

# Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Yuma, Arizona December 17, 2015



## Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduates

Back Row left to right:

John Driskill Jr., James Greaver, Austin Hull, Jaime Santana, Richard Miller, Quentin Barley, Gregory Hunter, Reynold Jerome

Second Row left to right:

Mario Montero, Erica Velarde, David Juarez, Michelle Greco, Rubin Breedwell, Taleena Garcia, Thomas Cortis

First Row left to right:

Rachael Lopez, Sydney O'Shields, Lori Garcia, Andrea Daicos, Karla Vizcarra, Jennifer Breedwell, Barbarita Aguilar

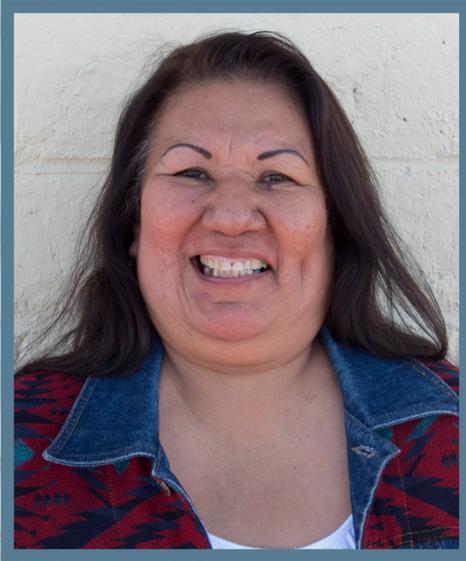
Front: Andras Maroti



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## A Lil Hope and Trust in God

Barbarita Aguilar

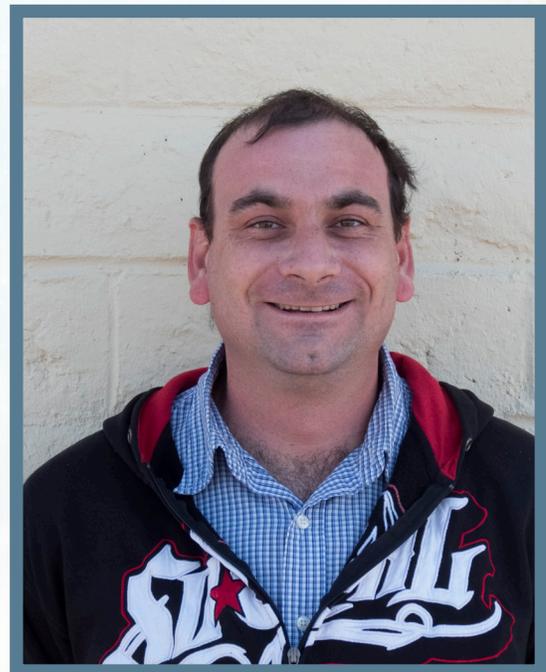
When I was in jail, my daughter came to visit me and she told me that Richard ( my son ), had gotten beat up real bad. That night and two more nights I prayed and asked God to bring him home. When my daughter came back to visit, she told me that he was home. We both cried and I told her that my prayer was answered. Little did she know that during those 3 days I was fasting. This is when I knew with just a lil HOPE and trust in GOD anything is possible.

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## Revive the Hope

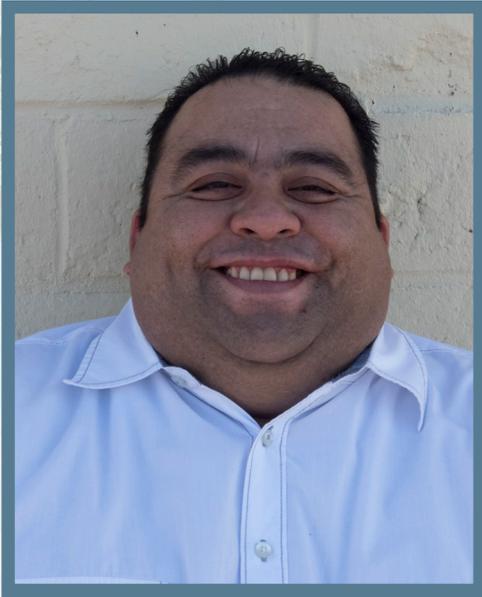
John Driskill

My personal experience with hope I believe happened while I was in a 120 day rehab program for my alcoholism. Before rehab I had felt hope was dead to me. A lyric by my favorite band Slipknot sums up where I was, "it took the death of hope to let you go". To me that meant I was ready to let go of my addiction and make an honest attempt at recovery and try to revive the hope I had lost. So, while in rehab I had found my way back to God who has since helped restore my hope for recovery and hope for living a better life. I now hope to use my experience to help others who may be in similar situations.



# Hope and Recovery

David Juarez



I grew up in Yuma Arizona, my early life was great until I became a teenager. I became isolated, I led a troubled life through high school. I began using drugs and alcohol after my high school years were over. I got married in 2000, started a family in the year of 2001 when my first son was born.

I thought everything was going great until I started getting deeper into the drugs.

I thought I was living a great life until that day I lost my family because I was all into the drugs. I became isolated, depressed and lost in a world where I had no hope, no faith and no spirituality what so ever. After 21 years of being an addict, I led my eventual addiction to drugs and found my hope and my faith by going to a rehab center, NA group and a recovery drug treatment program.

