

# Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Safford, Arizona October 3, 2019



## Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduates

*Back row left to right: George Flores, Brady Good, Jill Johnson, Jamie Knight*

*Sitting left to right: Roxanne Chacon, Rebecca Neff, Crystal Mondragon*



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# Hope is Everything

Brady Good, CRSS

Hope was the first step I took in my recovery. Hope is an essential part of my recovery, as well as the foundation I stand on today. I never went out looking for it, but during a time spent in darkness and despair, I hated myself, and the world around me. I sat in a tree ready to shuffle off this mortal coil when my phone rang. I brought myself to answer the phone. My aunt was on the other end, in need of my help; why call me for anything? I remember everything so vividly, from the tears shed to the laughter we shared. I later told her the whole story, and the significant impact of her call and how it affected me. This encounter instantly made me realize hope is everything. I can pass it on to others, and it keeps me going when my mind and body wants to stop. Hope is that small voice in my head that tells me to never give up.



# Everyone Needs Hope

Jill Johnson, CRSS

Hope is compelling because it is universal. It crosses all human boundaries: age, race, class, gender, ethnicity, religious, political, or any other persuasion. Everyone needs it, and almost everyone exhibits at least some measure of hope if they have made it as far as this day.

Hope is important because hope involves the will to get there, and different paths for you to take. Life can be difficult and that should not come as a surprise to anyone. Yet, hope allows you to keep going down different roads, to see things different, and try to make things for our perfect ideal. This holds true, even when there seems like there isn't a solution. In fact, the word "hope" is in the word "faith". Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Furthermore, faith without works is dead. Meaning, if you



simply wish on something to happen, but do nothing to work toward it, then it is of no use. In order for us to fulfill our ideal of hope, we have to take action with our hope.

# Believing

Roxanne Chacon, CRSS



My name is Roxanne Chacon. I started using about seven years ago. That was the worst decision I have ever made in my life. During this time, my life began to fall apart. I lost my cars, truck, my home and most of all my family. My relationship with my kids was going downhill. I was messing everything up so much that I didn't want to be here anymore. I started thinking about this all the time. I was at my lowest and I didn't know how to pick myself back up.

I wanted to change so badly, but I was so scared to actually do it. One day I was arrested and had my rights taken away. I realized I couldn't make my own choices or see my family. That made me feel awful and angry, and I knew right there that this was enough. I detoxed and made my decision; I needed to fix my life.

Now I am a year sober and I've gotten closer to my kids, my fiancé, and family. Each day I work hard to be a better person for my family, my community, and me.

# Hope

Rebecca Neff, CRSS



My name is Becky and I will be sharing my experience of Hope. When I was 5 years old, I was taken away from my mother and stepdad. I was taken to a child care center in Las Vegas, and it was the worst experience I have ever been in. I was there for about a year and I was being abused. I prayed every single day

that passed by for someone to come save me. I harmed myself a few times, hoping to be taken to the medical room so that I wouldn't be around the person that was harming me. After a year of suffering at the child care center, my grandmother came to rescue me. Just when I began to feel happy and feel as if everything was okay, I began to hear voices. Up until now, I still haven't been diagnosed but I do continue to hear voices. However, I've learned some techniques to help me get through it. When I was 19 years old I reverted back, meaning I began to act like a 2 year old and couldn't do anything for myself. I struggled so much with self-harm. As I was going through all of this my mother became very ill and passed away, and it hit me very hard. I blamed myself, and the self-harm continued until I was 22 years old. I began counseling and found different techniques to help me with the pain I was going through. I am now 23 years old and living day-by-day with positivity, and focusing on my future and not my past. I believe I am a better person now.

# My Personal Experience of Hope

Jamie Knight, CRSS



My experience of hope is still occurring, everyday! But I now know hope. For 47 years I lived with no hope, with no regrets and with no sorrow. I was a spoke on a wheel; endlessly going around and around but never getting anywhere. They say the definition of insanity is repeating the same actions again and again, yet expecting a different outcome for each action. Clouded by drugs and alcohol (an endless cycle for 40+ years), it was easy to lie to myself. Survival was just a way of life for me. My life had no meaning, just a constant flow of motion from the cog that I was. On March 23rd 2018, I was finally bombarded with the futility of it all and I sought suicide as an escape.

