

Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Sierra Vista Arizona, December 22, 2016



Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduates

Top row left to right: Michael Wasmund, Linda Stallard, Brett Ashbrook, Lucia Newell, Amanda Root, Paul Rago

Bottom row left to right: Britany Riddle, Anita Hancock, Marissa Delk, Christopher Hudson



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Hope

By Micael Wasmund



I do not feel as though I have had a personal experience of hope or a turning point in my life. Perhaps only small ones, but I know for a fact life is not over. For those who have triumphed over a mental illness, substance use disorder or co-occurring disorders the shift in life, even if it occurred slowly, is noticeable even over a decade. It may be harder to pinpoint, but it's certainly there.

Throughout my life I have been in and out of recovery for my physical health. When I need a surgery, that's not the solution, it simply buys me time until the next. In between medical issues I do as much as I can. I even push it a little. I've started college courses, trade schools and even some very good jobs I thoroughly enjoyed. I'm pretty sure that in elementary school they passed me out of pity.

Between and during these physical health occurrences I certainly had a lot of mental health issues. Not just from the medical problems but quite a lengthy list of other things that have happened in my life. Those tend to be put on hold because I need to be present and well and ready for the next medical procedure. I'm Michael Wasmund, and there's no cure for that. I know this isn't the answer or response you expected or even asked for but it's the truth.

Hope for a Bright New Future

By Anita Hancock



It was about this time of year exactly. I had a drinking problem. Truth be told, I was a raging alcoholic and it was affecting all aspects of my life. I had heard of a place called Westcenter in Tucson and decided to give them a call on a Sunday afternoon. I agreed to be there on Wednesday. I went there as planned even though my husband was against it, being Christmas and all. I found hope and help in great quantities. My passion for the program led me to complete the thirty-day program in fifteen days. I left on New Year's Day a new person, and I have never looked back. Westcenter saved my life and gave me hope for a bright new future.

God Has Helped Me Every Step of the Way

By Lucia Newell

I prayed for my recovery. I was addicted to a drug that had me hunting for it all over the city on a daily basis. I was going on five years of being divorced, and my family life was pretty shot. Every day I would say, "Please God, just give me one more chance". Instead of complaining about the circumstances that I was in, I accepted what I created and left it all in the Lord's hands. Then one day a friend called me and asked me to start taking care of her house. It was a big house in the country, set up in a quiet atmosphere where I could begin a recovery process. I absolutely believe in the power of prayer because God has helped me every step of the way, without wavering. He is just asking me to do as he does, and to never waver. So I began staying in my friend's house and taking care of her property.

Not many days after that, one of my best friends who dealt drugs was also taken out of my life. This was after she dared me to call SEABHS to bluff my ex-husband and son, because my Ex had instructed me to seek mental help. He told me that my son would not come to see me unless I saw a doctor. After following the instructions of my friend and setting an appointment with SEABHS, the advocates there began asking me questions about drug abuse in my life.

I finally decided to come clean with someone for the first time, and this started my road to



recovery. I decided to stop being friends with the woman who dared me to go to SEABHS in the first place, and this is another chapter of hope being fulfilled in my life. Finally, after starting college and getting rid of a few nasty friends and habits, I feel things are beginning to look up for me. It seems the more I hope and the more that I pray, things keep getting better with God's help every step of the way.

Finding Hope From Within

By Brett Ashbrook



My first sign of hope was not until I lost everything... Not until I realized that I was alive. Because I had hit rock bottom and always had an inner knowing of a divine being, "Creator" I asked why? Why was I so lost and sad in life? I realized I was at the bottom due to my own free will. I am feeling the love from the divine now, and know that I am still loved. I know I must love myself.

I felt the power from within. I know now I can do anything with my life. I listened to my heart, knowing I was blessed, and I want to share this truth with all I can. I have learned that how I viewed my life actually changed how I expected it to be. This has been very empowering and heart wrenching. I now have been on a journey to embrace and understand myself. I am learning to love all parts of "Creator", and learning that we are all one, that I'm loved, even when I don't love myself. When I keep love in balance with myself and others, I find it to be the best way to honor 'Creator', life and being in it.

I Felt Hope and Everything Changed

By Brittany Riddle



My personal experience of hope happened when I fell to my knees and cried out to God to save my life because I couldn't stop getting high even though I wanted to and was going to die if something didn't change. Shortly after I spoke to God a series of events took place that led me to be court ordered to go somewhere for at least 30 days to get sober. That place was where I met someone who had gone through similar things. I'll never forget when she told me I could and would get better if I wanted to. I felt hope and that's when everything changed. I got better and though I have a disease I am recovered.

Hope, an Intangible Force

By Linda Stallard

I believe hope (while a universal concept) is an individual experience elusive of meaning, purpose or goal. It is difficult to find and skillfully ambiguous. Thus, my interpretation of "hope" is that of an energy which drives an expectation that we will find a way through our hardship, chaos and pain.

It has only been recent that I have gained the strength and energy required for the recovery process. Actually, it has been this course which has provided me the catalyst for change. For example, learning to empower others as a Recovery Support Specialist has simultaneously empowered the self. I believe this self-empowerment motivates. Motivation prompts action. Action, in turn, leads to change and recovery. As a result, it is my expectation of recovery that enables me to look beyond any hardship, chaos or pain. There is a way....