Now my experience in recovery and my wishes are that no person should suffer alone. Leading me by being a certified recovery support specialist and having the 12 steps and my NA groups as an integral part of my daily life.

To this day I remain recovered and grateful and want to thank my cases manager JOSE CANTABRANA, my peer support ALLAN VALENZUELA who saw my potential when I could not. And to all my family, friends, mentors who have helped me in so many ways thank you.

God bless you.

# Surrender to Victory

Andras 'Andy' Maroti

The moment that changed my life was approximately 45 days into my recovery. I was court ordered into a Christian rehabilitation program. I had never been one to surrender to anyone or anything. I started questioning the surrender idea. I had asked staff members. I asked other people in recovery, both in and out of the program I was in. I also asked many clergy members about surrendering. To no avail. It looked like I was going to be lost. Considering how important surrendering is to the program of recovery.

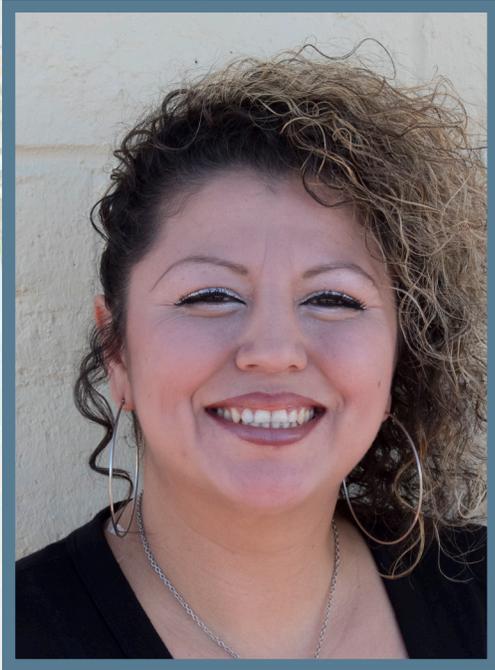
Then one day, on a Friday. I was heading to my work assignment, managing the front desk. I had my big book, my good book, a plethora of pencils and highlighters, along with my 32 ounce cup of coffee. Then a staff member named Gordon asked me how my surrendering was going. Shaking my head I had no good answer for him. Gordon then raised his hands and asked me "What about surrendering to victory?" I thought for a moment. I then raised my hands. Letting books and pens fall to the floor. Along with



my huge cup of coffee. I yelled "I can surrender to victory!" From that moment forward my life has been getting better and better. As I continue practicing surrendering.

# Making Dreams Become Reality

Erika Velarde



I believe HOPE is not a dream but a way of making dreams become reality. My reality came when I decided to hope for a better future for me and my children. One day I woke up from coming down off my addiction I went to the bathroom to brush my teeth looked in

the mirror & started crying when I saw what I had become & how disgusted I was of myself. As I stood & stared at myself in the mirror I was praying and asking God please take this addiction from my body & talking to myself asking myself why & one thing that came out of my mouth was this. Where do you see yourself in the future? Is this who you want to be? And it was then when it hit me like I was reborn, like when a baby cries for the first time as she takes her first breath into this world she comes into this world innocent, flawless, pure of the things of this world God said to me you are forgiven of your sin's . And I wept like a newborn baby. As I walked away from that mirror I felt the energy and positivity through my body; so I wiped my tears got myself dressed and my outlook on a lot of things changed and my mind set. I began to find things that helped me in my recovery, changed the negative to positive and started setting goals. Here I am today with a job, happy, healthy, enjoying my children like I once did and beginning on my journey as I sit in class it is just the fresh start to my new life that I had HOPED for thank you!!!!!!

# Seeing Change in Others Gave Me Hope

James Greaver

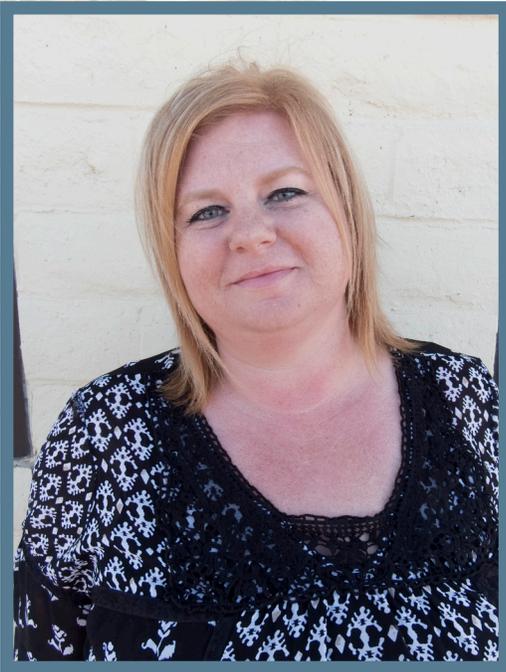
My personal experience of hope occurred when I woke up one day in the hospital, I had overdosed and was rushed to the emergency room. Shortly after leaving the hospital I was arrested for a warrant I had. While sitting in jail I had a lot of time to think. I knew that something needed to change, I just didn't know how to start. At the time I was on probation and I thought that surely my probation officer was going to violate me and I would spend along time in jail. One day she came and visited me and by the grace of God she told me she wasn't going to violate me, she told me that as soon as I got out to go to detox and then sign up for the Crossroads Mission 4 month rehab program. I knew that this was my chance, my chance to change my ways. That was my turning point. Once I got to the program I saw a lot of people I knew from the streets, and I saw a lot of change in them. Seeing them change gave me hope. About a month into the program I was introduced to my sponsor who has helped me out a lot. He has played a major role in my recovery. After graduating the program I signed up for the 6 month program here at Crossroads. I never though that I would be



