

University of Arizona  
 Department of Family and Community Medicine  
 Recovery thru Integration,  
 Support & Empowerment-RISE  
 1450 N Cherry Avenue  
 Tucson, Arizona 85719-4207

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**RISE is located in the Department of Family and  
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**U of A RISE**  
 1450 N Cherry Avenue, Tucson, Arizona 85719-4207 or  
 Betsey Lyons 520-626-7473 email [lblyons@email.arizona.edu](mailto:lblyons@email.arizona.edu)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_



**This newsletter is for anyone interested in the ongoing and growing RSS Program.**

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**Recovery Support Specialist  
 Newsletter  
 Issue 24—June, 2009**

**COPE Hosts RSS Alumni BASH  
 John McElroy, CRSS**

On Thursday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009, COPE and I were pleased and honored to host an **RSS Alumni Bash** for all graduates of the 18 RSS institutes. Thanks to Laura Benchik, Christina Anaya, Aaron Valencia, and Norma Thomas COPE staff, the event was a huge success. Fifty + graduates attended the event including employees of COPE, CODAC, La Frontera, SEABHS, Primavera, and CPSA. All were inspired to take recovery to a new level after hearing from RSS Trainers Dan Steffy, Beverly McGuffin, and Beth Stoneking about the RSS Program's past, present and future. Guild President, Fred Ortega spoke of vision for the RSS Alumni Guild.

The purpose of the Bash was to allow RSSs to network with each other; to build a foundation for collaborative efforts; to positively effect energy in the peer workforce; to continue to make positive changes in the lives of individual members that RSSs support; and to advocate for the best services at the highest levels of government. RSSs were challenged to do this, while continuing to spread the message of recovery to the community. RSSs address issues from both professional and lived experience perspectives. Their voices deserve and need to be heard at the local, state and federal levels where decisions are made concerning mental health. It is my belief that through the collective voices of those providing peer support in our communities, powerful and positive changes can be made regarding how behavioral health is viewed and funded.

The Alumni Bash was one more positive step towards change. This vision of recovery for all needs to continue to expand into a powerful force and voice in government, providing hope to people in the community struggling with mental illness stigma, discrimination and prejudice and limited access to quality services.

As a Recovery Support Specialist, I have observed first hand a number of areas in which there is great room for improvement in the behavioral health system. As a person in recovery from mental illness, make yourself heard by getting involved with the RSS Alumni Guild. Let's make our voices heard at a level that can have lasting, pertinent and significant impact on the recovery community.

**If you are interested in being a part of the RSS Alumni Guild, please contact: Fred Ortega, Case Aide, CRSS La Frontera Center, Inc.  
 520-838-3878 or [Fortega@LaFrontera.org](mailto:Fortega@LaFrontera.org)**

**Advisory  
Committee**

Julie Croteau  
CRSS

Kathy Lewis  
CRSS

John McElroy  
CRSS

Ken Rogers  
CRSS, CPRP

Patricia Porras  
CRSS

Dan Steffy

**NEWS of NOTE...**

Elizabeth Lyons (Betsey) is on board with R.I.S.E. as the Administrative Associate after being with UA for 18 years. Prior to RISE, she worked for Electrical and Computer Engineering and at the Law College. She has come full circle having begun her UA career with Family and Community Medicine in 1992. We are delighted to have Betsey, so say "hello" and introduce yourself to her when you call U of A RISE.

*Clarity's Gift*

*With a clear mind comes clear vision  
With clear vision comes clear direction  
With clear direction comes clear purpose  
With clear purpose comes fulfillment  
With fulfillment comes happiness.  
- John Sowersby, CRSS*



My name is **Emily Lesky**, CRSS. I am now a Certified Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner (CPRP) and a member of the United States Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (USPRA).

I first heard about the CPRP certification exam in December of '07 and decided to take the test in November of 2008. I was notified at the end of December that I had not passed. My discouragement was replaced by renewed efforts to retake the exam in March, 2009. I spent the whole month of March studying, reading, and completing the exercises in the CPRP workbook. On March 28, 2009 I took the exam in Phoenix and again it was another long wait. I found out my results on May 8, 2009 and I **PASSED!!!** Now my goal is to further my career in substance abuse/mental health with my CPRP.

