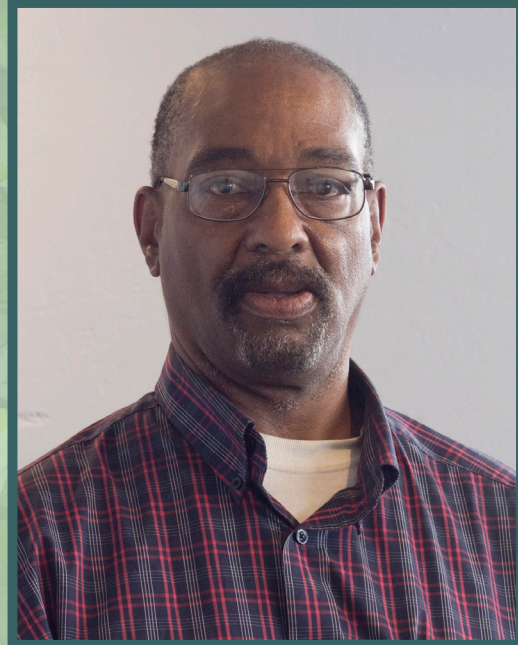
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Walking Up the Hill to Recovery

Gerald Barlow

In the last 14 years I, Gerald Barlow, have just lived, living a life on hold. Like when you pause a DVD movie. That is the story of my life. Today I have the opportunity to move forward to doing a good thing for others and it is doing good for me. This program (RSS) is giving me a new start. I have learned so much about me today. It is imperative that I learn and do great today. The staff has made me believe, that Gerald Jerome Barlow is walking up the right hill to recovery.



Hope a New Reality

Alan Lucas



In the spring of 2015, I was homeless and felt no connection to anything except alcohol; that was my only friend. I finally discovered Primavera Homeless Shelter and had a bed to sleep in, and people who understood my situation. I was reconnected in a social structure and appreciated feeling understood.

That is where hope began for me; I could see the possibility of a future as a trustworthy father, son, and friend. I was able to see my own progress, a reality of sobriety, responsibility, and usefulness in society.

A Second Chance at Being Free

Abran Othon

My hope began when I violated probation for the first time. I violated probation for dropping dirty for drugs, not attending substance abuse classes and not programming. That played a major role in my recovery because I had to go to a halfway house where I learned structure. This helped me take my medications on time and daily, it told me that I can do it, it is possible! The one person that I think helped me was my probation officer; she gave me a second chance at being free. Other people that have been there for me is my

grandmother whom I love very much, without her support I couldn't have done it; the other person is my cousin who believed in me and who I can count on if I need a question to be answered.

The RSS program has given me the knowledge and tools to stay sober and help people with mental illness like substance abuse and myself. I believe that by taking these classes they will give me a better chance at succeeding in life and overcome obstacles that in the future will present themselves.

I Discovered Hope

Barbara Moneymaker



I spent four decades in the grip of active addiction, the substances changed many times, but my mind didn't. My children had been taken, my freedom has been taken, but I never thought past the next high.

One year ago, I began an amazing transformation. I discovered hope. Having the guidance of a Court appointed Recovery Support Specialist; I came to realize my challenge was not to beat the system. My goal now is to become the loving, caring, responsible self, that comes from loving myself and knowing I am worth the effort it takes.

The support and guidance I have received has helped me come to believe in myself, as others have believed in me. My life is now full of hope, and I feel blessed to have been given this opportunity.

What is Hope?

Anna Browning

"Hope is the light at the end of the tunnel." I like those words, but they are not mine.

Mine are more like just plain stubbornness. I don't know why I am here on this earth; but I am. So what do I have to do, now. I want more but today I'm not going to end my life because there is nothing more right now. Maybe tomorrow this life will look like something worthy. So hang in there and see what happens.

Today I have to do somethings. I'll have to wake up instead of roll over and go back to sleep. Today I'll call one of the people in my life to see if something good is happening for them. Today I will do anything just to be doing something and even when that goes on day after day maybe something different, that is good, will happen. That doesn't mean that you don't try to change things it just means you keep trying when you don't know if anything you are doing is working. "Stubbornness!"