doing peer support, until a few people had mentioned it to me. I figured that I'd try it out, I didn't know what to expect but after doing the training I have really enjoyed it. I have had a lot of support in my recovery so I want to give back and help other people in their journey to recovery.

# Angel from Heaven

Jennifer Breedwell



The one major event in my life that was and is and always will be my personal "HOPE" experience. It was 10 and a half years ago when I found out I was pregnant. I was in the worst part of my addiction, no place to live, no job, basically lost all hope in everything and everyone. The only thing I had was my clothes and my car. I had always told myself that if I was to get pregnant I would quit everything cold turkey, but to say it and actually do it, well you know addiction is no easy thing to just let go and never look back.

A child is the ultimate gift from God and I in no way wanted to mess this up too. I thought, well it was no longer about me and my addiction and selfish ways, right? There was a little human being growing inside me, a true miracle. I was confused and scared, my

addiction was telling me that I really didn't want to be a mom, that I was in no place in my life to be a good mom and I needed to just give up all hope and get rid of the baby and continue on the path of using. That I was never going to make it out of this alive.

I believed what my addiction was telling me. I mean how was I going to take care of a child when I couldn't even take care of myself. I decided to go with my cousin to Phoenix who was going to see her daughter. My sister was living there at the time so I stayed with her for a couple days to clear my head and figure out what I was going to do. While I was there we went to Peter Piper Pizza with my cousin and her daughter. As I sat there watching her with her daughter and all the little kids and their parents playing with them it hit that no matter what, God was going to take care of me and this little gift. I mean I was just as capable as them right?

The actual day I found out I was pregnant I did quit everything. I mean everything no smoking, drinking, using anything that had been an everyday, all day thing, was done. I knew that no matter how bad life could ever get, this child, this angel sent from heaven to save my life, was indeed my true "HOPE". Since then, some 10 and a half years later I have had many rough horrible moments in my life where I could have easily picked up and used again, and I always go back to that one moment in my life, the day my whole life changed, the day my little Devin from heaven was born. I know that there is always "HOPE" as long as I have him by my side. He literally saved my life.

# My Story of Hope

Jaime Santana

July 20, 2015 is the day I made one of the hardest choices I have ever had to make, the choice to give up meth for good. I took a chance on hope and that there may be light at the end of the tunnel. This would be my turning point for a better me, a better husband, father, brother, son and friend. I had shut off my mind and closed my eyes to see any negative effect that the drug was having and creating in my life.

My wife who was always there for me, helped me to open my eyes and see the pain and hurt I had been bringing to our family and to myself. My wife showed me that I could live a life free of drugs, I needed to find my heart again. She helped give me the courage to speak to my parents about my addiction. My addiction was a secret that I had kept from my family for 13 years. I knew talking to my parents would play a major role in my road to recovery. Talking to my wife and family has helped me so much in my recovery and one of the reasons why I stay clean today and have no wish to go back to the life of drugs.



I now spend my days around family, special time with my wife and a lot of time playing with my kids. This is what life is truly about and this is the life I was meant to live.

# Hope: Helping Other People Emerge

Andrea 'Drea' Daicos

HOPE for me began in 2008 staring at a magazine ad I cut out that said Hope with a pair of pink lips. My pathology report came back positive needing to be tested again. I looked up at God and said, are you saying I have cancer? Not even 20 minutes later the phone rang saying I needed to come back to the doctor. My biggest fear came to life. 32 years old and I had cancer.

I could not even believe this. But my spirit knew. Not only had I survived rape, abuse, addiction, now I was wondering if death would take me? I knew if I survived this I would change the world. I have one key phrase "stay amazed." This is my through line. I hope to challenge our current system, society and myself to bring a kaleidoscope of information, compassion and heart to give people a new spin on Hope and the human will. An insight of



possibility and proof that anyone and everyone has the ability to change if they decide to.

Stay AMAZED



## Nurturing Hope

Austin Hull

The moment HOPE entered my life is hard to pinpoint, but I definitely knew the point I had to change. I was in the middle of a brutal argument with my ex-girlfriend, centered entirely on the things about myself that she couldn't stand. Instead of becoming defensive and paranoid as I was prone to in times past, I became humbled beyond belief and asked my higher power for the strength to endure. That relationship is unsalvageable, but luckily my HOPE was only inspired by this person, I learned to nurture it and let it grow so even without her, I want to change.

