

Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Tucson, Arizona June 6, 2019



Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduates

Back Row left to right: Ramon Benitez, Tamara Howard, Darrell Sheets, Jaime Gryszkin, Andrew Romero

Middle Row left to right: James Johnson, Ryan Mellgren, Victoria Morales, Charles Stillman, Ryan Malone, David Holley

Front Row left to right: Rebecca Olguin, Rachel Head, LeAnn Hendry, David Samaniego

Hope

David Holley, CRSS



Hope is something that I have been running out of, until going through this course. I don't think the instructors even know how profoundly this curriculum has affected me! I promise that with the tools this course has given me, I will do everything humanly possible to improve upon this, (obviously) universally flawed world. I feel this modern version of the Hippocratic Oath is ado.

A Modern Version of the Hippocratic Oath

I swear to fulfill, to the best of my ability and judgment, this covenant:

I will respect the hard-won scientific gains of those physicians in whose steps I walk, and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow.

I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures which are required, avoiding those twin traps of overtreatment and therapeutic nihilism.

I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug.

I will not be ashamed to say "I know not", nor will I fail to call in my colleagues when the skills of another are needed for a patient's recovery.

I will respect the privacy of my patients, for their problems are not disclosed to me that the world may know. Most especially must I tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given me to save a life, all thanks. Above all, I must not play at God.

I will remember that I do not treat a fever chart, a cancerous growth, but a sick human being, whose illness may affect the person's family and economic stability. My responsibility includes these related problems, if I am to care adequately for the sick.

I will prevent disease whenever I can, for prevention is preferable to cure.

I will remember that I remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings, those sound of mind and body as well as the infirm.

If I do not violate this oath, may I enjoy life and art, respected while I live and remembered with affection thereafter. May I always act so as to preserve the finest traditions of my calling and may I long experience the joy of healing those who seek my help.

I do so swear in the eyes and ears of all those present here, including my most sacred higher power, Amen.

A Personal Belief in Hope

Jaime Gryszkin, CRSS



Three years ago I was on a path of self-destruction after losing my daughters to the state. After I lost my girls, I was submerged into a deep depression, and started using drugs and ended up homeless. I lost everything I ever had - my house, my kids, and I lost my wife to mental illness and drug addiction.

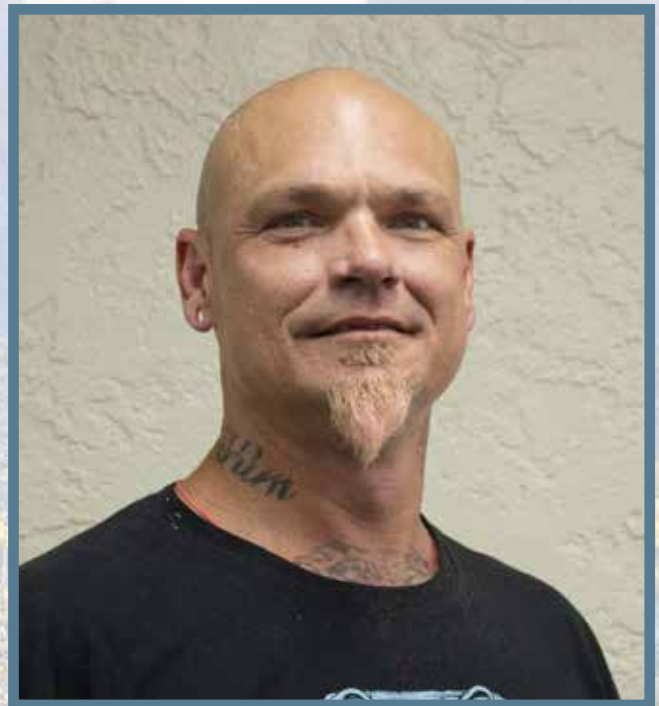
My story of Hope started last year after I was released from county jail into a sober living halfway house. I was restricted to a wheelchair for an entire year and was unable to walk; luckily, the halfway house gave me the chance to work for them as their Intake Coordinator and Job Specialist. There I managed to stay clean and sober. Through working with residents and helping them, I started to realize that I had a purpose in life. It was to help and guide people onto the right path in life and deter them from making the life mistakes that I have, which led me onto the path of self-destruction.