I never would have tried to put this into words for myself, but I have to try to get something I want so, I'll do it, stubbornness, just so maybe things will work out the way I won't them to.



Is that "Hope"? Maybe? Maybe not? So right now I'll just stick with stubborn it's a good word for now. Maybe by the end of class I'll get the hope word but if I don't I'm still going to be Stubborn and try to get what I want.

Who I Really Am

Luzyvette Lopez



My name is Luzyvette Lopez; I am 56 years old, married for 33 years to a wonderful man that supports me in everything. I have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. My journey into hope began 8 months ago. To me hope means healing the impossible and most of all the possibility of recovery 100% from a sickness that attacked my brain when I least expected in my life. I have been in and out of crisis since 2009 and had no idea what was happening to me. I felt lost helpless and very confused. There was a lot of stress and

mostly a lot of fear. In 2013 I started seeing a psychiatrist who was prescribing all the wrong medications, but I had no say. By March of 2015 I stopped all medications and seeing that psychiatrist. It just got worst after each crisis. Until December of 2015 when I was hospitalized for 15 days, then only did they confirm that I was allergic to the medication. I left the hospital with a court order for treatment which six months down the road the agency psychiatrist dropped my court order due to my recovery.

My life changed completely when I met two RSSs from the agency and their stories made me see that everything was possible how they overcame their illness. They told me about RSS Institute and I made it a goal to attend. In the mean time I have realized that taking the right medication and having the support of those who believe in me like I believe in myself was the turning point of a new life recovery from anxiety and fear.

It means to get up every morning and be able to function to look in the mirror and see the person who I really am. To be accepted as a human being and not a diagnosis. I learned that having a mental illness does not define who I am.

Why would I ever have to convince anybody when the most important person in control should be "ME".

Something Meaningful In My Life

Carol Hurley



Hope came when two great human beings validated my life. They listened to me when I needed someone to just listen and not want to “fix me”. I received the guidance I so desperately needed, giving me the tools to help with my everyday routine. They were consistent with calling and setting up appointments and knowing that some days I couldn’t even get dressed. They would rearrange their schedule to accommodate me. They couldn’t do enough for me. They got to know ME !

A suggestion was made by my therapist as to whether I would be interested in a Wellness program that ran for 9 weeks, and that food would be provided along with snacks and transportation. I was ready to be social again. I needed it.

I needed the socializing to get me out of my depression. I was feeling so much better then when I first started seeing my therapist.

My anxiety of relying on transportation was a challenge. Waiting some days up to two hours for them to pick me up was a toll on my body. But I kept going. I met some wonderful friends with whom I still see and talk with regularly. The wonderful people at the Wellness program helped me when stress was overwhelming me, by having me remember what I was being taught, and to apply it to help me get through the anxiety of life.

I was feeling stronger every day. I still had the flare ups of fibromyalgia, but I kept going. I WANTED to get up, shower, and dress. Be “human” again. It was one of the instructors that suggested I go to the RSS program through the U of A. She had attended and spoke highly of it. I told my therapist what she had suggested and he thought it was a great idea. I knew then I could do it. I wanted to help others. It made me feel good about myself.

I received such caring attentive help, that I so wanted to give back to others. I have always been a caring, compassionate, loving person, and this was my way of doing something meaningful in my life. The training I have received through the Wellness program, group meetings, my RSS and my therapist and now this wonderful program confirms that my life has purpose and to give the same caring, attentive help to someone who may need guidance in their recovery well, that’s for me!

My Journey of Hope

Jennifer Riecke

What is hope? Hope is; the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best. I never really knew what hope was, nor did I even think it was something real that existed. I lost my father at a young age and that's when I began doing drugs. When I started drinking that's when my life became consumed for the first time.

I quit drinking and am now 5 years sober, however in order to quit drinking I needed to substitute it with something else and that's when I became addicted to pain killers. After a bad car accident, I became withdrawn and dependent on these drugs, I was depressed, had anxiety and PTSD; to me the pills were all that really helped numb all of my pain, especially physically and emotionally.

Pain killers really consumed my life, that was when I truly lost all hope that I would never get off the pills and that's all my life had become about; even though I had a job and was in school; I was addicted. There was not a moment that went by when I hadn't wished or tried to stop however nothing was working, so the more I did the more hope I lost.