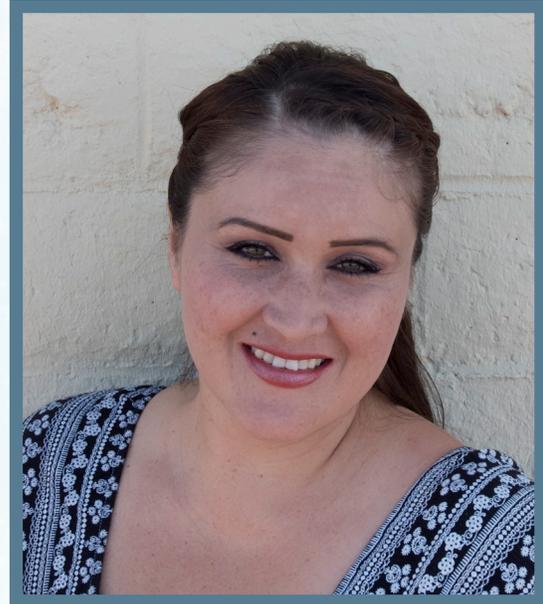
# Just One More Chance, and I Got It

Karla Vizcarra

My personal experience of HOPE occurred when I received a visit in jail on 06/26/2015 from a peer specialist of a recovery agency that was completely unfamiliar to me. I had been in jail for 5 weeks already, in wasn't sure when I was getting out because no one would help me pay my bail of 2000 dollars.

I was 7 months pregnant, I didn't wanna have my baby while I was there, I was so afraid my baby would be taken away if I was sentenced to stay in jail for a long time. I was feeling so bad about myself and my actions, full of shame, guilt and completely hopeless about the outcome of my case. All I knew its that I was alone in this.

When the peer specialist begin to explain to me why he was there and how he needed to take my information down for an intake, I wasn't really sure what for or why he was doing that, the moment that I felt something in my life was about to change is when he said to me, "I am here to help you, don't feel bad about your situation, trust me I was in your place once, but guess what? Life does get better and that is why I am here. You are starting our program of recovery and support assistance and you start Monday 06/29. You are being released to us at 6 a.m." with a great big smile. At that moment I knew God had answered my prayers he was giving me another chance to make things right for my baby girl and my own life too. Only I knew my fears, my needs, my life situation outside of jail, but all I wanted was



one more chance to change my life all the way around, just one more chance... And I Got it.

Everything I needed and prayed for to start my recovery and life change were all in the structure of the agency's program, it was amazing. Someone was willing to help me, and find resources that I never knew were available for people like me. Ever since I've been working to bettering myself so that I too can be of help to others...

**THAT'S WHY I AM ATTENDING THIS TRAINING FOR PEER SUPPORT, TO BRING THE SAME GOOD NEWS TO OTHERS THAT CHANGE AND RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE!**

# Chance to Become Whole Again

Lori Garcia

In 1991 was when it all started with my substance abuse disorder. I was a mother rising three girls by myself. My husband was incarcerated and would be spending a year in La Hembra prison, for DWI. I was going on fourteen years of marriage. I married the love of my life when I was seventeen. At that time all I wanted was to be a good wife and mother. In those fourteen years there were a lot of ups and downs. And the downs were out weighting the ups. I was a supportive wife to my husband while he was locked up, and doing my best to be a good mother. Then one day things changed, I was hurt by things that were said to me by my husband. I started to get depressed, sad, crying, mad, and then I realized I had to make a change. And in order to keep my sanity, I let go of my relationship with my husband. That's when I took that train ride to a place not sugar and spices. But now I think of it has hell. I started experimenting with



the world. Introduced to a drug that took my sanity, caring nature and loving support from

continued on next page



## Hope for a Better Life

Reynold Jerome

Hope was instilled in me when I was sitting in jail. I had picked up two more felonies when I was on probation. So when I went to jail my first thoughts was that I was going to prison. All my hope had gone out the window then. Talking with my public defender, she had said that she could put in a motion to suppress the evidence that was being used against me. Thus, instilling hope that maybe I could get the charges dropped against me. Further down the line, we came to plea agreement, stating if I go to residential treatment center for four months and get my life back on track. I was released to the Crossroads Mission where there, I found hope to a better life which I am now living very happily.

## Chance to Become Whole Again by Lori Garcia, continued...

my children. I lived in back of a bar, so when the children were asleep the yellow brick road lead straight to the front door of my best friend, the bar. Endless days and nights for years that was my lifestyle, drink, drugs and rock n roll. I ended up losing everything I worked so hard for. My children ended up going to live with their father, and very seldom did I see them. I was living with friends, family, working here and there. I had so called friends that were there for me, so I thought. Yeah right they were just digging me a bigger hole then I had already dug for myself.

I was in my third year out in the world when I realized what I was missing out on. I began having side effects of depression, stress, sadness and feeling sorry for myself. I started giving up on myself playing the blame game. Then one day I believe that the Lord knew what my heart was aching for. He still believed in me and his plan was just moving forward. My youngest daughter would visit with me and one day she asked if I would go see her new house that her dad had gotten. I said yes, she asked her father and that was ok with him.

