

The Herrington Recovery

Alumni Association Newsletter



From the Desk of our President

Hello Alumni, Friends, and
Supporters,

Fall is in full swing, and I hope
you're all enjoying this beautiful
time of year. I've always loved
the season—the changing colors,
football weekends, and the
anticipation of the holidays ahead.

The holidays can be tough, especially in early sobriety, but
I've found they become much more manageable when we
stay connected with friends and peers in recovery.

Another thing I love about fall is our Fall Ball event. The
3rd Annual HMAA Fall Ball was held on Saturday Nov
1st, and it was a terrific night that promoted connection
and reminded us that we can have a blast in recovery.
Approximately 180 people gathered at the Oconomowoc
Community Center to enjoy an evening of food, fellowship,
sharing, and music. This included the current residents of
HRC from both Oconomowoc and West Allis. The night
started off with a terrific BBQ dinner provided by King's
Katering. We then rolled into our program for the night –
Our very own Kenny B. shared his story and his perspectives
on what HRC meant to him. Then our very own Billy O. and
his band Chasin' Mason took the stage to get things rocking.
I was excited to see so many familiar faces—and to meet
some new ones, too. It's inspiring to see how our alumni
events continue to make an impact, bringing together both
longtime friends and people joining us for the first time.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank Brad Ingram who once
again did a fantastic job leading the Fall Ball event. I also
want to thank all the alumni who helped with setup and
cleanup. It takes a village to make an event like this happen.
Also, special thanks to Kenny B, Chasin Mason, King's
Katering, and the City of Oconomowoc for their help with
the event. Most importantly, I would like to thank all of
YOU who came to the event and helped to make it a special

night. I am so proud to be part of this amazing alumni
group.

Our next big event is the Winter Retreat which will take
place January 2nd – 4th at the Redemptorist Retreat
Center in Oconomowoc, WI. This newsletter includes a
flyer with more details on this event and instructions on
how you can reserve your spot. We also have scholarships
available for those who may need financial assistance to
attend the retreat. Please reach out to Jim Dropik who
leads the event to inquire about a scholarship. The retreat
is a great way to start the calendar year, and I hope to see
many of you there.

As always, I'd love to hear your ideas for how the board
can better serve our alumni and HRC residents. Please
feel free to reach out using the contact information below.
I look forward to staying connected and continuing to
share in the blessings of recovery with all of you.

Scott Elston, HMAA Board President
262-442-0837 • cscottelston@gmail.com





Forty Years, One Day at a Time

By: Natalie Zimmerman

When the editor of the newsletter emailed me asking if I would consider writing an article for the next issue, I was initially flattered—but then that flattery turned to confusion. What do I know about recovery that is unique or earthshaking? I will simply share some of my experiences and what has worked for me.

I have been blessed with continued sobriety since January 23, 1985. Life has continued to happen over the years, and the desire to drink to cope with life has raised its head off and on during this time. Continuing to attend AA meetings, working the program, and not taking that first drink have been the solution. What worked for me in 1985 still works in 2025.

I have sponsored many women over the years and have learned that I do not keep anyone sober. I recall how devastated I felt when the first person I sponsored relapsed—but it brought with it the realization of my powerlessness to keep anyone sober. I can chuckle now as I recall being “fired” for not being of the same educational or financial level, for going on vacation, and even for not having relapsed! I have also had to end sponsorships when I felt the person I was sponsoring was not serious about sobriety, or when I was working their program harder than they were. Our own sobriety must come first.

The Alumni Association was formed just a few months after I left inpatient treatment. I was on the initial board of the organization. As a group, we worked very hard to lay the groundwork to make the association what it is today. As I recall, we concentrated on welcoming new people to the organization, beginning with their first day as inpatients. Many of us spent countless hours on the unit, getting to know and supporting people during those early, frightening days. Many patients needed transportation from the airport to the facility, which we provided—offering a wonderful opportunity to form initial relationships that, in many instances, have lasted for years.

The first picnic took place that fall, followed soon after by the first retreat. Before those events came the weekly rap sessions with inpatients.

For many years, the newsletter mailing preparation took place at my home. Alumni gathered on Saturday mornings to label and stuff envelopes. As our numbers grew, the task became unwieldy and was eventually turned over to an automated process.