There were many times I thought I had hit rock bottom but I hadn't; not yet anyway. In late November I found the thing that became my best friend and that consumed my life for the last time; heroin. This is when I really hit rock bottom, I stopped going to school, I was stealing more, I had really and truly given up on hope and believing that there was any chance for me. It only took a short six months for me to realize that I had enough and it was time for me to admit to myself that I had a huge problem.

This occurred to me seventeen months ago, that was my turning point in my life, when I finally reached out to someone and said, "I have a problem and I need help." In taking



that step, I finally admitted to myself I had a problem and saying it out loud to someone else gave me hope again that maybe just maybe I could get through this. The hope of knowing things can get better and believing in me has so far played a huge role in my recovery journey.

Working my recovery program and taking it seriously has gotten me where I am today, this is not just something you can easily give up when you have co-occurring disorders; it's truly something you have to work for. It is a complete lifestyle change and if you don't really want it or have hope and believe in yourself to do it, it isn't going to happen until you are ready. I believe that my father and my grandfather, whom I can say are my guardian angels, helped guide me toward the right path; and because of them believing in me and I believing in myself I am here today and able to tell you my story and journey of hope.

“Thank You”: The Best Reward

Debbie O’Gorman



As a child I always felt different from other family members and classmates. At the time, I did not know what it was. I was going through school as shy with very few friends. In my teens, I tried to talk to my mother about what I was feeling. She responded “Just snap out of it”. So I was not able to talk to any family members at all. As I became a young adult, I realized that this did not feel right. I was always sad, not believing in myself and feeling hopeless.

I got married at age 20, not really knowing what I wanted my life to be. I had my first

child at age 23, still feeling the same way about myself. I tried to talk to my husband, but he did not understand either. But I was able to bring up my child and work at odd jobs, never lasting that long.

I had a few friends through my daughter. They decided to go back to college, so I followed them. I finished college with honors, but felt even worse. When my daughter was in her teens, I had another daughter, hoping that this will make me happy. That did not work. I felt the marriage was not going well, so we separated.

I met someone else and got married again. The amazing thing was he understood what I was feeling. He himself while not suffering from the same exact symptoms suffered from chronic depression and anxiety and understood the impact this can have on someone’s life and day to day living. He went with me to get help. For a while, I went to a therapist. It was helping me to a point. He suggested going into the hospital and go on medication. I started to feel much better after trying different medications. I learned about depression and found many outlets to learn more.

I started a day program and there I was approached to try an internship to see if I had any interests in working again. I was asked to help in the mental health field. My internship was with the MHA (Mental Health Association). I loved the work and started to feel good about myself. Wow, this was the first time. The agency that got me the

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My Miracle

Crystal Vaughn



My personal experience with Hope didn't start until I was almost 30. The reason behind this is because for the longest time I didn't believe that there would ever be hope for me. Growing up in foster care it was hard for me to imagine that there might actually be "Hope" or "a light at the end of the tunnel" as others called it. I had a rough childhood and believed for a long time that I would live and die on the streets. I honestly couldn't see past my addictions.

Until the day I found out I was pregnant. I had always been told I would never have children. That's when I realized that there truly was Hope for me. That it was time for me to change my life. My daughter "my miracle" gave me the Hope I needed to live. Though the road has been rocky at times and still sometimes is I now realize that Hope is possible.

"Thank You": The Best Reward, by Debbie O'Gorman, continued...

internship, found a part time job for me at People Inc. They needed a peer companion at a respite house. The organization was totally peer run, from the top down. I loved hearing people's stories and see how a few days at a respite house made a world of difference to the people who came and moved on. I learned every aspect of running the house and talking to others as I would have liked to be talked to myself, with respect.

After about four years, I was at home and received a call from my supervisor. She asked me if I would like to be a manager of the Putnam Rose House, a respite house. This I could not believe. With my husband's support, I took the job. This is where my eyes opened,

I can actually help others. When the guest left the house, their "Thank You", was the best reward I can ever receive. The benefit I received from doing this was not only my joy in helping others but gave me a much greater insight into my own mental illness and ways I can help myself.

