

Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Nogales, June 1, 2018



Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduating Class

Back row, left to right: Rosy Gutierrez, Ignacio Buelna, Amber Helen McKenzie, Marianna Estrada, Jose Peña, Silvia Araujo, Cesar Armando Del Rasso, Adalberto Sainz, Angel De La Cruz

Middle row, left to right: Patrick Wayne Robles, Melissa Gracia, Beatriz Osete, Scott Herrick, Edward Schulz

Front row, left to right: Mavy Moreno, Karina Yvette Cañez, Luis Gaxiola



Hope Around My Life

By Beatriz Osete, CRSS



Hope never dies.

We have to search for it no matter all the difficulties...

I was a person who had experienced depression, stress, nervousness, and hypertension for more than ten years. I was living in panic because the marriage of one of my daughters was in big trouble. Her

husband got involved with drugs. This destroyed both my daughter's and my own nervous systems. I am in treatment now, and I have a happy life. The future of our family is better. I have two grandsons under thirty, and my husband and I take care of them because their father is involved with drugs.

My primary goal is to help people with their needs. Another is to take my grandsons and show them the way to be better people. I was affected by my relationships with some relatives, and they were dangerous for me. But once my hope was under control, I found Pinal Hispanic Council. I started to feel safe in myself again. I work on paintings there.

I want to get a certificate in order to reach my goals and be a good example to my grandsons. I would also like to take classes on painting and get a part time job at Pinal Hispanic Council. My hope is to reach the moon and touch the stars with my hand. Thanks to the Recovery Support Specialist Institute and the teachers Rita, Stephanie and Dave for giving me the opportunity. I am so grateful to learn that to live with HOPE is what makes my family and me happy.

Everything Will Be Okay

by Amber Helen McKenzie, CRSS

Hope is not just a word. Hope is not a number, shape or size, and it should not be measured. Hope is more than just a word, it is a feeling within that describes that everything will be okay. It is the knowledge that everything is going to be okay at the end of the day. It is something that we need to hold onto to get through our days, weeks, months, and years. Without hope we feel helpless and hopeless, and that whatever we do is not good enough. So, I am ready to start with my new attitude and a new hope that everything's going to be alright.



Make The Best Of It

by Angel De La Cruz, CRSS

My experience of hope began with me thinking that all was lost. I was diagnosed with schizobipolar disorder not too long ago. I would hallucinate; I would hear and see things that were not real, but they made perfect sense to me. It got to the point where I needed to be hospitalized. But with the help of my medication, yoga, walks, family, friends, and other things, I was able to come back to my senses.

I truly thought everything was lost. However, one day I thought "I may as well try to make the best of it", and I started motivating myself to do things I would not do before. I thought I would not be able to do much because of my condition, but putting barriers on yourself only holds you back. With the help of my supports, I have been able to push myself to new places, and I plan to do more every time.



Give It Away To Keep It

by Edward Schulz, CRSS



Hope played a big role in my attempts at reaching sobriety and proper treatment, being a person diagnosed with a serious mental illness. I lost my partner of almost ten years, my home, and my career. My will to live was non-existent. I'm not sure if this was my rock bottom, because one thing I've learned is that things can always get worse. I had no hope, and the only thing holding me back was my mother, sisters (I have four) and my best friend. I felt defeated and lost. Hope began for me when I was able to start seeing myself through their eyes. I didn't know about rehab or proper medication, but I knew I had to survive if only to stop the pain I was putting my loved ones through. I started trying to stop my self-destructive ways. Trips to the hospital detox and ten day stays at their behavioral unit, although not enough, began short spans of clarity which gave me insight that there was HOPE.

The turning point to seek further care came when I almost completed a suicide attempt, and was ordered by a judge to attend a 30 day stay at a rehabilitation facility. My family did the research and paid the fee for me to attend a place in Austin, Texas. They picked me up took me to the airport, and through tears of hope, I went. My stay seemed really brief and I returned in full relapse mode, again feeling defeated and guilty for having let myself and my family down. From that experience however, my point of view changed. I knew more about recovery, and through guest speakers and listening to other peoples' stories, the seed of hope began to bloom. Next I went to a local treatment center called Casa De Vida on a voluntary basis; I thought, why not? They stripped down my arrogance, my cowardice, and my fears, and I began to wish for the old me to come back. The guy that made it through nursing school and fought for a better life... I knew I could do it; I had tremendous HOPE. After a nine month stay, my goodbye words were "I stepped through the doors here nine months ago with a dread for what would come the next day, but I've learned more about myself here than I'd hoped. Today I'm leaving here with an eagerness for tomorrow, and I can't wait to see what tomorrow will bring."

