

The Herrington Recovery

Alumni Association Quarterly



From the Desk of our President

Hello to all of our Alumni and Friends,

I hope this newsletter finds you happy, healthy, clean & sober! Unfortunately, the last number of Covid months have been harsh on many of us. Where have you struggled? Where have you

succeeded? How can we help?

There is so much truth in the saying “A relapse happens long before the first drink/drug”. What are you doing in your daily life that strengthens your recovery or leads you toward relapse? Are your behaviors today those of addiction or those of recovery? Do you even know the difference? If these questions confuse you, we want to help! Reach out.

If you are struggling in your recovery, get to a meeting and get honest. Many communities do have in-person meetings. Google your local NA/AA chapter and ask about in-person meetings. Those around you in your recovery community want to help you and remind you that you are not alone. Recovery meetings are a judgement free zone. We just want you to get well, but we can't help and support

you if you don't show up.

Are you going to meetings but still feel “on the edge”? Volunteer! Even if you don't really want to do it, get involved in some recovery service work. It will make a difference! Show up to meetings early and stay late. Find a way to get involved. Take a look at one of your recovery birthday coins, it says: Recovery-Service-Unity. Where can you increase the service and unity in your recovery?

For those of you who are strong, healthy, and happy in your recovery, we celebrate you! Look for opportunities to support the many who are especially struggling during this Covid time. Find ways to strengthen your own recovery by helping others in the program. I hope that you are pleasantly surprised at how much you will benefit from the experience.

As an alumni organization, we strive to support our members, especially the residents at the Herrington Recovery Center while they are in treatment, and as they transition to their home recovery community. How can we serve you better? Talk to, call, or email any of our board members listed on the back page. We want to hear from you. Stay safe, clean & sober out there my friends.

Blessings in Recovery,
Kristin Simons
drkjsimons1@gmail.com

Looking for an Opportunity to Give Back? Consider Our Alumni Partner Program!

The Alumni Partners program is a list of past Herrington graduates who are willing to connect with a recent Herrington graduate in their hometown and assist them in finding meetings. Many new graduates have difficulty and some anxiety finding and attending a new meeting for the first time. This is especially true for new graduates who live outside the immediate Rogers area. Please consider adding your name to this list, especially if you live far from the Oconomowoc area! This is not a commitment to sponsor. It is a willingness to meet up with a new alumni member in your area and help them find a few meetings. Remember what it felt like to go to those first few meetings where you didn't know anyone? Let's partner with the new alumni and help them get a good start after they graduate from Herrington. If you have at least a year of continuous sobriety/clean time and are willing to be an Alumni Partner, please contact Jeff Radtke from our board of directors jeff.radtke@yahoo.com



Now you can use your smartphone to donate to the HMAA using Pay Pal. Just use your smartphone to scan this QR code.



New Recovery Meeting Spaces ***Bob Olson***

I am very pleased to report that as of late summer 2021 all recovery meetings will have a new home on the RBH Oconomowoc Campus.

RBH leadership crafted a vision for a building that would house recovery meetings, provide a space for visiting families to meet with their loved ones as well as a space to house RBH's bustling research department, a chapel for continued spiritual care and housing for the RBH Foundation.

The building will feature a "Great Hall" where recovery meetings will take place with private rooms for break-outs meetings to be facilitated. A few HMAA alumni were included for design input along the way and I am very happy to say some even became major financial contributors to this project. Our recovering community can know we helped provide the action to make this vision a reality.

Visiting families can take advantage of the Ronald McDonald House Family Room while visiting our new building. RBH has partnered with them on this project and it is only the second time in the Ronald McDonald's House's history to have partnered with a behavioral health organization. Within this family room visitors will find all of the amenities a visiting family could expect. I.E. kitchen facilities, secure lockers and laundry facilities, showers, play areas for children etc.

Even with major support for financing for the building coming from friends of RBH, a major contributor was still needed. That's where the Ladish Company Foundation came into play. The Ladish Company Foundation donated a huge sum of money to bring this project to the finish line for ground breaking which occurred in early October.