I served as editor of the newsletter for many years. I do not have a journalism background and found the job to be beyond my capability, so I felt it best for the organization that someone else take over.

I also served on the HMAA Board for many years. The organization experienced some difficult periods, but inevitably a group of alumni would step forward to get things moving again—each time making it stronger than before. It is interesting to note that the activities we viewed as crucial to recovery at the organization’s birth remain crucial today. Those activities emphasize human connection. In other words, *we can drink alone, but we cannot recover alone.*

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the 40th picnic and reunion this past June. I had looked forward to the day, but health issues prevented me from attending. Our very first picnic, 40 years ago, was a potluck held at a park somewhere on South 76th Street in Milwaukee. I remember baking a Texas sheet cake—a moment of great significance, as it was the first time since leaving inpatient treatment that I spent time in my kitchen baking. My kitchen had once been my bar, and spending time there had meant it was time for a martini.

By the way, I played all the games trying to control my drinking. I switched to Scotch because I didn’t like the taste and thought that would help me drink less—but I learned to like it. Then I switched to margaritas, thinking they would be too much work to make—but that didn’t stop me either. I eventually returned to my old “friends,” martinis and Manhattans.

How have I managed to celebrate 40 years sober? The answer lies in the second paragraph. There is an easier, softer way—and that is through the Twelve Steps, which are not only a way to live sober but also a wonderful way to live life. I learned about the program from the folks around the tables. When I was inpatient, the staff often talked about how important it was to “have a program.” I kept waiting for them to tell me what my program should be. Somehow, with the help of those who came before me, I figured it out. I am so grateful I had the willingness to listen to the old-timers and benefit from their wisdom and experience.

Yes, I have over 40 years of sobriety—but the most important day is today.



Reflections from Officer Friendly

I was born in 1934 and grew up in Milwaukee during the 1930s and 1940s. My parents didn't have much, but I always had food on the table and a roof overhead. My father never drank, and my mother only enjoyed an occasional cocktail. I never touched alcohol as a teenager.

At 19 years old, I joined the Army with a friend so we could serve together. Before shipping out to Korea, I bought a diamond in Washington and mailed it to the girl I was seeing—a strange way to propose, but it worked. I served a year in Korea—“hell”—and a year in Hawaii—“heaven”—helping form the Hawaiian National Guard. I didn't drink during those years.

When I returned home, I went to work for American Motors. During layoffs, I'd rely on my Army pay and spend my time golfing. I'd always wanted to become a police officer—though I'm not sure why I waited so long to pursue it. My first attempt came while I was still at American Motors, but I failed the physical agility test. I wasn't drinking then, but I was a smoker. Eventually, I quit smoking and began running every day with a friend. The next time I took the test, I passed with honors.

I married my first wife in 1957 and joined the police force three years later. Eventually, when I learned she was unfaithful, I was devastated. We attempted reconciliation yet were divorced in 1962. At the time I enjoyed a few cocktails with friends, but I didn't get carried away.

After a transfer to a different department and shift, I met my second wife—she was a woman I pulled over for driving without her glasses. I invited her to a regular hangout, and she took me up on it. We married in 1964 and had four children.

As the years went by, I set and achieved a personal goal. On December 31, 1984, I quit smoking for the second time. It wasn't easy, but I took it one day at a time and never picked it up again.

My second marriage was happy for a while, but eventually, things fell apart. I was working day shifts then and would come home and have a couple of drinks. Just before my daughter's wedding, I was served with divorce papers. It was a blow, though deep down I knew it was coming. We never fought - we just drifted apart. The divorce was finalized in January 1992.

After that, my drinking became problematic. Some of my relationships with my kids fell apart. I rented my own apartment, and upon returning from work, I went straight to the bottle, what I call “the lost weekend.” I drank daily, and bottles littered the apartment. When I went out, I ordered doubles. My girlfriend would still be nursing her first drink while I was already calling for another. I was always looking for the next one. A gal commented,

“You're drinking kind of heavy,” and she was right. I tried to cut back, told myself I'd only have one—but that never lasted long.