When I left the true battle began. Through odd jobs and rolling with the punches, ten years later I am still clean and sober, with proper medication and support. I can look back and say I'm doing alright. I've been to hell and back, and maybe sharing my journey could help others. The quote "recovery, you have to give it away to keep it", has never made more sense. I am here attempting to make my life better. When this program is done, I'm going to leave with more hope than I had four weeks ago. Thank you for all you've done.

Hope to Faith

by Jose Peña, CRSS

I guarantee all human beings on this planet have had to overcome some sort of adversity challenge, or obstacle at some point in their lives. Everyone's story differs from others; some have harder paths, wrong decisions, unfortunate events, and the list goes on. Don't get me wrong. Of course there are sometimes the "good" things and positive things that occur as well, but to some those moments are rare. What I'm trying to say is that some people, especially people who are in recovery or have dealt with a mental illness, certainly encountered all I've previously mentioned above. I, as an individual, have previously overcome such things.

Most difficult was having substance use conflict with a mental disorder. More than a couple of times those things have led me to dark places that feel like hell, to rock bottom. Each time felt like I was falling deeper and deeper. Surpassing all those moments of despair, I witnessed firsthand this thing called HOPE. That led me to ultimately believe in this other more powerful word called FAITH. I have had many difficult situations in my life since a young age, but I was able to live to see another day.

The one time that really left an impact in my life was when I overdosed. Pronounced dead at the scene and on the verge of death, I was fortunate and lucky enough to survive. That was the turning point in my life; the final lesson I just had to learn. I finally learned how to have hope because things got better after that. Things have been great ever since thanks to the amazing support system I have, especially family, and specifically my mother. Without her, I would not be here today.

Ever since that turning point in my life, I learned



to have faith that it will always get better. That is the message I want to help spread, so I can possibly be the positive influence and change, make a difference, or simply make someone feel better. I know for a fact that if I someone like me accomplished something like this, anyone can. That is what I would love to teach the souls of people: that the human spirit can never be broken.

Day By Day

by Patrick Wayne Robles, CRSS

In retrospect, the hope and faith that was gifted to me and nurtured by my amazing family was lost, and all but given away during the height of my battle with substance use. After countless attempts at sobriety (which were built on shaky ground), and introspective work that was far from thorough, I always managed to pull myself up by my proverbial bootstraps, only to eventually crumble again. It was during these bleak times that lasting happiness and the hope of overcoming my issues had evaporated.

Through a series of unexpected events, divine intervention, and the persistence of my beloved late wife, Kelly Marie Doyle-Robles, I was diverted to the Pima County DTAP (Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison) Program. DTAP takes a multi-pronged approach to the treatment of addiction, and all of its symptoms. Day by day, I began acquiring the tools needed to solve my personal substance use riddle. The resource team helped me address vocational questions, facilitated the improvement of my mental and physical health, and assisted me with grief counseling over the loss of my soulmate.

God, my wife, my family, and the DTAP team fostered hope for me until I was able to ascertain it for myself. I had to believe in the goodness I saw when looking inward, in order to accept the bad with the good, when looking outward. I find it extremely ironic that although I abandoned hope during difficult times, it was imperative for the



rebirth of my hope to occur during difficult times as well. Just as an incubator is conducive to healing and health, my mind, heart, and soul has become an incubator conducive to everlasting and omnipresent hope.

From Gang Leader to Meeting Leader

by Luis Gaxiola, CRSS



My hope discovery journey started in 2014. I had been using for ten plus years, but had become sick and tired of the lifestyle. I just didn't know where to get help, and I had been isolating for the whole time and wanted to be close to my family. I was on my way to see my roommate, who was also my best friend and my dealer (typical, right?). It was then that I received a phone call from a friend saying that he had passed away from an overdose. I was crushed and didn't know where to go from there. I called my mom and asked her to be at the house and have my dad there, because I really needed to talk to them. When I got home,

I sat down and told them about the problem I was having and said I wanted to stop because my roommate had just passed away. We looked for help and after a couple of months of searching, finally found it.