We all have a lot to be grateful for and excited about.

Let's all look forward to welcoming each other to the brand new Ladish Company Foundation Center in early August 2021.



As if We Didn't Have Enough to Consider in Early Recovery... Now We Have Covid-19

- John Aschenbrenner

Continually we hear on the news and in the papers how individuals being out of work and isolated are more easily turning to alcohol and narcotics; that Covid-19 has become a huge additional stressor in our lives. That's become everyday life for individuals who were social drinkers and users, and who may not have crossed the proverbial line into addiction – that is, until Covid-19 has become an everyday word in our vocabulary. If we're following prescribed methods of avoiding and spreading the virus, we find ourselves with many new restrictions in our lives. And the Media certainly doesn't help the situation. Depending on which network we're tuned into, we don't know who to believe, which merely complicates our situation.

Continuing to work in residential treatment, I'm amazed at how residents acclimate to a situation which is so different from the time I came through treatment. Visitation is difficult or nonexistent, physical social contact with Sponsors is limited and the virtual zoom meetings are exceptional for what they afford. But they limit us in terms of expression through body language and expressions of deep compassion and empathy, so real when we're physically together.

Since Covid-19 I've come to know too many early recovering individuals, and some that have been in recovery for years, who are relapsing. Upon questioning as to what happened, too often the word "Isolation" enters the discussion. In my estimation it's the largest force leading to relapse, over and above the other triggers and situations we all had to deal with in early recovery.

What to do? Here are a few recommendations I've seen to be effective in the lives of those in early recovery:

- 1) Remember the pandemic won't last forever, and we need to hold onto those goals we set for ourselves during our treatment. Remind yourself why you've chosen Recovery, always looking forward through the windshield of the new life you've begun to reclaim and further develop for yourself, and every now and again, look in the rearview mirror, and the devastation your traveling away from. Sometimes it's therapeutic to remember the past, just so long as we don't begin to live there, and in that guilt again.
- 2) Schedule your day. Get up at a regular time, grab that meditation book on your nightstand – reading whatever the passage is for the day, setting a positive stage for what is to follow. Eat healthy and try to remain physically active. There are many resources open to you – Workout DVDs (It's great to get those serotonin's flowing again, allowing

you to feel exhausted and satisfied, long hikes on a good day, biking, or just a leisurely walk out into a Nature that had suddenly opened to us again while in treatment. Eat your regular meals at the usual time and go to bed at the usual time. Remember the schedule you had in treatment and how important that became in your recovery. Continue to be as scheduled as possible.

- 3) Set a schedule to work with your “Primary Recovery Group.” Call your sponsor every day and zoom into as many virtual meetings as you can. People have suggested to me, “But John, it’s so lonely at home.” Be safe, following precautions, but look for people you think you click with during the virtual meetings, and ask them if they might want to hike with you.
- 4) Start something new. I like to stress this a good deal. Drinking and using had taken up so much time in our lives. Now that it’s in the past, we’ve created a void, and as all of us know, voids will fill on their own unless we actively fill them with something positive. Start a hobby. I’m a collector, and years ago, after treatment, my family cringed when I told them I had found a great Web Site - eBay!” I smile at this point, as for many of us, we entered treatment with an addictive personality, and I like to still suggest that we leave treatment with that same addictive personality. What we needed to do while in treatment was to begin learning how to live life differently with that addictive personality. So be careful with whatever it is that you dive into. Initially I began working out with a passion, to the point where I had to have my hips replaced! “Addiction is addiction is addiction.” I don’t just collect coins and stamps, but rather ancient coins and artifacts. My wife still becomes frustrated at times, saying, “You have absolutely no comprehension of what balance might look like in your life!” So, then I get back on my course and keep trying.
- 5) Most importantly, be good to yourselves. When you find yourself berating yourself, and falling back into the negativity, STOP! Make those calls. Today there are even support groups you can call or connect with online. Be gentle with yourselves and those around you. Practice compassion. Remember how compassionate everyone was with you in treatment? Pass that on, get out of your head. Helping others helps us keep from berating ourselves. If you’ve gone far enough in the steps, begin to sponsor, and if you’re not ready, put yourself on those lists we create as support people to call.

