

# The Moving Finger

The Herrington McBride Alumni Association

Summer 2007

## Our 22nd Annual Alumni Reunion

"We will comprehend the word Serenity and we will know Peace."

By: John Ashenbrenner

We could not have hoped for a better day for our Summer Reunion – warm with a cool breeze, the generosity of our Higher Power again affording us exactly what we needed. Opening with our continental breakfast and greeting each other – the energies began flowing...the emotions of past memories, sharing our present struggles and daily reprieves from our addictions that once held us.

Beau, our 24 year old UW-Madison keynote speaker, flew in from Montana where he's fighting fires for the summer, to be with us and afford us his remarkable 4 years journey since his days in treatment. Beau was so very well received – you could have heard a pin drop in the 160 strong audience.

Our picnic found John & Mickey again flipping burgers and brats, the crowd filling the newly landscaped lawns behind Herrington House. In the early afternoon we were again hushed by Mary and Jim, our AA and

Al-Anon husband/wife team, who afforded us their story of supporting each other and strengthening their marriage through their recovery – and how they continue to live one day at a time after losing their son to the grips of our disease. There wasn't a dry eye in the audience.

The scavengers for the hunt were sent out promptly at 2 PM. This year's costuming and scavenging theme was "Super Heros and Nemesis," and upon their return the scavengers had transformed themselves into Greek Gods, Spiderman, Superman, and The Savior from Kryptonite Anonymous. Nobody ever dismisses the depths of the Addicts creativity – remembering how we needed it to survive in our past, now turned productive.

The sun began to set as we gathered on the hillside surrounding the fire pit - the furious flames of the fire kept being fed by Jim and Dominic. Doubts crossed our minds whether or not Jim and Dominic had

unresolved pyromaniac issues not addressed during their treatment, and Beau got a bit nervous, wishing he had packed his fire-fighters gear! Our Mr. Saturday Morning Live, and president of the Alumni Association, Bob Olson, opened the AA Meeting, and the message... as always in years' past was Gratitude! The fire blazed on, as each of us reflected back on our days in treatment, listening to the challenges of those honored guests presently in treatment at Herrington, and the blessings of all our recoveries – no matter how many 24 hours we've accumulated, recognizing once again that "Our attitude of gratitude remains our never ending prayer!"

At 10:30 we doused the fire, pushed the cleanup brooms, and rolled up our "Herrington McBride Alumni" banner for yet another year. It's in the back of my closet once again, but already the gears are turning, thinking about next years' theme, our next scavenger hunt list, and reminding myself that with "one day at a time" we'll again be together next year. Which one of us leaving the reunion didn't believe, down deep, that through continuing to work our recovery programs, we'll most certainly continue to comprehend the word Serenity and we'll most certainly continue to know Peace.



Left to right: Bob Olson, President of HMAA; John Ashenbrenner, Chairman of the Reunion/Picnic; Beau Stafford, Alum and Guest Speaker; Rob McCreadie, Board Member

*"Life is like riding a bicycle.  
You don't fall off  
unless you stop pedaling."*

*- Claude Pepper, US Congressman*

At first I saw God as an observer, like my judge, keeping track of things I did wrong. This way, God would know whether I merited heaven or hell when I died. He was always out there, sort of like the President. I recognized His picture when I saw it, but I didn't really know Him at all.

But later on, when I recognized my higher power better, it seemed as though life was rather like a bike ride, on a tandem bike, and I noticed God was in the back helping me pedal.

I don't know when it was that He suggested we change places, but life has not been the same since... life with my higher power, that is, making life much more exciting.

When I had control, I knew the way. It was rather boring but predictable. It was always the shortest distance between the points.

But when he took the lead, he knew delightful cuts, up mountains, and through rocky places and at breakneck speeds; it was all I could do to hang on! Even though it looked like madness, He kept saying, "Pedal, pedal!"

I worried and became anxious, asking, "Where are you taking me?" He just laughed and didn't answer, and I found myself starting to trust. I soon forgot my boring life and entered into the adventure, and when I'd say, "I'm scared," He'd lean back and touch my hand.