With this position I was able to promote the house though out the community. Then I received a call from the local NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) president. She asked me if I would like to be on their board. I finally felt proud, confident and happy about myself. My goal is to keep helping people with mental health issues for as long as I can.

Recovery is Possible

Earle Gough



14 years ago I had no hope. Locked away in a jail cell and defeated by my illness and addictions. Family and friends had all given up on me and I felt that I had been forgotten. Succumbed to the stereotypes I had learned to use to cop out of life and trying not to live it.

At the end of my rope and feeling hopeless, I gave my hope and life over to faith. At the time not really even knowing what that looked

like. But I had no one and nowhere else to turn, except at that moment I knew I had hope, because the Lord my God was there for me to show me that there is a light at the end of this tunnel that we are in that we call life.

Years later 4 to be exact I had felt that I had overcome my illness. After all I had a solid faith? And then Bang life happens and I break down. I had not been to the doctor because of course that would have been a sign of weakness at the time in my life. So breakdown after breakdown I do the same thing go back to ignoring the delusions and hoping they would go away, the definition of insanity. I was in and after begging and pleading with the Lord to just take away this thorn out of my side.

Breakthrough, the Lord tells me 'why don't you just get help like everyone else?' So finally after this one breakdown I get real and finally listened to the doctor and did what they told me to do. Such a relief to know I'm not special. And now currently am lightly medicated and learning about whole recovery body mind soul and my hope is that I can be a good example to my children and everyone that I meet. My hope is that others will know they are not alone and Recovery is possible.

One Day at a Time

Josie Juarez

Desperation; for twenty years I asked myself why it took me so long. Why I couldn't simply just "quit" and the real answers are; there are no simple answers. The only possible explanation for my actions and why my life ended up here is pretty simple; I had a purpose long ago; I just couldn't see it when using drugs. This is my story, of strength, hope and recovery.

A year ago, stumbling with the crossroads of trying to find a way out of my hole I've dug for many years of using heroin. I couldn't keep employment; stuck in a bad family living situation, and ready to give up on myself entirely. I literally was on the brink of suicide. I attempted to commit suicide of all days, Valentine's Day. Relationships were always disastrous in my case; I tried and tried to meet people. Before I met my wife, I was stuck in a pit of despair, looking for someone to fill this emptiness inside of me. Of course I met someone online, still using pretty heavily, believing this was love at 'first' sight I decided to go for it and commit to this person after a week of dating. Not too long after a week; this woman tried to assault me and force herself onto me. Having been assaulted many times before this by countless others, this only sparked me to use even more. Spawning me to spiral out of control; not understanding how to handle emotional turmoil. I never was used to experiencing any sort of feelings, the highs and lows were always too much for me to handle. I used to cover up so much pain. A scared little girl inside, I turned to my drug of choice to slowly die inside. Again, back in that behavioral health services office; my appointment was set for 2pm. I sat there for about six hours. I was



determined to be seen early. My brother had called the next day, after that suicide attempt on my life on Valentine's Day. Insecurities began to flood inside of me. I wasn't quite sure why I was here. I knew I needed help. I really wanted to stay clean. My home life was toxic at best and knowing there was no way out. My brother had his best intentions but he was using too, he left me there at that appointment to go get high himself. See, this was my world, I didn't know any better. I sat there though; awaiting a better life as I heard in NA meetings. Unsure of how it would get better.

Eventually, I had my appointment. I said all the right things; unsure if I really wanted recovery, if I was honest with myself at this point in my life. I just wanted to get the hell out of that shitty household and into a better environment and not feel so lost. I began to start to rebuild my life slowly, but surely

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One Day at a Time, by Josie Juarez, continued...