**Ken Rogers**, CRSS, was the first RSS Institute graduate to take and pass the CPRP exam. Congratulations to Emily and Ken!!!

**Word Quest**

Try to find these 15 words

awareness	positive	recovery	graduation	powerlessness
meaning	challenge	facilitating	powerful	empowerment
fellowship	foundation	priceless	satisfaction	encouragement

L M E E E O N T S U S A E O I L S  
P C O M H P O W E R F U L L R P S  
C I G P O W E R L E S S N E S S A  
S E R G E M N S L I S N C G A C F  
S V A E I R C L F E O O E N I W W  
A I D L A P O S N I V X P E E E E  
P T U E W W U E T E P E N L E F E  
R I A I S A R C R E A A F L C N D  
I S T H N A A Y R W S S N A S A T  
C O I M W F G I C N G R A H R U L  
E P O A S N E W I F E W L C T A L  
L E N I I N M G S S L I A F E N I  
E F T N T N E M R E W O P M E P T  
S A A I I E N O I T A D N U O F L  
S E A G N I T A T I L I C A F I N  
M L E G E E R N O R A N A R R I N  
S A E S O O O A E I E N T O E O A



## Do you know...

### *Eating Recovery Center Debunks the Seven Most Dangerous Eating Disorder Myths to Raise Awareness During National Eating Disorders Awareness Week*

DENVER, CO - More than 11 million men and women in the United States struggle with an eating disorder, yet despite the rising incidence of these devastating illnesses, misconceptions are prevalent among the general public. To raise awareness and understanding during National Eating Disorders Awareness Week (February 22-29), the [Eating Recovery Center](#) shares the truth behind the seven most common eating disorders myths.

**Myth #1: Eating disorders are a disorder of choice.** Eating disorders are a mental illness, not elective behavior. People suffering from eating disorders cannot 'snap out of it' as the implications of the diseases are far more complex than making healthy choices.

**Myth #2: Eating disorders are not life-threatening.** Eating disorders are the most deadly psychiatric illness, with mortality rates reaching 20%.

**Myth #3: Eating disorders are about food.** While eating disorders may begin with preoccupations with food and weight, they generally stem from issues beyond food.

**Myth #4: Eating disorders are not genetic.** Current research suggests that there are significant genetic contributions to eating disorders and that the diseases often run in families.

**Myth #5: Eating disorders are an illness of the affluent.** Eating disorders affect people from all social classes and all ethnicities.

**Myth #6: Eating disorders only affect women.** More than one million men in the United States suffer from an eating disorder, accounting for nearly 10% of all eating disorders.

**Myth #7: Eating disorders are a passing fad.** The recovery period for an eating disorder can take up to ten years, and in some cases, many more.

## Love and Fear by Cynthia Aspengren, CRSS



Some believe that there are only two major emotions: love and fear.

From love comes all of the positive emotions such as happiness or joy. From fear comes the so called negative emotions, such as anger and grief. Anger can be used in a positive way to affect change. Martin Luther King Jr. got angry about how he and others of his race were treated, and he used that anger as energy to affect change in a positive way. Grief, although not at all comfortable, is a normal reaction to loss.

In my experience, anger is really a strong reaction to fear. We really only fear two things: losing something we already have and not getting something we think we need/want.

We lock our doors out of fear. The surface fear is that someone will steal our stuff. In reality, we don't need most of the stuff we have. We could certainly live without the TV, DVD player, and many of the other things we enjoy in our homes. What we actually need to live is food, water, shelter, clothing, and a feeling of safety. What we are really locking our doors against is the fear that someone will take away our safe place. We fear losing something precious that we already have, a safe place to live.