He took me to people with gifts that I needed; gifts of healing, acceptance and joy. They gave me their gifts to take on my journey. Our journey, that is, God's and mine.

And we were off again. He said, "Give the gifts away, they're extra baggage, too much weight." So I did, to the people we met, and I found that in giving I received, and still our burden was light.

I did not trust Him at first, in control of my life. I thought He'd wreck it. But He knew bike secrets, knew how to make it bend to take sharp corners, jump to clear places filled with rocks, fly to shorten scary passages.

And I'm learning to shut up and pedal in the strangest places, and I'm beginning to enjoy the view and the cool breeze on my face with my delightful constant companion, my higher power.

And when I'm sure I can't go on anymore, He just smiles and says, "Pedal..."

*- Author unknown*

## **Message from the President**

Hello friends,

I write this letter with a smile on my face as I recall the wonderful past weekend spent at the annual HMAA reunion picnic. It was truly a remarkable event.

I'd like to give a heartfelt thanks to all of those who helped coordinate and worked at the reunion.

Special thanks go to Bo S. our keynote speaker who traveled from Montana to address our alumni and friends.

At least 160 people listened to Bo's story and overall attendance was about 200. The AA campfire was the largest ever with about 90 people sharing their stories.

It still amazes me that so many people attend and revel in this events. With so much going on in one's life we still take the time to travel back to Herrington to renew old acquaintances and reflect on our recoveries. It truly is a testament to the impact that Herrington has had and continues to have on many lives.

For most a second breath was found at HRC.

Please enjoy our short summer and if anybody has any comments they would like to share with the HMAA board feel welcomed to contact me personally.

*Warmest regards,  
Bob Olson  
President of HMAA*

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## **Thoughts to Ponder**

*When we are stuck in our own head,  
we are alone in a very bad neighborhood.*

*Keep your mouth shut and your ears open and  
you will learn everything you need to know.*

*The following is reprinted from an interview by Paul  
Bradshaw of Rick Warren the author of the book,  
"Purpose Driven Life."*

*In happy moments, praise God  
In difficult moments, seek God  
In quiet moments, worship God  
In painful moments, trust God  
In Every moment, thank God*

## **Upcoming/Ongoing Activities & Events**

### **WINTER RETREAT**

January 4-8 2008  
Redemptorist Retreat Center  
Oconomowoc, WI

### **RAP WITH PERSONS JUST ENTERING RECOVERY**

Oconomowoc campus on Tuesdays at 6PM  
West Allis campus at various times.  
Contact us at address in this newsletter or call  
1-800-767-4411 ext 516  
*(Individuals must be pre-approved)*

### **PIZZA WITH HERRINGTON HOUSE RESIDENTS**

September 2007  
*(If interested in attending, contact a board member)*

### **12 STEP MEETINGS**

AA

Oconomowoc campus  
Monday-7PM  
Wednesday-7PM  
Friday--3PM  
Saturday-7:04AM  
Sunday-8:30AM

*(All meetings are in the HMAA meeting room)*

West Allis campus  
Sunday-6PM  
Tuesday-7:30PM  
Saturday-9AM

NA

West Allis campus  
Thursday-7PM

### **ANNUAL REUNION/PICNIC**

June 2008  
*(Information in Spring newsletter)*

## **12 Items for Your "To Do" List**

1. **X** Surrender to the fact that you are an alcoholic and/or addict—give up the fight.
2. **X** Go to 12 steps meetings regularly and listen.
3. **X** Get a sponsor and use him/her to learn to live clean and sober.
4. **X** Read the "Big Book"
5. **X** Work your 12 Step program daily.
6. **X** Read some form of meditation book or recovery literature daily to remind yourself that you are an alcoholic/addict.
7. **X** "Hang out" with clean/sober people.
8. **X** Establish a "home group." Get to know people there and get to be known.
9. **X** Sponsor new people as you chalk up clean/sober time.
10. **X** Identify and use a Higher Power of your choosing.
11. **X** Listen to and do what the oldtimers say worked for them.
12. **X** Maintain a sense of humor. Being clean and sober is fun!