It has been over a year now that I have been here at this sober living halfway house. I am now able to walk again, I am clean and sober, and I have a new positive outlook on life. I have taken it upon myself to take the RSS program at the U of A, because I believe my purpose in life is to help people with their struggles, whether it be from mental illness or from drug addictions. I now have a personal belief in Hope for myself because of this, as well as Hope for other individuals. I know that I can give them Hope.

A Simple Word; Hope

Darrell Sheets, CRSS

Hope is a feeling of expectation and a desire for a certain thing to happen. Hope; it is a simple word, and yet can mean so much to anyone going through a difficult time. It can mean the difference between hanging on and giving up. It can mean a tiny smile in the face of a devastating diagnosis. Hope is commonly used to mean a wish: it is the strength of a person's desire. Hope is one of the three theological virtues in Christian tradition. Hope being a combination of the desire for something and expectation of receiving it, the virtue is hoping for Divine Union and so, eternal happiness. How do you give hope to someone? Champion the good you see in them, applaud the thing of value you see them do, praise them in front of them, encourage them to apply their gifts and talents by serving others in the community, and let them know they're worth loving.



Hope and Joy

Rachel Head, CRSS

I didn't have a lot of hope for a while. I was always in the hospital, cutting and burning. When I looked in the mirror, all I could see was my illness. It wasn't until I heard about this program that I started believing there was more for me than just my illness. I now feel like I have a purpose. I haven't felt this much hope and joy in a long time. I am no longer doing self-harm or have been in the hospital. Thanks to this program, I feel accomplished and ready to change mental health.



The Hope of Laurie

Ryan Malone, CRSS



The love of my life was Laurie. We were together for 18 years. On a warm summer day in 2016, we were driving home from shopping at the Santa Fe Super Walmart. It was 6 months after she had been diagnosed with End Stage Liver Disease. She was in constant pain at the time, but was well enough to be relatively

active. As we were going down the biggest street in Santa Fe, she said, "Promise me that you won't let this happen to you." I promised. I knew what she talking about. She wasn't finished. She went on to say, "Promise me that you'll learn from this." I said, "I will." Laurie next said, "Promise me that you'll help others not to let this happen to them." Again, I promised.

We both relapsed in December 2016. 2017 brought at home hospice, hospitalization, a nursing home, and recovery for her. It brought 28 days at an Albuquerque rehab for me, and recovery. It didn't last. She couldn't fight the pain. She passed away in the early morning of December 4th, 2017. Some of her last memories would have been of me giving her chest compressions until the paramedics arrived. Her hope was always in those promises that she asked me to make. It was constant throughout recovery and relapse. Her hope was for me, and all others, not to suffer like her. This hope has been with me in relapse and recovery. Laurie's hope became my hope.

Living in the Moment

Rebecca Olguin, CRSS



My sobriety date is June 21, 2013. I arrived to Tucson in the middle part of August directly from Jail; I surrendered to the Judge that I needed help. I drank every day for 15 years, as I hurt the ones I loved in the long run. The only thing I had was my make-up bag. I had no money and no clothes, and my hair was falling out due to stress. The staff from New Directions waited for me as I set foot off the plane. They drove me to a treatment center on Dodge, which was called New Directions. I was scared and I felt so alone; people were coming up to greet me and hug me and said I was at a safe place. They showed me my room, gave me a towel and directed me to the cafeteria where dinner was being served. The next day was my big day to start working on myself. I didn't

sleep, my mind was racing with thoughts about my kids and my family. I couldn't use the phone until I completed 30 days.