Some people will suggest that the Pandemic may be the most stress-inducing and life-changing situation many of us have had to or will experience. I deeply disagree. For a moment, look in that rearview mirror. How many of us have lost friends and loved ones to the destructive forces of addiction? How many of us have come close to losing or lives, or had to be resuscitated?

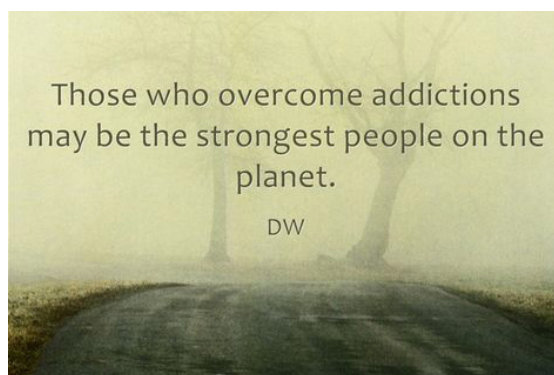
Certainly, the Pandemic is a tragic life-and-death force we live with, on a daily basis. So many people have died and are dying. I’m not minimizing any of it. But look to the staggering statistics of morbidity due to Alcoholism and Drug Addiction. We’re in Recovery, folks. We know what it has been like to struggle. We can do this! We can move forward in our lives, working on our recoveries, as well as following the guidelines to work our way through these difficult Covid-19 time. We can do this. I have no doubt in any of you!

Hi Everyone!

My name is Kayla and I’m an alcoholic and a former resident at the Herrington Recovery Center (HRC). I had the privilege of attending HRC in the winter of 2018 as well as the summer of 2019 and I can’t say enough wonderful things about HRC and my time spent there. Herrington and their amazing staff of doctors, therapists and counselors helped me truly start to heal and helped me to not only learn about my addiction but address my mental health as well; which for me, was a crucial component that I hadn’t been addressing. They helped me address past trauma, identify these things called ‘feelings’ I had heard so much about and really work on learning to love myself again. HRC provided me an incredibly safe and supportive environment to address my addiction and gave me hope for a life in recovery. Additionally, Herrington introduced me to my AA family, and I could not be more blessed to have so many incredible and wonderful people who help me daily to stay sober and live a FULL life in recovery.

It wasn’t until I fully surrendered, became honest, open minded and willing that I was able to start to see what a truly amazing life I can and do have. Today, It’s about sticking to my program, working the steps, talking to my sponsor and taking it one day at a time. Life gets good, as they say, and my life is no exception. I am in awe of this new life and so thankful to be alive and living with a heart full of hope, love and a desire to help others. Truly blessed.

Thank you! Kayla S.



Rebuilding a life in sobriety

Waking from the deep fog of another alcohol binge induced oblivion, I was startled to be in the ER with peer and colleague standing at my bedside as my admitting physician. He asked me if I had any idea what my blood alcohol was. Fighting the crushing shame, guilt, pain and panic while trying frantically to remember any of the events leading up to this moment, I recalled four days ago giving up and being done. Done living, done fighting, done with the mental and physical torture I was locked into. I was absolutely convinced that the only way out of this dark abyss was to die. I had bought multiple bottles of vodka and refilled my benzodiazepine script and got to work. I was truly convinced that my husband of 22 years and our four beautiful children would be so much better off without me. I needed to be erased.