regaining some confidence and anatomy. Assurance Health & Wellness began to give me some strength and hope once again. To be quite honest those were foreign feelings, and it felt so scary, terrifying. I was so scared it would all be taken away. My aunt whom sexually abused me starting at the age of 3; never admitting to it or apologizing for it began to realize I was no longer this 'little' girl that was too scared to leave the house. I was becoming a woman for the first time. I stood up for myself and to her. The living situation I had felt so resigned and destined to now a distant memory. No longer looking over my shoulder, my life is my own and so are my decisions. Not even realizing it was always up to me to make my choices, good or bad. In the end; I ended up mustering up courage and asking for help for the first time from my navigator at Assurance to help me move out. On my way to a half way house, I became a woman and with a little self assurance for once, I felt like things were going to turn around for me finally. I still remember sitting there in Ronda's car; crying as I left that house. I felt it. I hit me when I couldn't take all of my stuff. Feeling the door slammed on me as my aunt blamed me for her miserable life; but what killed me the most was not being able to see my grandmother and saying goodbye to her. The woman that practically raised me and I left her in the hands of a monster. I felt like such a failure in some way; of course I used over this. I couldn't seem to put two and two together; that I might actually be an "addict" and perhaps I might actually need some outside help for this substance disorder. But no one told me it was a disease. And I felt so lost in my pain. While continuing to work on myself as best I could at Assurance; and finding a job as a receptionist; and living at the half way house. It was all seemingly appearing like I had it together. I had nothing

together. It was a lie. Worried I'd never find my way; six months go by and I began to wonder if I'd ever find my way. Then on Dec. 19th I found my hope and the missing piece to my puzzle. I met my wife Alissa who happened to be in recovery, she ended up taking me to my first NA meeting. I was introduced to a new way of life; 12 step programs always seemed so redundant to me but something felt different here.

Everyone seemed so happy, so free and I wanted that. Of course it didn't hurt I was falling in love at the same time with this woman. I was following my heart for the first time and doing it clean felt amazing as well. I have been clean for 101 days; the most I've ever had as well.

The turning point in my recovery came when one night; my wife was asleep in our bedroom. I was still using; 'reservations' as meeting goes call it. I couldn't put it down it seemed; trying to find that perfect fix and never satisfied. I ended up nearly overdosing on our couch; the worst part our cat 'Fiona' nearly got to my 'stash' and I was able to get him away. The turning point was looking at myself in the mirror and seeing this person I did not like. I hated her. She was not Josie and I knew it I wanted to not lose everything I worked so hard to get, I needed to change and shape up.

I got in touch with my navigator again at Assurance and attend therapy sessions once again. Worked on myself; and realized no one can fix me, no one can cure my pain and especially drugs can't erase all of these character defects I tried so hard to bury. My sponsor daily asks me to make gratitude lists. The biggest omission I've made was to admit I had a problem and what was I going to do about it.

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My Turning Point

Sarah Warren

My personal experience of hope began the day I walked into my therapist's office. Armed with a lifetime of baggage and trauma, I took a risk, sitting down in that big comfy chair. I knew I was on journey, a road that I had been driving aimlessly on for years. The date was Feb. of 2016, the start of a new year, a new life.

I used to think one would travel their journey alone, only stopping to ask directions when every corner turned led to nowhere. By the time every dark bend had been explored, my hope of recovery was "fading to black." It was then I made my first giant stride into therapy; my turning point. It goes without question that there is a stigma tied to mental illness. And I, for the longest time, felt the stigma was real. Of course I couldn't work! Or make my own decisions! I thought I was looney!

After months of therapy and practicing skills I had learned from Internal Family Systems therapy, I slowly began to gain back hope, and stopped seeing my life as hopeless. For the first time, I did not hear the voice of my inside critic telling me I wasn't good enough. My biggest gift of hope came in the form of a job offer as a Recovery Support Specialist. I knew this was my



chance to take the next giant step in my road to recovery. Now, days before I graduate from the Institute, I have more hope than ever; hope in myself, hope in my peers who are struggling the same way that I was, and hope that together, we can overcome the stigma that is mental illness.

One Day at a Time, by Josie Juarez, continued...

The biggest reward was recovery; and all I can gain if I just stay clean one more day. I believe my purpose in this life is to help others like myself. Drugs might have been a big part of my past; but it doesn't define me as a whole person. Yes. I had a big problem with heroin; and I have to always manage this addiction with meetings and daily talks with my sponsor to help myself deal with it.

My strength and hope is that it does get better, and if I can make it anyone can. I'm just one example of what hope can do for someone in a time of need. I surely needed the guidance of my navigator, my wife and those in the program of NA. Without these people and those tools of recovery, I wouldn't be alive today to tell you my story. It does get better; just one day at a time and recovery is definitely 100 percent possible.