Then there is the fear of not getting something we think we need. What do we really need? We need those things that I stated before plus we need people in our lives that love and respect us. We need friends. Contrary to what some say, how and what people think of us is important. Really, what is important is how people we trust and admire think of us. If we can sort out who is important and who is there for us to support our goals of recovery and wellness, then we can have a better outlook on life and a strong foundation of support. What is the anger we feel when we don't get a job we've applied for? Fear that we are not good enough. How about when we don't get the promotion? Again, it is that fear that we are not good enough. We fear that maybe those in charge of the hiring or promotion know us better than we know ourselves and better than our friends know us. We become angry because we are afraid that they might be on to something. Rarely is this true.

Fear is a powerful emotion that clouds our perception and anger is sometimes easier to feel. Now when I feel angry, I ask myself "What am I afraid of and who really matters?"



## My Evolving Recovery and Transformation

Christene Bozarth, MFT, RSS

I graduated in November of 2007 from Institute 12 as an RSS. I first became aware of the program through my job developer and psychiatrist. Prior to this I was a successful Marriage, Family, and Child therapist. I worked in the field for about seven years until my bipolar disorder became unmanageable. In 2005 my father died and a month later my psychiatrist changed my medications and I felt shaken. I was hospitalized and when released, I was faced with another series of losses. I could no longer work full time; I was homeless and the family support I thought I had disappeared. This threw me into the deepest and longest depression I have ever known. For a long while I felt broken and hopeless. However, even though it seemed I had dropped into a hole out of which I felt I could never climb out, I thought, "If this is the bottom, then there is no place to go but up!" I came to believe that for some reason the Universe thought I needed to be on a "different path" and yanked me from the career direction I had struggled to maintain.

The concepts of "the consumer movement," "recovery" for those with serious mental illness, and "person first language" were new to me, even after having worked as a therapist for several years, I had not heard about this important changes and events in mental health. Having read many books on bipolar disorder, I was left to believe that, at best, I could only expect symptom stabilization and to continue to live my life in some kind of under-functioning way. The information presented during the RSS Institute was like "emotional CPR" breathing new life, knowledge, energy, and hope into me.

Since the 12<sup>th</sup> RSS Institute, I have persisted in my recovery. I was able to move into my own apartment and climb out of the "hole". I worked at Hope, Inc. from October, 2007 to March, 2009 as a Peer Mentor for the Warm Line and was designated the Lead Trainer for that program. I also proposed, wrote, and taught additional training programs geared for consumers. My personal support system includes: my partner, my aunt, good friends, my dogs and my support team at La Frontera. Taking my medications, journaling, art therapy, and more recently prayer are now an integral part of my continuing recovery. I look forward to me continued transformation, where ever that may lead me.



## Tucson Nursing Conference by Monique Roybal, CRSS, Sr.CSS

My name is Monique Roybal and on June 22, 2009 I will celebrate 4 years free from alcohol and drugs. I am also one of the "Warriors" that attended the 9<sup>th</sup> RSS Institute in November of 2006. I work as a Senior Community Support Specialist in the housing department of CODAC Behavioral Health and supervise 5 staff, three of which are RSS graduates. I want to share with readers an amazing event that gave me a high that no drugs or alcohol ever could.

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, I was invited to be a co-speaker with Beverly McGuffin at the 2009 Tucson Nurses Convention. You see, I was once a Registered Nurse but because of my substance use disorder, my nursing license was revoked in 2002. I shared with 80 nurses the story of my addiction during my nursing years but most importantly, I shared about my recovery. We spoke about psychiatric rehabilitation and my story illustrated how recovery is possible.

I explained that I am not an addict or an alcoholic but I am a person in recovery from a substance use disorder. I have to admit, it was pretty scary getting in front of a bunch of strangers and sharing my story, but I was not ashamed. I realized that in order to be where I am today, I had to go through those dark years of addiction. When nurses came up after my presentation, they told me how brave I was to share my story and thanked me for opening myself up to them, I was on a high that I thought I could never surpass.