Hope is an intangible force with very tangible results.



Recovery without Limitations

By Marissa Delk

Hope in early recovery was what others had for me. The beginning stages of my recovery seemed to be a never-ending painful fight to find Hope, let alone understand its place in my life and in myself. Once I saw that there were numerous people who held an unmeasurable amount of Hope for me to recover I was enabled then to believe that I could indeed become well again. The hope for me was that my health and wellness would return and through my own efforts I would truly live a self-directed life always striving to reach my full potential. This Hope I now carry is the difference between recovery and relapse, those beliefs in me ignited my own faith in my recovery process and it continues to do so. In my active addiction as well as living with a diagnosis of severe post-traumatic stress disorder I was unable to imagine that better days were ahead. I couldn't envision a brighter future for myself because I had lost hope that I could change and heal. My recovery has emerged from the hope



that others have had in me. I now carry in my desire and journey to help others that same hope that was so freely given to me.

Hope is recovery without limitations.

I Have Hope!

By Amanda Root



This is my most recent encounter with hope. In July of 2016, I was staring to live the life I wanted. All of my debts were paid off, and I was content. On August 1st, 2016, my life changed completely. My home of 20 years caught fire, and I lost everything I owned, including my 12 cats. I had no insurance, and figured I was ruined. I was pet sitting and had not been home at the time of the fire. When I arrived at my home, I stayed only 10

minutes before leaving. I have not been back since that life changing night!

I did still have a place to stay for the next three weeks, since I was pet sitting. I wouldn't let my mind wander over to thinking about the incident. I would redirect myself, by reciting the serenity prayer or a verse from the bible: "God will give you Beauty for Ashes". I repeated this many times a day. My friend and partner in crime (we work together doing animal rescue) Donna Graybill and her husband Wes, moved me into a mobile home on some land they owned. They are graciously providing me with a place to live rent free for a year. Donna also reached out to others to assist me, and strangers and friends furnished my home beautifully. She also started fundraising to pay the \$6000 clean up of my property, and raised \$3000 to assist me in having this done.

Then there is Mike and Lori Rutherfords, whom I pet sitting for when the incident occurred. Mike owns a company in town, and he had a worker come over with his equipment and clean up my property. I have never received a bill for this. All of these people have given me hope, they have taken all the stress away from me and allowed me to focus on this class. Which just happen to coincide with this class. This class gives me home in starting a new career, getting off disability. Starting from the ground up, I HAVE HOPE!

The Day I Found Hope in Lockup

By Christopher Hudson

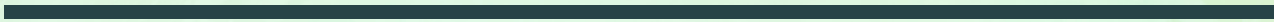
My situation begins with an afternoon in the mess hall at lunch. I was being bullied by a certain individual who disliked me because of my sexual preference. I tried my best to be cordial and respectful to him because I wanted to stay out of trouble and get incarceration time completed. Yet he continued to antagonize me.

I finally reached my boiling point with this person. I waited as he continued, then I assaulted him until he apologized. After this incident I was put into solitary confinement. It was there that I realized it hadn't been worth it and I had been completely out of line.

I prayed to God and asked for his forgiveness. It was at that time I realized that hope for my future was all I had to look forward to. It was my hope alone that allowed me to see that no one could improve my livelihood but myself. My hope for a better life is all I had to depend on.

Now I saw that life could throw me any number of curveballs. All I had was my own hope and faith to keep me from getting into more trouble. I needed that hope and faith to keep me on the right path.

Since that day, prayer and hope have been the things that have kept me from a life of violence, and optimistic of possibilities for the future.



My Personal Experience of Hope

By Paul Rago



I have struggled with mental illness all of my life, ever since I was a kid. To medicate myself, I started to drink alcohol and use drugs at the age of 13. Managing my illness was a full time job in itself and I had many issues relating to people. Keeping a job has been very difficult for me. The only reason I am here today is

because I have a very supportive mother, who has seen me through my illness. But she never had the skills or knowledge to help me manage my mental illness.

I hadn't had much hope of recovery, until I met Jackie. Jackie is a very special soul, who has gone out of her way to help me overcome my issues. She has been tough but loving, showing me an alternative to the meaningless and unfulfilled life I was living. She has shown me resources I never knew existed, such as DBT therapy and this IHRSS Institute that I am involved in currently. Without a doubt, her help has been influential in my road to recovery.

It is not easy by any means, but I am confident I can prosper in my life, and that there is finally some hope for me. Not everyone gets the help they need, and for many people with mental illness and substance uses disorders it is a sad and short life. I feel like I can help others in their recovery, as Jackie has helped me; with kindness, understanding, empathy, support, and tough love. I feel like I am more than my diagnosis, and anything is possible if I am willing to put the work into achieving my goals. This is what I want to teach others living with mental illness. Recovery is possible, but you have to work for it. It will not be easy or quick, but it is possible to be happy and productive in your life. The things I have learned thus far from the IHRSS Institute have been invaluable, and I hope that once I become a peer support specialist I can do the program justice and help foster hope for folks, and ultimately recover.

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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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