The next day I met my therapist and a few people in group; we did a check-in and I remained quiet, as I didn't want to talk to anyone. People in group started to talk about the past, childhood and how they were so happy to be there. I was not happy to be there, and I didn't want to tell people my problems. I'm not like them, I was not like them. 8 hours each day I attended groups, and I started to open up to others. I overheard that this program worked with people with addiction to drugs and alcohol. I finally admitted that I was an alcoholic. It took some guts to admit that.

I worked on my inner core, which included the trials in my life from death, abuse, drinking and being high days. I worked on 12 steps, and step 4 was the hardest step to work on. I was so scared to make amends to my loved ones. I started to go to AA meetings with others, and I felt so scared in this small city. As I was close to my 90 days, my mentor offered me then choice of a plane ticket back to my reservation, or to work on my life here in Tucson. It was the hardest thing I had to do. I moved to a half-way house, then a sober living home. I started looking for a job, riding the bus every day and keeping up with my program. I was monitored and took random drug tests. I completed a 90-day sober living, I was so proud of myself. I started to fall in love with Tucson. To this day, I'm in contact with some of my mentors and sober friends. I'm in contact with my kids and extended family, as it is the hardest thing to

continued on next page...

Never too Late

Charles Stillman, CRSS

I suppose we all start out with hope at a young age; HOPE as in hopes, dreams, and aspirations. I think it is different with each person as to what happens to those hopes, dreams and aspirations. Some people are driven to fulfill their dreams, some I believe are just destined to become their dream. These are lucky or fortunate people indeed, but for persons who are born with or developed mental disorders and/or substance use disorders, it can be quite a different life. We get to watch our lives (sometimes from the outside looking in) spiral up and down, round and round, as we see our hopes, dreams and aspirations get lost, fall to the wayside, or just get blown out like the flame of a candle. My loss of hope and any dreams I had was a slow one, so slow actually that I wasn't really aware of it until I was 45 or 50, and then it really hit me as to what my substance and alcohol use had done. It was then I lost hope, then anxiety and depression set in, and I had to deal with co-occurring disorders. In the end, my



journey or story is that it is never too late to have that hope we all start out with renewed; it took 61 years for me. My hope now is to help and show others of all ages through working as an RSS that they too can find or renew their hope and fulfill their DREAMS!!!

Living in the Moment, by Rebecca Olguin, continued...

work on. But I still have hope that my family will forgive me and accept that I'm a better person and I'm getting well each day.

I married my best friend, we have a business together, we travel and I'm studying to be a social worker. But first, I want to be an RSS and work with others

that are on the red road with me. My sobriety comes first before anyone and anything; I started to see things were starting to fall into place. I live in the moment, I accept the things I cannot change, have the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

My Hope Became Stronger

James Johnson, CRSS



It was May 26th, 2017 when I was arrested and had all but given up on life. Everything I thought made up who I was had gone, and all had vanished, just as my freedom had. I found myself with no one to turn to for help.

One day while I was looking in the mirror, I realized that I didn't even know who I was anymore, much less at who I was looking at in the mirror. At that moment I made a decision to turn my life around somehow, and if possible to help others so they didn't have to endure the pain and suffering I experienced; the pain of loneliness or the feeling of being left behind to deal with all the worst problems on my shoulders all alone.

I began talking with Chris Palacio at COPE mental health, my attorney and my Dad about turning my life around. Being told I could do this gave me hope, and the more I heard those encouraging words, my hope became stronger and my confidence began to build more and more. When I was released from jail, I was placed in Pima Partnership every Saturday and Sunday. All this transpired from me "having to do it" to me looking forward to do it as part of my recovery.

My Dad's words of love and saying he believed in me helped me build my own belief in myself. It gave me a purpose in life to help others experience that need to believe in themselves. Now I am a house manager at the sober living house in which I started. I help others with their struggles, listen to their concerns and problems, and most importantly, I help them believe in themselves just as I was taught.