**Monique Roybal presented at the Tucson Nurses Conference 2009. She joins a group of distinguished Recovery Support Specialists from past years:**

**2008-Christina Jasberg & Nadia Shivack, Inside Out: Portraits of Eating Disorders**

**2007-Hope Gonzales & Connie Proctor, Double Your Distress: DID (Dissociative Identity Disorder) and People Who Live With It**

**2006-Ken Rogers, Wanda Black, Emily (Plasterer) Lesky & Roxanne Gaul, Peer Support in the Behavioral Health Community and Programs for Mothers with Children**

**Hope Gonzales, Discussion with a Person Who Has the Diagnosis of Dissociative Identity Disorder (formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder).**

## Life in the Recovery Lane by Jackie Schimmel, RSS



The guiding force behind my recovery has been the hope I can live a meaningful life within my community. Recovery has been my way of life since 1996, when I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. I have had support from friends, as well as people I don't know well.

In the past eleven years, I have faced traumatic events which have shaken my very core. I was injured on the job and went back to school to learn a new trade I loved doing. I lost my father in the same week as I graduated. Being a chef brought me personal satisfaction.

In 2003, I had bilateral knee replacements. At the same time, I was told I would have to give up my profession. I tried doing the job and couldn't physically. In 2006, I was given SSDI status.

Recently in July 2007, I was hospitalized because my medications were not working. This taught me that I could be in a crisis even when I'm doing well psychologically. I'm aware of my meltdown because I was using my Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP).

I have faced many challenges over the years with a positive attitude, hope, courage, open mindedness, supportive people, education, personal responsibility, and advocating for myself as well as others. There are no skeletons in my closet or monsters under my bed except, living with bipolar disorder; I never know when my brain chemistry will tilt. I have been through the dark and murky cavern of depressions and through the intensity of mania. I have learned how to live a meaningful and productive life and while I have a disability, I'm much more than my disability.

Jackie was nominated for the **Daniel Moreno Award in 2008**. The deadline for the Daniel Moreno Recovery Award submission this year is **9/15/09 at 5pm**. The Reception is on 10/02/09.

Contact: **Moreno Recovery Award NAMI Southern Arizona, 6122 E. 22<sup>nd</sup> St. Tucson, AZ 85711 (520) 622-5582 (520) 623-2908 fax**



## Putting My Disability to Work by Kyle Long, CRSS

Upon graduation from the 16th Recovery Support Specialist Institute, I had no idea if or when I might find a position in the behavioral health field. With all that is going on with the economy, I was somewhat doubtful. In addition, I was looking for a part time position and I knew that would not be easy to find.

However, to my surprise, CODAC was looking for a part timer. I applied for the job. The next thing I knew, I was gainfully employed and absolutely elated. I was amazed that somebody wanted me and I was to be given a chance to serve others.

CODAC has given me a tremendous opportunity. It is my privilege to work with a community of people in a housing complex. At the onset I was curious about how I would be received. This community has allowed me to reach out to them and they, in turn, have done the same for me. I am facilitating one-on-one peer support as well as community meetings. A year ago, I would have been astonished if somebody had told me that I would be doing this kind of work.

This position is different from anything I have ever done before. I have had a psychiatric disability for many years. It is the first time that I have been able to actively engage with others, despite my disability. This is the only job which has first required that I acknowledge the disability, and that the experience of this disability is the primary qualification for the job. What a relief not having to hide the disability anymore!

My family has encouraged and supported me all along the way. They never questioned whether or not I would complete the Institute. They never doubted that I would get a job. Without them I would not be where I am today.

The primary message that I have to offer is this: Never give up. No matter how big the mountain or how deep the valley, there is always grace to pull you through. I was almost ready to "throw in the towel." But there were people who believed in me. It was their belief in me that rejuvenated belief in myself. It has been a long journey. It has been a journey worth traveling. I encourage you to look deep within yourself and find the hope there for you. If I can do it, so can you.



Recovery Support Specialist Institute XVIII



Standing, L-R: Mark Haley, Paul Burton, John Anglin, Johnny Coxe, Kirk Roberts,  
Chris Lohmeier, Sean Reddix, David Delawder, Kevin Coyne  
Seated, L-R: Tippy Atkins, Joy McCrary, Lynn Mantel, Gabie Davenport,  
Karen Preston, Nikki Fox

C.R.S.S. PANEL



Christina Jasberg    Monique Roybal  
Arnoldo Aguilar      John McElroy