Because of the love that God and my family has for me I was given another chance to become whole again. I was given the chance again to become the loving wife, mother and grateful caring person I use to be before I took that ride on that train to nowhere. Now I had my God and family back in my life. From one day of using drugs to the next I quit cold turkey. I knew then I was stronger then that

drug that took over my life at one time. I did a lot of praying and soul searching, began eating healthy, exercising and making up for lost time with my family. I believe I am a strong-willed person and if I hadn't changed my life style I don't think I would be here today. I give credit to God and my family, but I also give credit to myself. Some people with a substance abuse disorder don't get that second chance that I got. I've worked very hard for my recovery and it has not been easy. I will continue to do so everyday of my life. Sometime I do wonder about the people I've meet along the way that had a substance abuse disorder or any kind of disorders. All I can do is hope and pray that they search deep inside themselves to find the strength to take that road to recovery. I have dreams and goals I feel that I need to accomplish, and it starts with that one seed and the tools and knowledge I have learned and experienced in my recovery and the CRSS training class. No matter where this journey takes me, I will continue to use the tools to keep my recovery a part of my life. I am going to make a difference in this world and this world is going to make a difference in me one day at a time.

Last but not least thank you to the awesome trainer's, my hat goes off to you. Without you this knowledge wouldn't have been a part of my life and recovery. I wish you all the best and I pray that you will continue to have the strength, wisdom, knowledge and patience to keep marching and adding chapters to the book of recovery.



## Unconditional Love

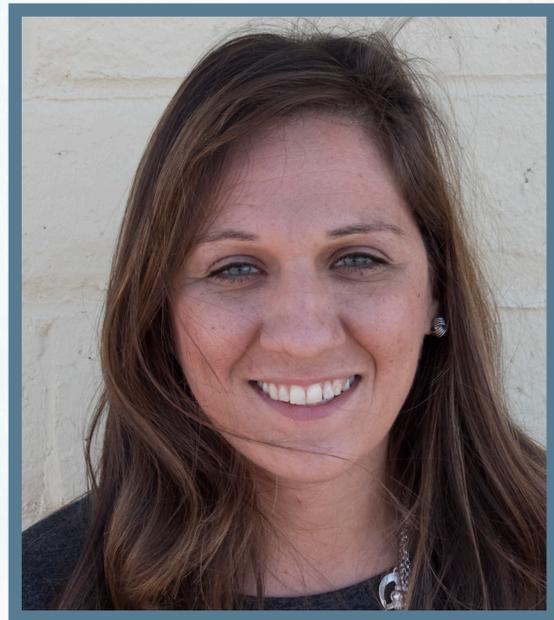
Rubin Breedwell

I guess my personal experience with hope occurred when I realized how much wife cared for me. It had been close to a year and a half after I relapsed, went to jail, relapsed again, when I realized, no matter how bad things got, she would always be there for me. Her always being there for me gave me hope and showed me unconditional love. Shortly, after going to meetings at the 449, seeing others in recovery, I knew that I could be that person to help a person in recovery. I have never told her that she has been my inspiration to help others, but she has been.

## A Child of God

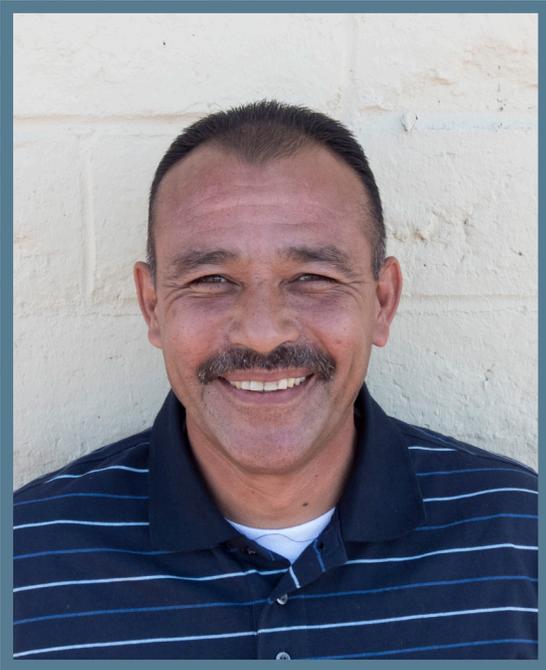
Rachael Lopez

I am 32 years old. I have battled with drug and alcohol dependency for half my life. I have been in trouble with the law since I was 15 years old. I never once thought I had a drug or alcohol problem. In 2012 I got in trouble for the last time. I had been heavy in my addiction to meth and somehow avoided going to rehab multiple times. My probation officer had enough, I was sent to jail for 4 months. I got out of jail and was escorted to Crossroads Mission where I spent another 4 months. It was at that time that I realized that my probation officer was not out to "get me" he was in fact trying to help me. I was accepted into the drug court program and it has been a life changing experience. I have since graduated the Drug Court Program, I have gained full sole custody of my son, and I have my own place. I believe that I do not need drugs or alcohol to have a good time. I am a child of God and I give Him all the praise and glory for saving a sinner like me.