There are a multitude of people that I can attribute for my recovery and experience of

hope. But let me first thank Brian and Gina, my oldest and dearest friends. They were instrumental in my recovery and gently nudged me in the direction of hope. Next, I wish to acknowledge and thank Daina, my peer-ambassador. She has been here through every step of my recovery, and is a true blessing and instrument of hope. The list starts to get long from here on out, but lastly I would like to thank my peers in my graduating class. Through their strength and determination, I have a greater belief in hope. Stephanie, Rita and Dave for your time and consideration, otherwise none of this is possible. Thank you!!

Conway Twitty said, "The only thing constant in life is change. You either change or you die!" I copied that quote down, sometime in 1990. It's taken me all these years and an attempt on my life to fully grasp the true, ulterior motive behind that quote: i.e. hope to me is the essence of change. I hope, therefore I am capable of change. I've changed and now I have a whole new meaning of hope!!!

***In this life take your lessons  
where you learn them.  
Don't leave them idle,  
know they're there to guide you.  
If you never try, you'll NEVER live;  
just coast through.***

--JK

June 2019

# Hope

Crystal Mondragon, CRSS

My name is Crystal Mondragon. I am 35 years old. My life changed when my brother became paralyzed during his senior year. I had to walk for him at his graduation because he was on life support. Three months later, he was home with us. During the end of the year, we both became addicted to crystal meth. I continued to use crystal meth for the next four years and eventually my addiction led to CPS involvement in my life. My family started to fall apart slowly, and then extremely fast. After numerous domestics, my kids were taken and given to family members for 6 months. I continued to use and my parents ended up adopting my children. 12 years later, my brother died from addiction and I was introduced to heroin. For one year I was in denial that I was addicted to another drug. This time it was the scariest, ugliest part of my life and I was scared for my life. I got married but it was all just a fantasy. Everything seemed okay, but I was really truly never happy. I needed to find myself, I needed my kids and family back in my life, and I needed to get sober.



If I hadn't gotten help, I wouldn't have all the great blessings in my life today. My life today is being able to give back and stay sober, in memory of my brother Jude Mondragon.

# If I Can Do It, You Can!

George Flores, CRSS



Hope, it has always been there. I just always thought it was always out of my reach. I remember my mother being beat so bad, I watched the swirls of blood go down the drain from my father beating her. I was about eight. That's all my life has ever been, violence and despair. You kind of get used to it. To numb out the pain I became addicted to drugs. I have been a user most of my life. It took a long time to see clearly. I have only one hand, and I was born that way. I don't make excuses for it and I bust my butt to do the best I can every day. My life was hard. I had tragedy, I had despair, I had hate, and I had anger, but I made it. I'm here now and no matter what I did in the past, it doesn't define who I am now. I don't like all of it, but it made me the man I am today. I'm 51 years old. I've been on my own since 13. It's been a long journey so far, and I made it here only through the grace of GOD. Without him I am nothing. I've come and traveled through tragedies, adversities, and just plain hate and ugliness, but through all of this I'm still here and I haven't given up. Hope is the only thing that keeps me going. I define who I am.

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## Hope

Joby De La Rosa, CRSS

My personal experience of hope was when I had the opportunity to moderate a panel (Beyond Opioids: Rural Arizona) at Any Positive Change, the first Arizona harm reduction conference. This experience played a motivating role in my recovery; I felt like I had contributed to a very special moment in history, and had made many new connections. The conversations I had on stage gave me a lot of hope - hope that I, along with all of the other folks doing radical public health work, am capable of

making a difference in a world that once felt very meaningless and bleak. I, a 22 year old with opioid use disorder and other mental illnesses, was able to team up with other folks (many of whom have also been diagnosed with mental illnesses) to educate an audience of hundreds on the lack of services available to folks who live in rural areas/folks who use stimulants, while providing information on program implementation.

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*The Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute is administered by the Workforce Development Program in the Department of Family and Community Medicine (DFCM) at the University of Arizona. The Institute is funded by Arizona Complete Health. Arizona Complete Health services are funded through a contract with the Arizona Department of Health Services/Division of Behavioral Health Services (ADHS/DBHS) and AHCCCS.*

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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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## **Make sure you get your next issue!**

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