

# The Herrington Recovery

## Alumni Association Newsletter



### *From the Desk of our President*

Hello Alumni, Friends, and  
Supporters,

I hope you are all are having a  
fantastic summer and enjoying  
all that recovery has to offer.  
Summer is my favorite season  
because of the warm weather,

the sunshine, vacations and the opportunity for cookouts  
and picnics. Once again, the Herrington McBride  
Alumni Association threw one heck of an alumni picnic  
this summer to celebrate our recovery and the place  
(Herrington) that played such a vital role in our respective  
journeys. This is one of our flagship events that we sponsor  
every year.

This year the 39th annual Alumni Picnic was held on  
Saturday, June 15th at the Rogers grounds in Oconomowoc,  
WI. It was a terrific event from start to finish and I am  
sincerely grateful for all of you that attended, for the  
supportive staff at Rogers, and for all of you that chipped  
in to help with the event. It was a wonderful display of  
our fellowship in action! We had two terrific ten-minute  
speakers, Theo and Christa, followed by our excellent  
keynote speaker Michelle V. After a great picnic lunch,  
we had two more powerful speakers, Rob M. for NA and  
Steve G. for Al-Alon. In the afternoon we enjoyed recovery  
Olympics, an ice cream truck, Trivial Pursuit, and some  
good laughs. The event culminated as it always does with a  
gratitude meeting around the campfire facilitated by Rob M.  
Next year's HMAA alumni picnic is slated for Saturday June  
21st. Mark your calendars now... you won't want to miss  
our 40th annual picnic!

As you all know, this is a program of action, and we are an  
alumni board of action. We are already planning our next  
series of events. Our next big event for alumni is the FALL  
BALL. This will be our 2nd annual FALL BALL and it will  
be held on Saturday, November 9th at the Oconomowoc  
Community Center. The event is open to all alumni,

friends, loved ones, current HRC residents, and others in  
recovery. Space is limited so we will be selling tickets in  
advance – more information on ticket sales and details  
will be communicated in the weeks to come. The FALL  
BALL will include dinner and an acoustic music set by  
Chasin' Mason (featuring our very own Billy O.). Brad  
I. from our board is leading the event. If you have any  
questions or would like to help in any way with the FALL  
BALL, please reach out to Brad or me. Hope to see you  
there!

And that is not all! The HMAA Board is also planning  
events for the current HRC residents for both Halloween  
and New Year's. And don't forget that the HMAA Winter  
Retreat is scheduled for January 3-5, 2025. The board  
also continues to sponsor Pizza Nights, RAP speakers,  
Defining the Program, Scholarships, and several other  
initiatives to promote connection and recovery. The  
board is also working on an option to send this newsletter  
out digitally via email. More information will be coming  
out on that as well.

I'd love to hear from you on what else our board can  
be doing to serve the needs of our alumni and HRC  
residents. I always welcome your feedback and ideas  
so please feel free to reach out to me using my contact  
information below. I look forward to staying connected  
with all of you and promoting the blessings of recovery.

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Now you can use your  
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## Gratitude Recognized

I wasn't always an alcoholic, but I was always an addict. I know I'll always be an addict. Spiraling out of control was not like a plane crash; it took a very long time to see the effects and it was hard to understand how I got there. Learning how to identify this, and what it means to live with it, was a big part of my recovery.



To say I wasn't surprised that I would develop liver issues is an understatement. In fact, when I went in for my appendectomy, a part of me already thought the pain had to do with my drinking. Doctors confirmed, after performing the surgery, that I had fatty liver disease and would need to stop drinking. A few years later, after multiple liver biopsies, "oscopy" procedures, additional testing, therapy, and outpatient treatment, I was lower than ever. I'd suffered crippling anxiety around my health issues. I was depressed, hallucinating, mixing/changing medications; and instead of stopping with the bottle, I had come to depend on it as my primary coping mechanism.