I learned all the tools, but I wasn't applying them. I was talking clean and walking dirty. I got in trouble with the law due to my associations. I was put on probation and didn't care about stopping my using. I ended up going to jail to sing the county blues. I did two months, and my mom visited me with my sister and my three nieces. They asked if I was willing to go to 28 day treatment, but I was already clean and didn't think I needed it. I just wanted to finish my time and take the 3.5 years. They begged me to go and finally I agreed, and within a week I was off to Benson.

That is where I experienced my first taste of HOPE, when I felt a connection with a peer support that I hadn't felt before. I took what I liked about his recovery and applied it to myself. I started to see the change and I went on for the ride. Since I had been a gang member my whole life, I knew I could be a leader. I read a story from the big book; it was called "From Gang Leader to Meeting Leader". I wanted to do that and help others who weren't receiving help. I hated being a statistic and I wanted better for myself and for others. I promised myself that I would make it and that I was going to do anything possible to help others. When I left the program, I was blessed to hear about the classes that the U of A provided. I was all for it! Besides being a huge U of A fan (BEAR DOWN, GO CATS!), it was a blessing all around.

Finding My Light

by Cesar Armando Del Rasso, CRSS

Hope has been a part of my life since I was a child. Through all the darkness in my life, hope was the only thing left in my life that would get me to my light. This light represented success, my children and a career. Throughout my life, I had the potential to reach this light. However, as soon as I would come close, drugs would drag me down and hold me against reaching my light.

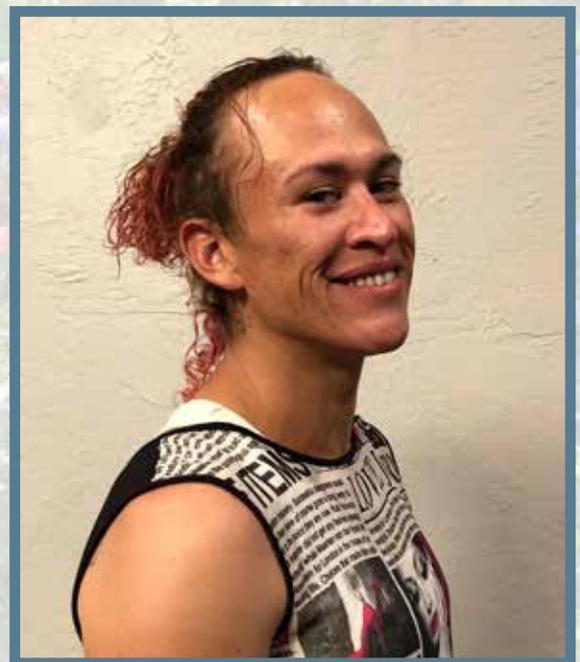
I went to prison and the darkness in my life deepened, and I realized that I needed to find my light. I got out and went in search of it, and in this search, I met a special person who directed me to my light. With her direction, the love for my children and the U of A CRSS training program, I now stand in my light. The one thing that never left my heart was hope. Today my life is light. I have the tools and knowledge necessary to keep my light, and best of all, I have learned to teach others to reach their light.



Life and Love

by Ignacio Buelna, CRSS

My personal hope was my shift toward life's picture. I always had hope for change, but never thought I could do it, because I was afraid of doing so. People came to misunderstand me, thinking that I was an insane person. There was a person who knew how to listen to me, and gave me lot of hope by not judging the decisions I made. I gained strength through their understanding and support, and I realized that no matter my image, I had to fight for a decent life and love. It was then that I set goals and reached the door that I now have opened. I am happy for my new hope that the Workforce Development Program has given me to develop professionally, and am very appreciative. Thanks for this opportunity that gave me new hope.



Hope for a New Toy versus Hope of Recovery

by Scott Herrick, CRSS

My recovery/discovery started the day I was born. Being born with a mental illness, you aren't aware that who you are isn't what other people expect you to be. I knew very early that I wasn't like everyone else. School and learning were as simple as breathing for me. Life was easy. It wasn't until middle school that I started noticing that "life's little tests" were changing and I was starting to fail miserably. People that had extreme difficulty in school and intellectual tasks all of a sudden were geniuses compared to me. Everyone seemed to have the answers, and I couldn't even find the questions. I really didn't understand how I could be so good in some areas of life and so inept in others. I was able to find complex work-arounds for many of my deficiencies, but I still noticed myself falling further and further behind in the skills that others were starting to build their lives on. Life had become extremely confusing and difficult.