# Today I Believe in Myself

Mario Montero



My name is Mario and I am grateful person in recovery. I am here to share a little bit about my experience with hope and how I obtained it. In 2012 I was diagnosed with paranoia, anxiety, depression and other mental disorders. I was also a substance abuse user

for 30 years. One day, when in treatment for substance abuse, I was required to take medication for my mental disorders. I was also asked to enroll in a program that would have me attend peer support groups. I remember that I was not able to find the means of paying for my medications; however I did find peer support. For more than 2 years I have been regularly attending these groups. I have an assigned peer support specialist that helps me. I never knew that I would find the help that I was looking for in hearing others who had problems similar to me and sometimes even bigger. I never thought I would find the Hope that I was looking for. I was always living isolated in my own problems. Today, I am a very grateful person in recovery. Today, I live in recovery. I believe in peer support and I believe that with my personal experience I can pass on the message of Hope to another person. Today, I believe in myself and I have hope that if I stay on this path then I have nothing to fear.

I want to say thank you to John, Tim, and Beverly and the entire team at the University of Arizona WDP for the compassion, love and hope that they have given me.

# Taking the Next Right Steps

Michelle Greco

I am a survivor of domestic violence, an ex-drug dealer, and a person dealing with mental illness. I have been in some very dark places with no sight of a light at the end of the tunnel. When I started my path of recovery I didn't have much hope, I just wanted change in my life, so I started changing everything. With the help of my case manager I moved into transitional housing but, while living there I was becoming complacent and feeling down, not wanting to do much, struggling with the environment I was in, and losing the drive for change. Even though things were different than in my past I was still in a state of hopelessness. Out of no where an opportunity arose that I almost turned down. It was a chance to move out into my own place. I prayed about it and decided to take it. I began looking for a place, the whole time praying for God's will to be done. Within a four to seven day time frame, I found a place, applied for it, was approved and moved in. That first week in my new place I had a panic attack and called my sponsor. So many changes were happening at once it was overwhelming. She told me things were falling into place because I'm taking the right steps and as long as I continue doing the right things I'll be ok.



Next my oldest son and my first grand baby were no longer homeless as they were given the chance to come home and move in with me, my youngest son will be doing the same in the summer. Through all of this I also started Recovery Support Specialist training and am learning so much about hope and recovery. I believe I found hope when in taking the next right steps I started finding the blessings that come with recovery.

# Helping People Get the Help they Need

Quentin Barley



I think it all started on May 11 when the Marshalls finally caught up with me. I was sitting in my jail waiting my fate. I thought that I would be going to prison for two years, but for whatever reason, probation decided

to reinstate me. That is when I started thinking about second chances.

I got out of jail on July 10, went to probation on the 13th and started doing what was asked of me. When I started the substance abuse classes, I felt a sense of relief. I believe that while I was taking these classes a part of me decide to grow up and wanted to truly stop the using and going to jail. After I finished with what the courts had required of me, I continued with after-care. There I would hear the stories of some of the other people and my life wasn't as hard as theirs.

All I could think about was all of those other people that weren't getting help or receiving crappy help, wondering what I could do. Then everyone in class was talking about peer support and how all the agencies were hiring for it. I wasn't sure if I should sign up for it or if I would be right for the job. I know now I want to help as many people as possible get the help they need.

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## Hope Saved Me

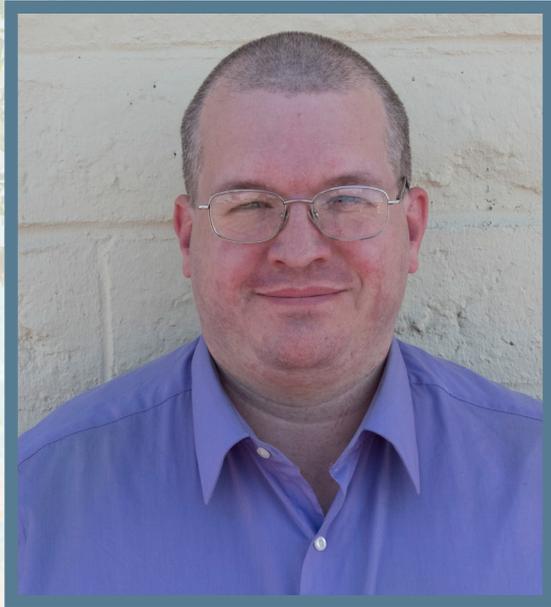
Sydney O'Shields

To most, hope could be defined as a feeling or desire for a certain thing to happen. Its what pushes them to do better in this crazy, beautiful thing called life. Unknowingly, hope had become a foreign word to me. I had become complacent in the life I had. I believed I deserved every wrong or bad thing that was happening to me. There I was fighting with the horrific battle of a meth addiction, an open DCS case, no job, an abusive relationship in which he had gotten my cousin pregnant, and no stable place to live. Sounds like a bad Jerry Springer episode, right? I felt I deserved every bit of it. I only felt remorse for my children. They didn't deserve this life I was giving them. And that is where I found hope. They pushed me to do better. As things started slowing getting better, I gained more and more hope. It saved my family. Hope saved me.