Despite all the support from friends and family, I still isolated myself and stuck to my own means. I stopped drinking with others long before I stopped drinking entirely. I lost my job and a longer stint without alcohol went out the window. I dedicated more time to making sure I could access the next drink and did my best to hide it from my family. I was emotionally abusing my wife and young child. My wife was pregnant with our second child, and I was driving her away. My gastroenterologist told me at the rate I was going I'd have liver failure in a year and no way to get on the transplant list.

My spiral culminated to a situation where I was running on nearly

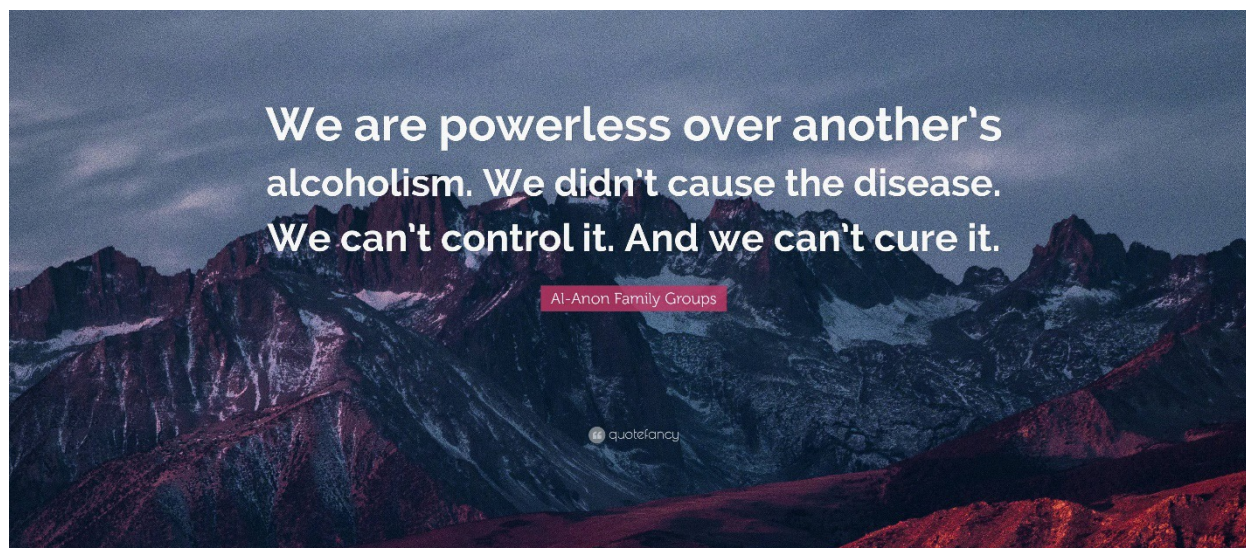
48 hours without sleep while suffering withdrawal symptoms and I blacked out. I'm not sure if I bought the bottle at that time or found it somewhere amongst the hidden stash of empties, but it was there. My wife had found it out in the open while I slept. She had spoken with my therapist. Both told me I needed to head into rehab. I finally agreed.

I dreaded my arrival at inpatient. It felt like I had failed my family, that I had failed myself. But I got there, in as many emotional and physical pieces as I thought were possible. But this wasn't the end. And once I settled in and withdrawals weren't as intense, I actually breathed a sigh of relief. All I had to do was work on myself. Focus on being better to myself and stop worrying about the damage I was causing. After about a week at inpatient, I got into Herrington and moved across the campus to start residential treatment.

I met some amazing people at Herrington. People who wanted to be better and wanted you to succeed too. There was a lot to learn about myself and I knew I wasn't alone in my struggles. Resources were there for how to move forward, beyond the problems of my past. I just needed to listen, learn, and show myself kindness. To be there in the present. And the staff helped me to develop a plan for when I returned to my family (which I did two weeks before the birth of my second child).

Herrington, the staff, and people I shared time with while there, are a big reason I'm still alive today. A reason why my (now three) daughters will grow up and get to know their father. I get to be there for them. I made some great friends too, people who I truly wish nothing but the best for. In a way, addiction led me to some of the best parts of my life, a life still going more than four years later. And while I don't wish addiction on my worst enemies, I wish a life changing experience like I had at Herrington for everyone.