I tried my best to remain hopeful that a solution would arise, but I never had much success finding it. I tried many, many times to seek help and advice from others, but that was always a non-starter.

"Oh come on, what do you mean you don't know what to do? Didn't you just ace the economics test yesterday?" "Really, you think you have problems?" "Quit whining, you're too smart to be worried about such simple things." "What do you mean you don't like parties?" "Quit pretending to be stupid, you know better than that!" "Yeah right, don't tell me you didn't understand what I meant!" I guess I was on my own.

By the time I entered college, I had spent years dreaming, wishing, and hoping to "be normal". "Why is life so hard?" I just didn't get it. In college I dove into Psychology, Sociology, and Philosophy, searching for an answer to why I had so many difficulties, especially in social situations. High Functioning Autism seemed to be the most



likely answer, but I didn't have any of the early childhood developmental delays required for that diagnosis, so the question of why I had these difficulties went unanswered for another 20 years. I eventually found out that I did in fact have those delays in development. Better late than never, I guess.

So what does that story have to do with hope? Well, there are two types of hope. One is a passive want; optimistic, happy, fun, wishful. "I hope I get a new toy!" This is the most common and modern definition. It's what you'll find in google, and most dictionaries. Words such as wish, want, feelings, and desire are commonly used in describing hope. The New Oxford

continued on next page...

I Woke Up

by Karina Yvette Cañez, CRSS

I was a person with no hope when it came to my recovery. Even though I had the support of my family, without believing in myself or having even an ounce of hope, I was just stuck in a mindset that recovery from my co-occurring disorders was simply not possible. Then one day when I woke up, I realized that I WOKE UP!! I was alive, in my bed, and not in a jail cell or hospitalized. I was with my family, still supporting me through everything. I decided to reach out. That decision alone inspired hope in me. I found that I'm not alone in this journey, and that I can be a person who inspires hope in others with my story. There's a quote I stumbled across; it says, "I still have a long way to go, but I'm already so far from where I used to be, and I'm proud of that." That is hope!



Hope, continued by Scott Herrick, CRSS

American dictionary even uses hope in their definition of wish: "A desire or hope for something to happen"; this is the type of hope I had earlier in my life. Sure, it made me feel a little better initially, but that feeling would always subside and eventually turn into despair, depression, anxiety, and hopelessness.

The second type of hope is more of an active need. It is the much older Hebrew translation of hope found in the Bible. This definition replaces wish, want, feelings and desire with certainty, trust, expectation, and confidence. Even though I had grown up in a Christian home and spent countless hours in my youth reading and looking for answers in the bible, I would frequently get discouraged because I had passively hoped for a better life, only to be disappointed when it never happened. It wasn't until I discovered the Biblical

definition of hope that the light bulb finally came on. This is the Hope that God promises. It's also the type of hope we can all have for recovery. That is the hope I want to share with others. A firm unwavering foundational hope that isn't moved by the uncertainties or struggles of life. The reaffirming positive confidence that recovery is possible!

We no longer have to wish for a new toy. Our hope for recovery is much more solid and immovable. There are too many personal testimonies and stories, too many longitudinal studies, too much empirical data to limit our hope for recovery as merely a wish, a feeling, or a desire. The overwhelming evidence compels us to have "a strong and confident expectation" that the possibility of recovery is 100%!



I Am Not Alone

by Melissa Gracia, CRSS

Three years ago I left a man. A man that had me in a prison of hell. I had to do things that I thought would make it okay. For four years I was in a domestic relationship. I would use drugs to survive the daily threats, beatings, insults and more. I couldn't think for myself; I was lost in a world that he had control over. Because I felt that I was weak and stupid. I thought it was my fault for everything that I did in the relationship.