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## **HMAA Board of Directors**

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# ***Out in the Real World to Live Life on Life's Terms***

by Gina Masulli

It has been nearly 3 weeks since I left the safe confines of the Herrington Recovery Center, or as we residents liked to call it, HRC. My road to recovery was anything but smooth and everything except obvious. I lacked the harsh whack on the head that others said they received from family members, employers and even the law that brought them into treatment. Instead I toyed with the idea that I might benefit from the absence of alcohol from my daily routine, just so long as it was temporary. I lollygagged in pondering about what my life would be like if I didn't or couldn't drink, however these thoughts were fleeting as I needed to get back to some real serious thinking about where I was going to meet my friends later or what shoes I would wear. It seemed obvious to other people that my behavior was quite unusual and often alarming the more intoxicated I became, but I was too cocky, drunk, or scared to take a look at it myself. Not only was I a regular drinker, I also suffered from clinical depression that had put me through some very dark times which I'm sure aided my constant self-medication, although this is the chicken and the egg argument which bears no helpful solution. It didn't matter if I drank because I was depressed or if I was depressed because I drank, what mattered was that when I got drunk, a bottle of pain pills became my knight in white shining armor. This act of self-destruction landed me in the hospital more than once and once was too much. I should probably also mention that I wasn't only hurting myself, as any alcoholic knows, my wrath of misery and self pity was reaching my friends and family as well. I was insolent, irritable, and cold and my actions were of the like. If I wasn't a crying, suicidal drunk, I was a raging, mean one that hit people and threw things. Surely, I was a tornado ripping through peoples lives.

The consequences of my drunken behavior, such as the hospital visits or fist fights with my boyfriend, might seem like clear reasons for me to consider getting help but I just was not ready to give up the drink. It wasn't until I saw the big picture that the thought of quitting became real. I realized that my mid-term grades were going to drop my

GPA considerably which might ruin my chances of being accepted to a graduate program. This was probably what pushed me into rehab at Herrington because it was my life, my future that was at stake. I thought if I didn't get it right in college this time around, my future would be awfully bleak and I would live with that regret forever. I also knew that I would continue to have unsuccessful relationships as long as my behavior carried on in this fashion. The kind of guy I was looking for wasn't going to last long in my line of fire if he already wasn't running for the hills. I was done. Done being unhappy, finished being angry and I had enough of failure. My cousin suggested a residential treatment center because it worked for her so I did my research and found the Herrington Recovery Center. Like most of the other residents, my first week was a rollercoaster of emotions with the prominent one being (hold on to your seats) anger. I didn't really know if I needed to be there but I sure as heck knew I did not want to be. Once I became comfortable with the house and my housemates, I softened up. After six weeks of their rules and routines, I came out of the house on my way to being 60 days sober.

I just recently went back to a meeting at HRC to get my 90 day chip and I must say I feel really good about that. Life has not been easy since I left Herrington and I am sure it won't always be easy in the future, but I learned tools in recovery that I can use in every difficult situation now. I feel more prepared mentally and spiritually to face life on life's terms. In the two months that I have been out, I got a new job, a new house, new friends and a new appreciation for life. I am ready. I am ready for whatever comes my way and I am eternally grateful to Herrington for giving me the opportunity to find this readiness. I also could never sufficiently express my gratitude for the friendships that I made during my stay there. They are priceless. I found so much inspiration at HRC from my counselor and the staff that it is a sacred place for me to which I can return whenever I need that serenity.

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## ***Changes to Upcoming Retreat***

Start now to prepare for attending the retreat on January 4th - 6th, 2008.

While the format will remain the same some changes will need to be made to be in compliance with the retreat center's policies. The cost of the retreat will be \$165.00 which is still a great bargain! Payment MUST accompany your registration. No longer will the option of "paying at the door" be available. In addition, the deadline for registration will be shorter.

The theme of this year's retreat will be, "PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION: A NEW WAY OF LIVING." Dr. Barry Spiegel, attending physician at Herrington House, will be the lead speaker on Friday evening.

Scholarships will again be available. The application process will be outlined in the next issue of the newsletter along with registration information.