~ Kyle M.





## ***Get Uncomfortable and Be Honest***

I was born January 13th, 1988, in West Allis, WI. I was raised most of my life in Mukwonago, WI. I have a younger brother and older sister. My family was very close growing up. We did family vacations, holidays, and everything a family is supposed to do. I always had friends that were around and who acted like they were part of the family. Growing

up I did a lot of hunting, fishing, and camping; I always enjoyed the outdoors. I would say I had a good childhood.

In high school I was big into cars, snowmobiles, ATVs, and the outdoors. I partied on weekends and started smoking weed often. My family was cool with drinking when I was home or around them. Drinking was accepted in our family. For the most part I did what I was supposed to and didn't get into trouble. I kept my grades up and had a lot of fun.

After high school I took a year off from school and worked full time. I started to party a few times a week. We had a cabin up north that my parents spent a lot of time at, or they traveled a lot. In their absence I threw parties at my house, the cabin, or other friends' houses. I started using drugs every day. I was taking Xanax, Adderall, Percocet, and still smoking weed daily. Despite this, I was doing well at my job. I was a maintenance technician at Maritime Savings Bank. Maritime sent me back to school to get a degree in facility maintenance.

I started going to WCTC full time for a facilities maintenance degree. I was already doing the job and was just going for the credentials. I already knew how to do the work, so I wasn't putting much effort into schooling. I also bought a house in West Allis and moved in. I started going out to bars a lot, drinking a lot, and still doing drugs every day. At this point I was still holding down my job and a relationship. Yet as we all know, things progress at a rapid pace.

I lost my job at Maritime due to them getting bought out by another bank. I started using harder drugs including heroin and crack. I secured a few jobs after that but was unable to hold them down. I was dating the same girl since high school. She started to notice that I was not doing well, and my family also started to notice. My friends started to worry about me. I was lying to everyone saying I was fine.

In a time of defeat, I decided to tell everyone about my substance use. My girlfriend and I moved back in with my parents, and I tried to stay clean from all hard drugs. During this time, we decided to get married and planned a wedding. A few days before the wedding I relapsed. I was in rough shape for the wedding. A while after the wedding my family sat me down for an intervention and decided to send me to Hazelden in Minnesota. I did not want to go and ended

up leaving early. I didn't stay clean after leaving there. That was followed by several IOPs and PHPs. My wife and I got a divorce and my life continued to spiral out of control.


I went to Herrington for the first time in 2017 after another time of defeat. I learned so much about myself and my recovery. I started to go to meetings where I saw people living life, having fun, playing volleyball, and being goofy; I started to connect with people for the first time in a while.

However, I didn't stay clean too long after treatment and started getting into trouble with the law. I received a few possession charges, theft charges, and a DUI. I started racking up the charges quickly and found myself in jail more than I wasn't. The last time I was in jail, I asked the judge to consider releasing me for treatment at Herrington; but I had no plans of going after being released. The judge agreed to release me and provided counseling about how hard treatment would be. He didn't say anything mind blowing or something I hadn't heard a million times. Yet after meeting with him something clicked. I realized I was powerless against drugs. I say it was God doing for me what I couldn't do for myself. The most important part is I made the decision to live a better life in recovery.

After I was released from jail, I went directly into Herrington for my second time, and I gave it 100%. This is when the miracles started in my life. I started taking suggestions, I got a sponsor, I made friends that I still have today, working the 12 Steps, went to 90 meetings in 90 days, and started praying to a Power greater than myself that I call God. I went through drug court smoothly and I started to surround myself with strong people in recovery. I had my family back and friends who truly supported me.