Four years of domestic violence, drugs, beatings, threats, put downs, and name calling; I was heartbroken, scared, blind, and afraid. I had a lot of anxiety. I was weak and I had no idea how I was going to get my strength back. Until the day when I didn't have my son. I realized that it wasn't my fault. He was the ill person. He was the problem. I started to go to CHA for family therapy, counseling and groups to gain my strength back. Two years have passed since I got my son back, and only because I won in court. I now have full custody of my son and I have my family back together. Knowing that he is in jail, I can live 99% better. The other 1% is still afraid of him because he did do so much to me. However, I'm a survivor now. I know I'm not alone.

My Purpose Was Bigger

by Marianna Estrada, CRSS

After years of depression, I found hope where I least expected to find it- in myself. It took multiple suicide attempts, and years of hitting rock bottom continuously to realize that I was still alive for a reason. I spent so much time trying to numb my pain that I didn't realize I was making things worse for myself. Through music and art, I realized that the happiest people don't suppress their emotions; they allow themselves to feel and create something out of it. I've always known my purpose was bigger, and now after

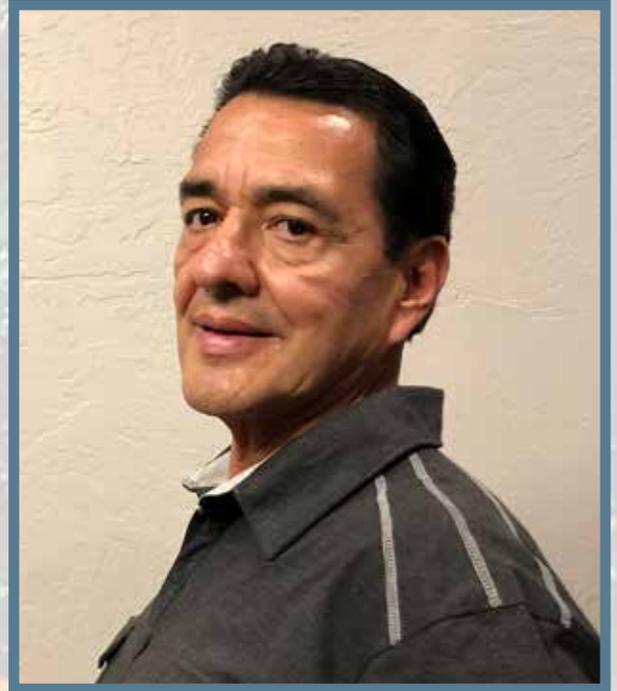
this class, I feel like I'm on the right track. I want to be there for people because I know what it's like to be alone. I want to help people find their purpose because I believe that recovery is possible with the proper guidance, love and support.

"I know you made me different for a reason God, I think I know why. I know you put me through it for a reason God, I think I know why."

Finding Hope by Adalberto Sainz, CRSS

My personal experience of hope started when I was sentenced to 22 years in the federal system. My addiction was an obstacle that I had to overcome through my years of being incarcerated. In those years, hope played a major role in my life for making the right decisions under the dire consequences of human destruction. It was like remodeling an old house, beginning with a strong foundation of hope, faith and courage; these materials would sustain the house.

The people that were involved in my recovery were Christian Pastors. Spiritual retreats through their testimonies and their hearts filled with love and courage. They taught through the Bible how to overcome any obstacles in the storms of life. When I was released from the federal system, I was looking for help. I needed a helping hand, because I had been out of the community for such a long time. I was in an isolated situation, with my anxiety attacks. When I finished the MRT program, I asked the counselor if she knew of a support group program. She gave me a card and told me to call them, and see if they could help me out. That is how I discovered that there was help available, and they offered me hope for my disabilities.



The Me That Believes in Dreams by Silvia Araujo, CRSS

As I sit here trying to write about my personal experience of hope, I have been struggling to write these words, although I have seen how hope has changed my life.

Hope and I go back a long time. Hope has always existed throughout my life at all times. Especially at times when I have found myself lost and empty. Hope has played a big role in my journey of recovery. Last year was a great time of loss, emptiness, sadness, pain and fear. I had hit my all-time low. I was scared that I would not come out of the darkness that I had found myself.