I just celebrated my one year clean and sober time. I was a guest speaker in a rehab center for a NA meeting. I am part of this RSS class to not only get a certification, but to also further my recovery and show others anything is possible to overcome, regardless of obstacles. It is also to become great enough to not only help others but to face them in the mirror.

Someone Who Had Hope I Could Change

Andrew Romero, CRSS

Hope is all around me every day, even if I can't see it. The time I chose to write about was right after I lost my arm. I was in La Canada skilled nursing facility. I had been clean for eighteen days at this point. I ended up relapsing on the eighteenth day. I ended up also getting caught. There was no mercy. They wanted me gone, and had already filled out the discharge papers. One person, the head of the people with addictions at the facility saved me. She turned around from heading home when she found out. She risked her job fighting for me, and putting her word on the line for me. This person, who had only known me for a couple of days, saved me. She had the hope that I could and wanted to do better. She forced them to keep me and not give up on me. If it wasn't for her I don't know where I would be. I would probably still be using. Would have lost my family, house, and probably my life. Just because someone had the hope that I could change.



Seeing How Bright the World Was

LeAnn Hendry, CRSS

Hope to me is seeing a light at the end of a dark tunnel. Hope makes life worth living. Hope helps me to have a positive self-esteem. Hope occurred after I hit rock bottom; I was in a deep dark place without hope, and then my mom, children and my church helped me see how bright the world was. Through their eyes I found the strength to go on living. Hope is a very important part of my recovery. It helps me to see the little things in life that are important, and not dwell on the past darkness that encompassed my life for so long. I like to say stop and smell the roses, and count your many blessings every day. Without hope, I would not be where I am today because without hope, there will be no tomorrows.



What Hope is to Me

Tamara Howard, CRSS



Hope to me is a wonderful gift that is so necessary to possess. Yes, possess, which means it belongs to me! The hope I have has always been founded on my personal relationship with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Here is my earliest memory of hope. It was the fall of 1983. I heard my dad calling me from the other room, but before I could respond, he was standing in front of me. I looked up and he seemed frustrated. "Tammy, where is the money in the white envelope for the Boy Scouts?" Being nine, I responded, "I'm not a boy, I don't know!"

For the next few days I was questioned and began to feel sad because my biggest hero didn't believe me. I remember going to bed wondering if my dad would check on me before going to bed, since he was so disappointed. I felt helpless, but still had hope in our consistent routine. Sure enough, there he was right before my heavy eyes closed. The weekend passed and when my dad picked me up from school, he was teary eyed and apologetic. He said to me, "Baby I am so sorry I didn't believe you, I found the money in my other coat!" I received my first bottle of perfume that day, went out to eat, and my hope was revived. Through the course of my life, I have experienced ups and downs, losses, and winning seasons. One of my biggest hopes I have held on to over the last 30 years was to be informed about being a person with a substance use disorder and how to create a support team, and utilize all I have been through to encourage others. In the darkest moments and helplessness, I felt there was always an ember waiting to spark what has always resided inside of me. Expectance with joy, which remains even in the deepest valley is what hope has been and will continue to be to me. I may not see the end result, but I have hope and believe it is coming.

Hope

Victoria Morales, CRSS

On September 12, 2016, what didn't feel like HOPE was a positive pregnancy test in Las Vegas. Lost in my addiction, with bipolar disorder, away from home, family and friends. Up until and even after I had my daughter, I struggled with my substance use and bipolar disorder. Which then eventually got me into jail, away from my newborn, and facing prison time. That is where I spent a significant amount of time re-evaluating myself. I stopped blaming others around me for the decisions I made, and that felt good.

My judge set a release date for January 4, 2018, which was the beginning of hope that I needed; I was already on Intensive Probation, in jail on a violation and still given a chance to prove myself. Everything changed. I started truly believing in something greater than myself - who I have chosen to call God. My daughter, Frankie, saved my life; she put a HOPE inside of me that I didn't even know I had. So, what I thought was the worst thing that could happen, turned out to be the only reason I am alive today. I have 2 years sober on June 13, 2019. I completed



a long-term recovery program at The Gospel Rescue Mission, I receive services from a behavioral health agency, and I have restored relationships with family and friends. This is my personal experience of HOPE.