My Recovery is Growing Stronger

Gennifer Shafer

It happened February 2nd 2010. That's when I discovered my hope. This was the day I knew that recovery was truly possible for me. My journey to sobriety and mental health began 5 years prior, but it was riddled with relapses, both with my drug and alcohol addiction as well as with my mental health. I could never get to 4 months of sobriety, I could be a week away and I would relapse. But on that day in February, 4 months exactly, I woke up and I felt hope. It proved to me that I was actually making a positive change in my life, that I was learning and practicing the skills I learned through Admire+, the outpatient dual diagnosis treatment program I was in through La Frontera. My journey isn't over, almost 7 years later my recovery is only growing stronger. Hope is the most powerful drug.



A Little Hope in Disguise

Michael Dunson



Hope hasn't always been a part of my life! I came into a treatment center, beat and battered from my choices I was making. As I lay in bed confused not even knowing what I wanted, miserable in every sense. I wanted to give up but something wouldn't let me, I think that might have been a little hope in disguise.

Staff in the treatment center started to get to know me, we began exchanging many conversations and in time saw something inside of me before I could, it was hope! They were always there reminding me I was worth it, always there without judgement, giving me more hope. I liked how these individuals interacted with me, as to say I'm someone.

These RSSs gave me hope, by believing in me before I could. And for that I want to give others that same feeling that they gave me. Through hope I have a new life in recovery, and wouldn't have changed a thing!

Hope Found Its Way to Me

Suzanne Murphy



In November of 2015, I was sexually assaulted by a close friend. As painful as the experience was; I never fully addressed the attack, save for a select few friends in my inner circle. I had become detached and slowly started to disassociate from life in general. Within a few months, I had spiraled into a full blown depression, replete with suicidal ideations. By May 2016, the thoughts had begun to take over my waking life.

I remember walking into my boss's office and explaining how I couldn't manage the thoughts any longer, how I needed help. I asked her to take me to the Crisis Response Center for evaluation and treatment. She agreed and kindly helped me gather my things. I was admitted within an hour of showing up and would remain under

observation for the next five days. Then, they released me. As soon as I returned to my home environment, the dread set back in. The need to isolate was overwhelming. I tried reaching out but had no composure. Within five days of my discharge from the CRC, I found myself looking down the edge of a razor blade...and on the phone with the crisis line.

Soon, I was stripping down and changing into paper scrubs in a freezing examination room. I felt defeated and turned to the nurse who had admitted me. "Will I get the help I need?" I asked. She replied "if you make the effort". The first night was absolute terror as I was unable to sleep and left to my thoughts. Soon after, I had fallen into routine, made friends, contributed to some great group conversations. I felt productive, gifted, engaged and vital. The only thing looming over my head was a possible transition to a group home as my housing had become unstable. My doctor was concerned that I needed to be supervised and didn't trust me to make my own decisions. On several occasions, she and my social worker noted my darkness and attributed the trauma to my lifestyle. Feeling blamed and shamed, I took her advice under consideration. I was making plans for my transition, when a former colleague offered up her couch. I quickly accepted, thinking that anything would be better than a group home, fearing it would trigger me.

After finding comfort, solace and safety within the confines of my hospital room, I was now on my own. I did not trust myself to make healthy decisions. I was a shaky, nervous wreck.

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Hope Found Its way to Me, by Suzanne Murphy, continued...

The first call I received upon discharge was from my new therapist. As she suggested times to schedule a new evaluation, I was terrified. I thought of how many times I'd had to share my story; how each time it felt as if I was reliving the experience. The intense guilt that had only been reinforced by the hospital clinician would resurface. Hesitantly, I went ahead and made the appointment. Even at my lowest point, I knew that I needed to reach out to someone qualified; as any chance of recovery would depend on the network I built out in the community.

Kaye was calm, unassuming slight woman whose office looked like a bomb had just gone off. She nodded frequently and wore her hangdog expression freely. She was sorting through her papers as she made apologies, noting that things were a bit chaotic but that she was there to listen. She apologized for having to ask me questions that she knew I had answered numerous times. She was quick, efficient and spoke with candor.