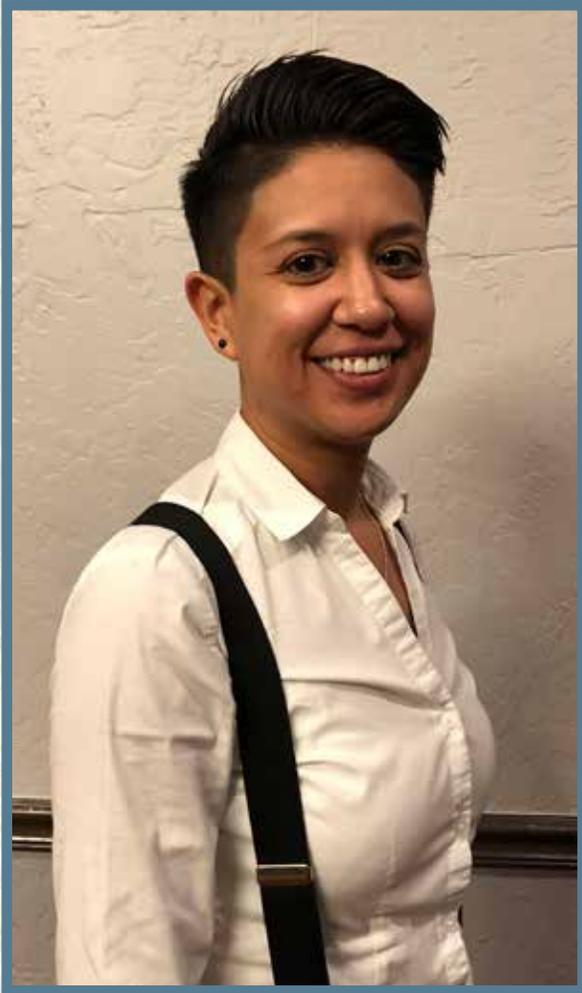
On February 07, 2017, a ray of hope guided me to the Hope Clinic. This is where I began my recovery. My turning point was when my child walked in on me in my room and found me preparing the "medicine" I used to make everything be okay. The lies I told myself; how distorted and sick was I? After a year and three months of recovery, or hope, I like to call it, I discovered myself - the Silvia that believes in dreams and hopes.

I honestly believe that I have the ability to expand my role in this lifetime beyond of a person with mental illness and a person with a substance use disorder.



I Found Hope

by Mavy Moreno, CRSS



A few months ago I was ready to give up on life. I was both physically and mentally exhausted, and no longer wanted to keep fighting this battle with recovery. I struggled to survive each day, and would go to sleep selfishly wishing that I wouldn't wake up again. I believed that life would be better for those around me if I was no longer here. From my point of view, I no longer had a purpose in life. I had lost everything, including hope for a better tomorrow.

I clearly remember the day when I found hope again. I woke up that morning with extremely negative and dark thoughts. I struggled to convince myself that I could make it through another day. Depression and anxiety were taking over and I was quickly losing control. I went to see my mother that day and as much as I tried to hide my real emotions and make it seem that everything was ok, I broke down in front of her. I could tell that my mother felt helpless. She didn't understand what I was going through or how to help me, yet she never lost hope! She believed that I could get better and refused to let me believe otherwise.

That same day was my first time at Wellness Connections. I was welcomed with open arms from the second I walked in. The staff and peers have been there for me through the good, the bad and the ugly. It was there that I once again started to believe that I could recover and live life to its fullest. Wellness Connections is where my mom and I found HOPE.

Hope Is What We Need To Talk About

by Rosy Gutierrez, CRSS

My name is Rosa Maria Gutierrez. I am 60 years old, and in my life I have gone through a lot of experiences. I was born and raised in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. I later acquired US Citizenship through my father. Seven years ago, I made the biggest mistake of my life. I committed fraud at my workplace. I had been working at this job for over 35 years. I paid the price for it. I was in prison for two years. I then went through a halfway house. Now I am finally at home, under probation. This whole ordeal is due to an addictive personality I have. I was involved in different risky activities, which put me in a downward spiral. I eventually reached the lowest point I've ever had in my life.

I am currently being helped by a psychiatrist. I talk to my therapist every other week. She has helped me realize how I can turn my situation into an instrument to help others. My goal is to share my testimony so that I can help at least one person steer towards the right direction. I am currently taking the RSS course and I was very happy to learn that HOPE is what we need to talk about. Yes, there is hope for all of us. I'm very excited about all I have learned and that I will be able to share my knowledge with others. Remember, God is hope. God uses rescued people to rescue people.



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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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