August 25, 1992, was the lowest point in my life. At 57 years old, I tried to end my life. I woke up that morning and started drinking, overwhelmed by thoughts that my life had fallen apart—two divorces behind me, nothing to hold on to, and completely alone. I had a gun but didn't want to ruin the carpet, so I decided to take every pill I could find. I called my mother and said goodbye, then called my girlfriend to do the same. My mother must have called my daughter, who called the police. By the time they arrived, I was unconscious. They told me later that if they hadn't gotten there when they did, I would have died. I woke up in the hospital and was later transferred to McBride in Wauwatosa for residential treatment.

I completed one month of treatment, made friends with “Grandpa Bill” and “Casino Dave,” and earned the nickname “Officer Friendly.” McBride helped me in so many ways: through therapy, group sessions, and the stories of others who showed me that it was possible to stop drinking. I realized I wasn't alone; others were fighting their own battles, some even harder than mine. The camaraderie was everything—we spent our days together, supporting one another.

Afterward, I attended weekly outpatient therapy and completed 30 AA meetings in 30 days, traveling around the city, even attending one for police officers. I listened to men who had been sober for 20 years and remember thinking, “How do they do it?” Now, here I am—33 years sober.

The treatment and early meetings gave me a foundation. Afterwards, I knew I had to live. I made up my mind to never drink again. Setting boundaries came naturally; I had to do that for myself. I stayed in touch with “Grandpa Bill” for lunch, and my sponsor was a lieutenant in the police department.

After becoming sober, I gave dating another try, posting ads in the paper and meeting several women along the way—but none of the connections seemed to last. On what I told myself would be my “last try,” I met the woman who became my third wife. We almost missed each other at the restaurant, but it turned out to be fate. After two years, we married, and we had a good life together for 18 years. I continued working as a police officer until retiring from the force in 1995, and I was honored several times for my service. We traveled often and spent time with my children and grandchildren—by blood and by marriage.

Sadly, my wife passed away in 2013. Now, at 90 years old, I live alone, though my daughter and son-in-law visit often. I like to sit in my study, surrounded by memorabilia from my years on the force, my family, and the friends who care about me. I have no desire to drink.

I sometimes wonder why I survived that day in 1992. I once asked a priest that question. Most of my cousins and friends are gone now, but I'm still here. For that, I thank God every day that I'm alive—33 years sober and still on duty.

HELPING

By Families Anonymous Inc.

My role as helper is not to do things for the people I am trying to help, but to be things; not to try to control and change their actions, but through understanding and awareness, to change my reactions.

I will change my ...

- negatives to **positives**
- fear to **faith**
- contempt for what they do to **respect** for the potential within them
- hostility to **understanding**
- manipulation or overprotectiveness to **release with love**, not trying to make them fit a standard or image, but giving them an opportunity to pursue their own destiny, regardless of what their choice may be

I will change my ...

- dominance to **encouragement**
- panic to **serenity**
- the inertia of despair to the **energy** of my own personal growth
- self-justification to **self-understanding**

Self-pity blocks effective action. The more I indulge in it, the more I feel that the answer to my problems is a change in others and in society, not in myself. Thus, I become a hopeless case.

Exhaustion is the result when I use my energy in mulling over the past with regret or in trying to figure ways to escape a future that has yet to arrive. Projecting an image of the future—and anxiously hovering over it for fear that it will or won't come true—uses all my energy and leaves me unable to live today. Yet living **today** is the only way to have a life.

I will have no thought for the future actions of others, neither expecting them to be better or worse as time goes on, for in such expectations I am really trying to create or control. I will love and let be.

All people are always changing. If I try to judge them, I do so only on what I **think** I know of them, failing to realize that there is much I do not know. I will give others credit for attempts at progress and for having had many victories that are unknown to me.

I, too, am always changing, and I can make that change a constructive one, if I am willing. I CAN CHANGE MYSELF. Others I can only love.

DO YOU NEED FAMILIES ANONYMOUS?

For Concerned Family Members and Friends

Ask yourself the following questions and answer them as honestly as you can. Fill in each blank with the name of the person who is causing you concern.