Today my life is not what I pictured it would be. I am grateful for that. I live a spiritual life in recovery. I talk to my sponsor a few times per week, my friends know what is going on in my life, my family supports me, I have a great job, I recently got married again, and my wife and I bought a house together. We push each other to be our best selves and we support each other's goals. We show up for each other and our families. Recovery has taught me so much in life and I try to carry it into my everyday activities. In living a spiritual life, I need to be free from all mood changing and mind-altering chemicals. I learned what it means to love myself, work hard, and be a good person. I have found joy in hunting, fishing, and the outdoors again. I try to carry the message of recovery and give to others what was freely given to me. I continue to put effort into growing as an individual and in my relationships. I surround myself with people who pick me up, tell me when I am messing up or wrong, and who are on the same upward path as myself. Thank you for taking time to learn about the life I have lived. If I could give advice to the newcomer: get uncomfortable, get honest with yourself and others, make the decision to do better in life and do it.

~ Jon Rudolph



We have found much of heaven  
and we have been rocketed into  
a fourth dimension of existence  
of which we had not even  
dreamed.

~Big Book, pg 25

## EDITOR'S ENTRY...

Hello! Please forgive the tardiness of this summer's newsletter – I am still adjusting to my new role as editor accompanied with a very busy and personally challenging summer!

You'll notice we are one HMAA alumni story short this quarter due to an alumni needing to withdrawal participation around publishing time. Therefore, I'm filling the pages with a recovery thought. Here's my plug: If you don't want to read my thoughts regularly, please contact me about sharing your story! We'd love to hear from alumni newcomers and old-timers as well as family and loved ones of alumni who have witnessed the impact of Herrington Center for Addiction Recovery. It has been brought to my attention that sharing recovery journeys publicly may be difficult given the strong stigma that is still attached to addiction; you may also share your story "anonymously" and without a photograph if you desire. (After all, the forty-two stories in the second half of the Big Book are anonymous!)

I had the pleasure of speaking to current Herrington House residents last Friday to "Define the (AA) Program." Some questions arose including why we introduce ourselves at AA meetings as alcoholics. Apparently, there is nothing in AA approved conference literature indicating how members should



introduce themselves. However, I explained that I introduce myself as an alcoholic because I believe proclaiming so is synonymous with Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. According to the Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions (1981), "Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be the firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built" (p. 21). I clearly remember the day when I cried out to God for help, finally admitting I had a problem with drinking. Only after I admitted complete defeat to "the mental obsession so subtly powerful that no amount of human willpower could break it" (12&12, p. 22) was I able to call Rogers and my family and start the process of receiving treatment.

By calling myself alcoholic, I "become open-minded to conviction...willing to listen...and ready to do anything which will lift the merciless obsession from [me]" (12&12, p. 24). By being honest about my problem, I am opening myself up to receiving the solution.

Alcoholism is a three-fold disease: I have an allergy of the body that sets off the phenomenon of craving when I take the first drink. I have an obsession of the mind that leaves me powerless over the first drink. And I have a disease of the spirit that breeds selfishness, fear, resentment, and hopelessness. Admitting I'm an alcoholic and in need of a solution for my three-fold disease allowed me to receive the suggestions of the AA 12-Step program introduced to me during my treatment at Herrington. And by "pick[ing] up the simple kit of spiritual tools" that the 12-Steps provides, I have experienced "deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized [my] whole attitude toward life, toward [my] fellows, and toward God's universe" (Big Book, 2001, p. 25).

Therefore, I consider myself a grateful alcoholic; without my disease and recovery journey I would not have been placed on this higher plane of existence. I "get to" work a daily Program while nurturing my relationship with my Higher Power God and giving back to others, which makes me grateful indeed.

Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. (2001). Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. New York.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. (1981). Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. New York.

## Alumni Board Member Update

Please join me in recognizing the following HMAA board members who have resigned over the past few months: **John Aschenbrenner, Jeff Radtke, and Laurie Schammel**. All three are still very much involved within the Herrington community and committed to serving those in recovery. Thank you, John, Jeff, and Laurie, for your dedicated years of service.