# Hope in the World Today

Richard Miller



I was sitting in a Mental Rehab-Substance Abuse facility being made to be there because I was mentally out of control. I had been diagnosed with Multi-Personal Disorder and was listed as a danger to my family and friends. I was put on so many different meds that I didn't even know who I was anymore. There were days that I would black out and my other half would take over, and would make it dangerous to be around me. There were days that I wouldn't want to get out of bed. I was wreck. I was ready to give in. It was then that I started getting counseling and was made aware of the ability to be able to control my other half. I started having fears that I wouldn't be able to see my family and friends again. I started going to AA/NA, mainly because it was mandatory while in this place.

A Spiritual service was started by my roommate. I was not even thinking about going at first, but my roommate said for me to try it out because all of the awesome things that it had done for him. I went to one service and it was there that I realized that my place on this Earth was to be a person in a behavioral health position and help others to get the services that they need. Too many people I help out today don't even know how to help themselves out. I had finally figured it out that my Hope was to see other people succeed and to know that I am doing good in this world and that I am not just another number on somebody's chart. Since then I have had relapses and had to find my way again, but that just makes my journey that much sweeter.

My Hope is that one day there will be a reaching hand out to everybody that needs Hope and will be able to find it. Not just the people who walk into an office because they were told to go there, but to be able to just feel the message in everyday life and know that there is a way to be all that they can be. I am inspired in this message through my Case Manager who has shown me that there is Hope in the World today.

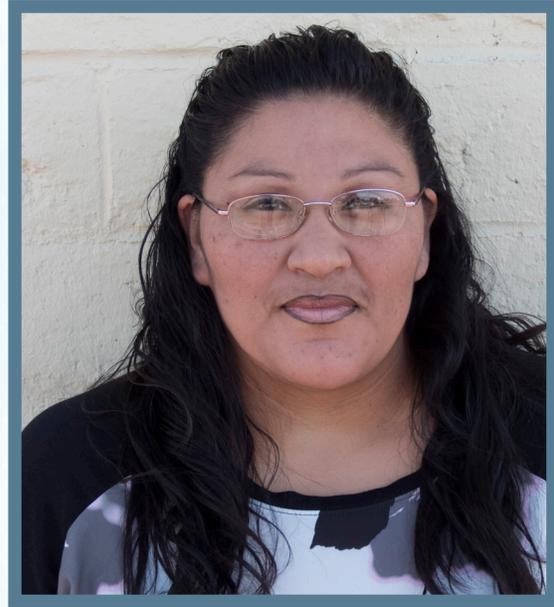
He is a man that even though he has all the money that he could ever need by being successful in his youth, he felt the need to go out and be part of the world to help people. He says that "I go out and help people because it is part of my recovery." I will respect him forever for being a man willing to say, YOU CAN FIND A WAY.

# Breaking the Cycle

Taleena Garcia

The first time for my hope was back in 2007, I had been sent to rehab in Portland, OR. I was pregnant and had four kids taken from my custody due to my substance use. The time I spent in rehab was for about two months and within the two months I had learned about how hard it was for a person to stop using. I didn't know about it because I always stopped when I wanted and wasn't as hooked to the substance as everyone else was around me. However, being in rehab opened my eyes to help myself and my kid's father. Even though, it helped me, I continued to remain in recovery.

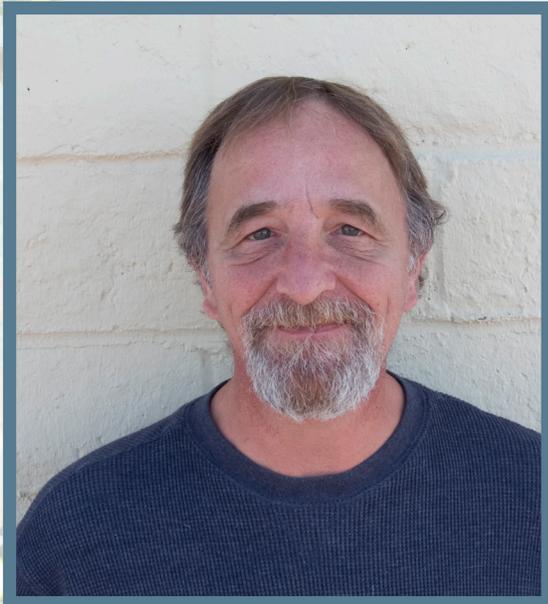
At this time, my youngest son was taken from me at birth almost a year after, the Cocopah Social Service took my three oldest, due to me having a dirty UA and being pregnant. This was the first devastating things that happen in my life. The second was this year; my oldest son didn't want to live with me anymore, due to my drinking. After being sober from alcohol and going through with this training, I realize what I have done. I need to break the cycle; my mom, dad, uncles and my kid's father side of the family have been or are still in the situation. It has to start with me, showing my kids the right path to take and what they can do to help me and themselves. Even though, I had the patience for my kid's father, however, I had no hope in him. I had given up on him. I



also had been dealing with depression since my teen years on and off. I look back and realize when I would lose my job I was dealing with my depression. When I started drinking I was dealing with depression and got real heavy into it that it started to affect my job not knowing it, until my son left. I am happy I went through with this training because it helped me learn more about myself so I can help others. I want to Thank You all of you for this opportunity.