I replied, completely defeated, no,” I had no idea, but that it had to be high”. My blood alcohol content was 0.47; a coma producing level, a seizure inducing level, a death invitation for an average drinker. I had tried to get help. In December, my family pulled me out of a cash only seedy motel I had gone to in order to drink in peace. I detoxed in a near-by city spending three days in the cardiac ICU. Discharged with a plan to go to AA, I also got on a waiting list at the Herrington House at Rogers. I stayed sober for three days. My family had taken my keys and wallet placing me on house arrest. I stole money and got cabs to buy liquor. I drank anything not nailed down in our home that had any trace of an alcohol content including all the Scope and vanilla extract. Oh, we alcoholics in the throes of our active disease are crafty, clever, devious and determined.

Life looked dandy from the outside. I put an immeasurable amount of effort into keeping a shallow facade in place. I had completed my third semester of grad school in attempt to become a nurse practitioner. This winter break found me spiraled out of control with no end in sight. I had been waking in the night to drink, drinking on my lunch break and had tremors so bad at times I could not sign my name. I worked on the Cardiac Unit in the very hospital in which I found myself waking from a potentially deadly binge. I knew better, I saw what alcohol does to us. I knew I was teasing fate every time I mixed my benzos with alcohol. I was living in a delicately balanced hell of measuring out alcohol and pills to get through a day.

I attended my first AA meeting a few weeks prior on New Year's Day 2017. A little thing I had been doing for years on the first day of each year was to engage in all the activities I wanted to have in the coming year. Spending time with my family, cooking, playing cards, read a bit, look at maps dreaming of travel, going for a walk, listen to music and this year I went to an AA meeting. I wanted to stop drinking. My first passage through the doors of AA did not make sobriety stick immediately. However, I

recognize now they all had something I wanted so desperately, Hope.

I arrived at the doors of Herrington House on February 2, 2017, Groundhog Day. It is a lot like that in residential treatment. A Groundhog Day in which we get up and keep doing things over and over until we start to move in a good orderly direction. I knew instinctively that the opportunity to put my life on pause was an incredible gift and if I was to find any salvation at all it was time for me to lay it all out on the table. I had to be completely honest no matter what the consequences or outcomes would be. I didn't realize at the time that by admitting complete defeat I had opened the door for my Higher Power to begin working in me.

My Higher Power brought me to Herrington and in turn Herrington along with the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, brought me to my Higher Power. The sheer amount of work to be done would have been paralyzing if it weren't for the 'one day at a time' mantra. Sometimes it is one hour or one moment at a time, even today. I had no idea who I was. I had lost myself long ago while keeping the facade of my house of cards intact while saturating my life with alcohol and pills. My approach to finding my way back to me was a process of elimination in order to get to the true me. I knew I didn't want to be the drunk Mom that wrote post-it notes so I could remember conversations with my kids. I didn't want to be the sneaky woman hiding alcohol in jars, drawers, nooks and crannies. Therefore, as I continued to eliminate things I knew I was not and did not want, the true me began to emerge.

After a few days the fog of alcohol and benzos lifted. During morning yoga in the Great Room with those heated floors and stunning window views of the lake framing breathtaking sunrises, my Higher Power spoke to me in Shavasana. My eyes flew open as I realized God had been with me all along, it was ME who turned my back on God. I reached out to my Higher Power and held on tight. My Higher Power is a Universal Energy that is an essential part of all living beings. By tapping into the positive energy that ebbs and flows I found gratitude, love and forgiveness.

I remember how powerful the realization was for me that I had drank/used just the right amount that day in January. Anymore and I would be dead, any less and I would still be living in the problem. The 'yets' that my HP had carried me through were astounding. No legal issues, my job was not on the line and my family was still standing by my side. I had driven under the influence with my to-go coffee mug full of vodka too many times to count. The fact that I had not maimed or killed one of my children, let alone any of the other children in my car, was a gift, in itself giving me reason to never pick up a drink again.

At HRC I found I was becoming a human being again rather than a human doing; a spiritual being having a human experience. I was not a bad person trying to become good, but a sick person trying to become well. The 12 steps of AA require action; this program of action offers me the tools I need in order live life on life's terms. I must do the work. I must own my part in situations past and present. There was so much work to be

done. That glimpse of hope I had witnessed at my first AA meeting came into full view as I listened to how others walked this same path out of the depths of the problem and into a life in the solution. I listened hard and hung on every word and suggestion about how to stay in the solution.