### Save the Date

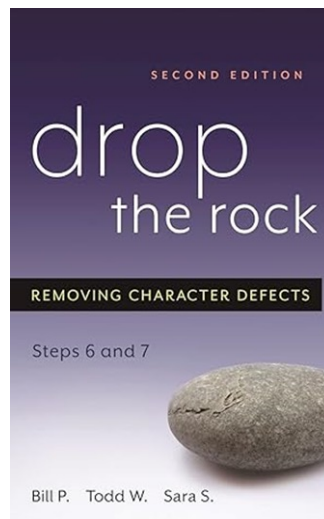
- Fall Ball - November 9, 2024
- Winter Retreat - January 3-5, 2025
- 40th Annual Picnic - June 21, 2025

## The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things  
I cannot change;  
courage to change  
the things I can;  
and wisdom to know  
the difference.

Living one day at a time;  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
accepting hardships as  
the pathway to peace;  
taking, as He did, this sinful world  
as it is, not as I would have it;  
trusting that He will make all  
things right  
if I surrender to His Will;  
that I may be reasonably happy  
in this life  
and supremely happy with Him  
forever in the next.  
Amen.

REINHOLD NIEBUHR



### Recovery Tools

Those familiar with working a Twelve Step program know that Steps 6 & 7 suggest removing character defects/shortcomings. Drop the Rock is an excellent guide at helping one begin the active, day-to-day solution to remove what blocks us from our usefulness to others, our Higher Power, and ultimately ourselves.  
~ By Hazelden Publishing.



## ***We Are Stronger Together***

*"A new life of endless possibilities can be lived if we are willing to continue our awakening through the practice of [the] Twelve Steps." - Bill W.*

### **ROGERS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AA MEETINGS**

**Ladish Center** - 34700 Valley Road, Oconomowoc, WI 53066  
Monday - 7 pm, Wednesday - 7 pm, Thursday - 6 pm, Saturday - 7:04 am, Sunday - 8:30 am & 6:00 pm

**Lincoln Center** - 2424 South 102nd Street, West Allis, WI 53227, Thursday - 7 pm

To find local **AA meetings** download Meeting Guide app: 

To find local **NA meetings** visit: <https://usa-na.org/find-na/>

To find local **Al-Anon meetings** visit: <https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/find-an-al-anon-meeting/>  
Visit the international **Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous (OIAA)** for virtual AA meetings at:  
<https://aa-intergroup.org/meetings/>

Alumni interested in participating in **RAP speaking** or **PIZZA nights** with current HRC residents please contact Kenny Blaine: [kennyblaine0@gmail.com](mailto:kennyblaine0@gmail.com) or 414-559-5529

For more information about the **Herrington McBride Alumni Association** visit: <https://rogersbh.org/hmaa>

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## ***Herrington McBride Board Members***

*Serving our Recovering Alumni & Their Friends:*

### **Elected Board Members:**

Scott Elston – President  
Brad Ingram – Vice President  
Jeff McGovern – Treasurer  
Sue Caliendo – Secretary

### **Past President Members:**

Bill Martens – Archivist  
Rob McCreddie  
John Hopkins  
Bob Olson  
Kristin Simons

### **Members:**

James Dropik  
Michael Ingrassia  
Kenny Blaine  
Jennifer Evancy  
Rick Siewert  
Billy O'Dwyer  
Paul Magel  
John Movroydis

### **Probationary Members:**

Michelle Von Dross  
Jake Esser

### **Advisors:**

*Matthias Scheuth – Director of the Rogers Foundation*

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**Your story is valuable! Alumni interested in sharing your HRC recovery journey or loved ones of alumni interested in sharing their experience, please contact the Editor. Also, please send name, telephone, address, and email changes to:**

**Michelle VonDross, Editor**  
[mlvshell0884@yahoo.com](mailto:mlvshell0884@yahoo.com)  
414-315-2003

**NOTE: We will need to remove any names from our mailing list should the newsletter be returned.**

**\*\*Automatic Donations- For anyone with automatic Bank Donations – please change address with your bank to: H.M.A.A – PO Box 456, Oconomowoc, WI 53066**