# Finding the Hope I Thought was Lost

Tom Cortis



What is hope? Hope is a vision everyone is born with just as love is a feeling we are born with but must be learned. I learned and found my hope in November 2009 when I first took peer support class. Peer support class made me look to the depths of my soul, made me look deeper than I have ever looked at me. The vision of overcoming mental illness and drug abuse. I knew for a long time I had these illnesses, but never knew there was a way to recover from them. As I looked deep inside myself I found something I can't explain that has helped me so many times break away from the demons inside me. Although there have been times I've slipped back, I continue to look deeper than I ever imagined I could and find the hope I thought was lost. Whenever you feel all hope is lost reach way down to the depths of your soul and the hope will always be with you.

## No Going Back

Reuven Shorr

It is not difficult for me to define the turning points in my recovery, nor what has kept me committed to a life in recovery. Although I had spent over ninety days in a drug and alcohol rehabilitation, where I learned a lot about my addiction, as well as the tools I would need to remain "clean and sober"; I was still struggling. There were weeks and a couple months where I did not use, but then there were weeks and months where I did. I left rehab on Suboxone and seeing an independent Suboxone doctor. This was a perfect set up for my rationalizations and continuing use of opiates. I could not afford the varying and increasing fees for my visits and prescriptions.

Secondly, and most importantly, I quickly learned to "work this system". Learned that I could skip a dose, use for a day or several and then continue my "recovery". The truth was I was not committed to my recovery and was still deep in my addiction. I was overwhelmed by the consequences of my addiction, loss of my job, my marriage, finances and my relationship with my children. In many ways I was hopeless, but could not articulate that in my own mind, much less to others. Everything I was doing, groups, NA, counseling, was going through the motions, but I was lying to myself and everyone around me. I had even started a Methadone Program and was not using opiates, but I was conflicted about the program and where my life was going.

Everything changed for me November 19th, 2014. I was at "the clinic", just like every other morning for over two months. The front desk told me there was a call for me, which is not allowed, except for emergencies. This is the moment that my life was forever altered, no



going back, nothing ever to be the same; I am changed. It was my girlfriend "at the time". She told me she was about to pick me up, that my brother was at the hospital. When she arrived, she told me my brother, Ezra was gone. Ezra had died.

There is no way to describe how I felt. Ezra was my best friend. We are only four years apart and were close in ways that only brothers and addicts can be. Yes, my brother also had a "drug problem". I used with my brother. And my brother died of a drug overdose.

Guilt, shame, pain, rage, nihilism and deep grief, do not touch what I felt, and still feel.

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## No Going Back by Reuven Shorr, continued...

What began after this moment was a period of prolonged shock. It appeared to everyone that I was coping. I was trying to continue with "normal" daily life, spending time with my children and family but nothing felt the same. I was struggling to find meaning in my brother's death, but I felt lost. Worse than my own pain, was watching the pain and suffering of my beautiful Mother. Having two boys that I love beyond words, I cannot imagine the agony of my Mother's loss of her son.

As the days passed and my family talked about my brother, we looked at pictures, watched videos, and went through his belongings like guarded treasures. I began to speak to people I met about my brother and how he died.

When I met others who were dealing with their own addiction, I told them of the deep pain of my family's loss, my Mother who lost her youngest son, my two boys who miss their Uncle and how I miss my best friend and brother every single day. I started to realize

that in speaking to people about my brother I began to feel Hope in a way that I had not since the day I lost my brother. I realized that there is a legacy to my brother's death in that I can share the experience of my own addiction and the loss of my brother to his addiction.

Although the pain of my brother's death never leaves me, some days I still can't believe he is gone, I am dedicated to educating and committing myself to helping others find the path to their own recovery, so that they do not have to put their families through the suffering I have experienced myself and of my family. Sharing this with others gives me hope, and I have seen it happen, that I, along with the spirit of my brother, can change a life and give hope to others.

Sometimes, and I know this personally, it can just take someone sharing their own journey, showing compassion and kindness. This can change lives.

## My Story of Hope

Jesse Martinez

My story of HOPE was a very unique story in a sense. I have struggled with the fact that I am epileptic since I was 18 (I am now 29, so it's been 11 years now). For many years I felt like a guinea pig taking pill after pill to try and overcome the pain from having seizures and migraines, sometimes on a daily basis. At the age of 25 I sought out help from a holistic doctor and she recommended that I try medical marijuana to help counteract the pain, and for years it helped and I became seizure free for 3 years.

Unfortunately at the beginning of this year (2015) my fiancée, at the time, got in an accident while driving under the influence of alcohol and had our daughter in the vehicle with her. At this time DCS (Department of Child Safety) opened an investigation on my ex and myself, and came to the conclusion that my medical marijuana usage would be a negative impact for my daughter. I immediately stopped using medical marijuana and focused on doing everything I could to get my daughter back.

I immediately submerged myself in every agency I could to inform myself about my options for advocating for myself. I enrolled in services at COPE, Arizona Families First, AVIVA and a few others as well. I soon learned about the DCS process and did everything in my power to complete everything in my DCS



case plan, in doing so I became educated in how the "system" works.

Now I want to be able to help other parents who were in my shoes and felt lost or unable to help themselves. I want to be an advocate for any parent who wants to do everything in their power for their children and needs assistance in doing so. There were many mentors who guided me along my struggle and I want to be able to do the same for someone else.

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