And then she asked me the dreaded question. When I had finished detailing the trauma, she looked at me straight in the eye, papers no longer shuffling, and simply but directly said "so, you were raped". I felt the blood rush to my feet and a wave of nausea come over me. No one had identified my attack as such before, nor talked about it without a trace of judgement. And here, this woman buried under a mountain of paperwork, had identified it. For the first time in a while, I breathed out a sigh of relief. In that moment, I knew I was going to be listened to and validated. I felt

supported in a way that had eluded me for some time. And that old feeling, that I had last experienced, sometime way back in October, started to creep up...my old friend, HOPE.

I knew my recovery couldn't happen only in the bubble of individual counseling. I had to start integrating back in to society; but how would I do that?

I attended my follow up appointment with my case manager and psychiatric nurse practitioner (PNP). To my surprise, I was feeling a bit more hopeful. Sitting in the lobby of COPE still filled me with dread and anxiety. But I knew I could, and would, sit through it. The PNP reviewed my safety plan and discussed social supports. She observed that I hadn't been to any groups. I made excuses. She noted that she was concerned about my unsafe tendency to isolate; sharing two hospitalizations in under a month was something she took seriously. She suggested that I attend at least one group that day. I made an excuse as to not having eaten, explaining that I'd come back later. Smiling at me slyly, but with kindness, she opened her drawer and presented me with three protein bars. "Now, you don't have to go home!" I begrudgingly acquiesced but secretly felt a bit of warmth flood my body. And that feeling again, HOPE.

HOPE found its way to me, many times. As I focused on my recovery and shared my story, I discovered I had a strong support network. Friends cared about my wellbeing and would be there, no matter the situation. I realized once again that I would always land on my feet. That, even in the darkest moments... there was always HOPE.

Journey to Hope

Krystal Rugg



I'd like to start off by saying my name is Krystal I'm 34 years old and I'm a mother of two. In 2004 my life changed drastically. I became involved with CPS and in 2005 my husband and I lost custody of our children. Our Caseworker did absolutely nothing to help us get housing. In the end they could only prove that we were financially unstable. As a child I dealt with a lot of different things. I have been depressed since my parents divorced at around 8 years old my two sisters and my brother and I were under the care of the state of California. My dad drank and used drugs frequently.

When we were in the shelter I met this girl who was my roommate. We talked to each other a lot and we made the decision that when everybody went to sleep for the night we were going to remove the razor

on are shavers and cut our wrist as we sat there on the floor I was thinking will God finally take me. Last year on June 29th 2015 I tried to slit my throat hoping all the pain would just go away. I started writing a very sad and dark poem on Facebook that turned into a goodbye letter to my children. Word got around by morning my dad was trying to get a hold of me to find out what was going on. He showed up at my sister's house with my stepmom and my 10 year old son and the Tucson Police. The cops said that I needed treatment and I refused my dad was asking the officer what he could do so i could be evaluated.

I was petitioned by my dad to spend 72 hours at the Crisis Response Center. After talking to a ton of people they decided I needed more intense treatment. I was sent to Sonora Behavioral Hospital where I spent two weeks. When I got to Sonora I was scared I felt alone more than ever before. While being there I was diagnosed as Manic Depressive with manic episodes, Anxiety Disorder and Bipolar Disorder, and PTSD I was put on several Medications.

When I was released to go home I was scared of what others were going to think of me and how I was going to manage my life without all the help. The day after I was discharged I had an Intake with Assurance Health and Wellness. The first month at Assurance I finally felt there was HOPE. I felt a new confidence within myself. I noticed a lot of changes in my attitude and how I was handling things. Since then I've continued to improve with my faith in GOD and the faith I have in myself. I don't see myself as a label I'm Krystal a wife, mother, sister, daughter and a friend and somebody who wants to make a change in someone else's life the way all the Staff at Assurance Health and Wellness has for me. Without their help and support and compassion I'm sure I wouldn't be sitting here today. And I would like to say with all the gratitude to Beverly, John, Dave and Tim for helping me realize that recovery is 100% possible. That concludes my little journey to hope.

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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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