Hope from the Heart and Soul

David Samaniego, CRSS



Hope began more than 10 years ago at the rehab New Directions. I was supposed to be there three months. My necessity was so great that I stayed a year to turn my life of despair

into that of a positive self-esteem, soul searching, and found God. After soul searching, I found wisdom (hope) from the heart or the soul. I've been a member of Alcoholics Anonymous ever since, but my real journey began here in the Recovery Support Specialist Institute (RSSI). What I've learned is that my belief in AA was not wrong, but there is a way which involves learned helplessness to hope and wisdom or heart (Soul). Accompanied by expectations of belief, fulfillment comes from a person willing to contemplate worth of self-esteem.

- 1) Like trying areas of change.
- 2) Increase areas of knowledge and awareness.
- 3) Mobilizing resources.
- 4) Opening oneself to areas of systems of change.
- 5) Opening my soul and whole heart to wisdom.

Life gets better every day with the newly acquired knowledge, and I regularly work with others as I have in the past.

New Way of Daily Living

Ramon Benitez, CRSS

After 16 consecutive years of incarceration, sentenced to probation on new drug related charges, and still struggling with a debilitating heroin addiction, my Probation Officer allowed me one chance to seek treatment or go back to prison.

My first experience with HOPE came in the form of an amazing, highly skilled staff at Arizona Rehab Campus in Tucson, Arizona. I was assigned to Residential Therapist Stephanie Bert MSAC, LASAC. An extraordinarily dedicated, true master of her craft. It was a new experience for me that someone genuinely believed in my abilities, more than I seemed to believe in myself.

Over the next 3 months of daily individual/group sessions, the word HOPE expounded in meaning as I processed the root of my issues in depth. This turning point in my life has allowed me the self-confidence and ability to continue reaching attainable goals I have set. HOPE is no longer



a meaningless word, it's a new way of daily living. As I grow in my recovery, my HOPE is that I share this message with someone in need of hearing it.

Never Completely Gone

Ryan Mellgren, CRSS

There is no hope. There is however compassion, understanding, tolerance, knowledge, self-control, confidence, intimacy, wisdom, and practice. Hope is a statement of ignorance. I used to hope and sometimes I still do, but I quickly drop it. My states of hope got me nowhere. I am here today because of surrender, humility, and asking for help. I was never completely gone. And I imagine that no one is forever gone or hopeless. Some individuals simply walk farther, talk more, dance more, think more, laugh louder, speak more softly, beyond the average and that's what their expression is. We all have unique gifts and I hope they don't get diminished by conformity, compliance, control or criticisms.



A photograph of a desert landscape featuring several saguaro cacti in the foreground and middle ground. In the background, there are rugged mountains under a clear sky. The image has a slightly hazy or soft-focus quality.

My Hope

John Dresser, CRSS

My hope is to get and stay well. I will continue with daily maintenance and staying true to myself, and things that make me feel hopeful. What hopeful means to me is that I have what I need; a nice place to live and a good job. My action plan for finding hope in my life is to find someone to share my life with, but not aggressively right now. I like the idea of having a life partner, but it is not my top priority. I feel that I have time to look for Ms. Right. My main purpose is to simply start a company and know it can work again. This would be a good start for me getting my life back in control.

Accomplishing getting a company back together would help me with my self-esteem and would be a great start for me becoming a peer support specialist. It would be a great start to some of my goals to achieve. Helping friends and practicing advocating for others and myself is easy, because I am not afraid to speak up and communicate what I need and want. Having the support of other peer support specialists and all of us being team players together is essential. WRAP is our most important value in supporting everyone as an equal –to each other's dignity, passions, respect and unconditional high regard of each other.

Workforce Development Program

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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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