Rebuilding a life in sobriety required me to retrain my brain in order to shut down the super-highways of poor coping skills, hiding past traumas and avoiding feelings. I had to take back the mindset that if I was going to make it in life, I had to go it alone. Every time I go to a meeting, work with my sponsor/ sponsee, go to therapy, immerse myself in recovery, spend time connecting to my HP, or just pray I am retraining my brain to live in sobriety. I have a disease of perception. I cannot go it alone, because if I am left to my own devices, left to rely on my default setting of self-criticism and self-destruction, I am allowing my disease to take hold. I did not have a choice before I got sober and found that there is a solution. Today, I have a choice!

I have been and remain painstaking aware and deliberate about the process of rebuilding my life on a foundation of sobriety and faith. I heard it said early on that the only thing we must change upon entering sobriety is everything. No pressure there, right!? Some of that is external change, simple things like hanging Christmas lights differently, not going to the same restaurants where I drank heavily, and cosmetic changes to my living environment. The real change, I believe, is internal. A shift in how I interpret and perceive situations. I must assume kind intentions. I know now it is not me and alcohol against the world, it is me, my HP and my family against alcohol. I should not judge a gift given freely by my HP because it doesn't come in the wrappings I envisioned.

After a few 24 hours, I have learned to lean into my HP during good, smooth times just as I do during the difficult ones. If I don't live in today, I spend too much time worrying about the next part of my life without realizing I am right in the middle of what I looked forward to. For me that is healing and growth with my four kids and husband, a HP providing all I need in a given day if I only ask, an amazing fellowship of friends walking this sober path along with me, rediscovering a talent for making jewelry, and the ability to return to grad school. I finished, graduated and have recently passed my boards achieving a dream I have had since I was a small girl.

All things are possible when I embrace a solution to the problem of having the disease of alcoholism. Putting a halt to the toxic generational patterns that almost killed me has been the single most difficult thing I have done in my life and it is also the most deeply rewarding. The pain of growth that comes as a result of leaning into the darkest parts of my being brings about the miracles of change. I need only to look into the eyes of one of my children to be reassured of that. Living this sober life connected to my HP takes continued effort and action. Not occasionally or frequently, but continued, all day every day. Before Herrington and AA, I did not know there was another way and I did not have a choice as my disease had a firm hold on me. Today I have a choice and again today I choose sobriety.

Karyn

SAVE THE DATE!



Herrington McBride Sponsored 34th Annual Winter Retreat January 7, 8 & 9, 2022

Summer Picnic

Due to Covid 19...
We regrettably had to
cancel our summer
picnic.

The good news:

**June 19, 2021
is the date for next
year's picnic!
SAVE THE DATE!**



We look forward to celebrating with you
next summer!

For the Weekly Calendar:

**For a current list of online AA meetings visit: <http://aa-intergroup.org/directory.php>

**For more information on COVID-19 options from the AA Milwaukee central office visit: <https://www.aamilwaukee.com/>

AA Meetings – Rogers Hospital – Oconomowoc

Currently no in-person meetings at any Rogers Behavior Health locations due to COVID 19 Outbreak

NA Meeting-Rogers Hospital-Oconomowoc

Currently no in-person meetings at any Rogers Behavior Health locations due to COVID 19 Outbreak

AA Meetings – Rogers Hospital - West Allis

Currently no in-person meetings at any Rogers Behavior Health locations due to COVID 19 Outbreak

Al-Anon Meeting-Rogers Hospital Oconomowoc

Currently no in-person meetings at any Rogers Behavior Health locations due to COVID 19 Outbreak

Alumni interested in doing Tuesday Evening RAPs with current Herrington Residents,
please contact Kenny Blaine: kennyblaine0@gmail.com or 414-559-5529

Visit: <https://rogersbh.org/hmaa> for more information about the Herrington McBride Alumni Association



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