1. Do you lie awake worrying about ____?
2. Do you feel frustrated in your attempts to control ____?
3. Do you disapprove of ____'s lifestyle?
4. Do you argue with ____ about his or her friends?
5. Do you find it increasingly difficult to communicate with ____?
6. Does ____'s behavior have you "climbing the walls"?
7. Do you often ask, "Where have I failed?"
8. Do you feel it is necessary to protect ____ because he or she is unusually sensitive?
9. Are you trying to compensate for some family misfortune, such as divorce, death or illness?
10. Are you embarrassed about discussing your situation with a friend or relative?
11. Do you find yourself lying or covering up for ____?
12. Do you feel resentful or hostile toward ____?
13. Do you find it increasingly difficult to trust ____?
14. Do you worry about ____'s behavior affecting other members of the family?
15. Do you blame others for ____'s problems?
16. Do you blame yourself?
17. Are ____'s problems starting to undermine your marriage?
18. Do you find yourself playing detective, fearful of what you might find?
19. Do you go from place to place seeking help for ____?
20. Is concern for ____ giving you headaches, stomachaches, or heartache?

Three YES answers: This is an early-warning sign.

Four YES answers: Chances are, you could use some help.

Five or more YES answers: You are definitely in need of help.

To find out more about FA meetings (online/in person), start a group, or view/order literature, please contact:

(847) 294-5877

Website: www.FamiliesAnonymous.org

E-mail: famanon@FamiliesAnonymous.org



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

Check with your employer to see if they offer donation matching — it's an easy way to double the impact of your gift!

Herrington McBride

Sponsored

38th Annual Winter Retreat

January 2nd - 4th, 2026



Friday Registration 3:00 - 6:00 pm until Sunday Afternoon 12:30pm
(Attendees must be recovering from their Addictions)

Redemptorist Retreat Center
1800 Timber Trail Lane - Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

All Registration Forms must be Sent by Monday, December 15th, 2025

“ HOPE ”

Keynote Speaker: Jon & Sarah R.

Cost is \$280.00 which includes all meals & 2 night's lodging. Married Couple \$460.00

Scholarships are available through “The Brian Kenevan Scholarship Fund” for those who require some financial assistance to attend the Retreat. Those requesting scholarships are asked to contribute what they honestly are able to, IF POSSIBLE. Requests are confidential. Please contact Jim Dropik for all scholarship requests. We set our rate to just cover costs.

Please Note: Anyone arriving under the influence of any mood-altering substance will be asked to leave immediately – no refund will be given. Refunds will be made only up to two weeks prior to the retreat, as we have to pre-pay at the retreat center.

Contact information :
jamesdropik@sbcglobal.net
(414) 640-3055

James Dropik
@james-dropik



venmo

or

**MAKE CHECK PAYABLE
TO: HMAA**

Send directly to:

Jim Dropik
S70 W15884 Princeton Ct
Muskego, WI 53150

REGISTRATION FORM

DUE WITH PAYMENT BY MONDAY, DEC. 15, 2025

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: () _____ Email: _____

Need a 1st floor room? Yes _____

Roommate? Yes _____ Roommate's Name: _____

Willing to share a room? Yes _____ No _____

Registration Fee: \$280.00 Married Couple \$460.00

Donation to Brian Kenevan Scholarship Fund : _____

*Donations will help those needing scholarships

Total Amount of Check \$ _____

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 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

Additional Meeting Resources

Alcoholics Anonymous: Download Meeting Guide app or visit Online Intergroup of AA

<https://aa-intergroup.org/meetings>

Narcotics Anonymous: Visit <https://usa-na.org/find-na/>

Families Anonymous: Visit <https://familiesanonymous.org/>

Al-Anon: Visit <https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/find-an-al-anon-meeting>

Get Involved

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



Herrington McBride

Board Members

Serving our Recovering Alumni & Their Friends:

Elected Board Members:

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Brad Ingram – Vice President

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Matthias Scheuth – Director of the Rogers Foundation

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

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Sharing your story could inspire someone to re-write their own. HRC Alumni, recovering individuals, or family members of addicted loved ones interested in sharing their story or recovery thoughts/experiences, please contact the Editor. Also, please send name, telephone, address, and email changes to:

Michelle VonDross, Editor

mlvshell0884@yahoo.com | 414-315-2003

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

Address for Automatic Bank Donations: H.M.A.A. – PO Box 456, Oconomowoc, WI 53066