

The Herrington Recovery

Alumni Association Newsletter



From the Desk of our President

Hello Alumni, Friends, and
Supporters,

I hope you are all enjoying the summer. I am about to head out on a family vacation. My extended family has a beach house rented in Isle of Palm, SC and I am looking forward to some family connection

and relaxation. It's pretty cool when my extended family gets together because four of us are in active recovery - my dad, my sister, my oldest daughter, and me. We can break into an AA meeting right there at the dinner table. 😊

Speaking of summer, I wanted to do a quick recap of our 41st annual Alumni Summer Picnic which was held on Saturday 20th at the Roger's Oconomowoc campus. We had a beautiful day and a beautiful event - approximately 230 people joined us for a great day of fellowship, sharing, and connection. The emotional highlight for me was the HMAA Board giving out honorariums in memory of two special HMAA alumni that we lost in 2026 - Jeff Radtke and Dillon Dropik. Jeff's wife Lisa accepted the honorarium (she is now a lifetime member of the HMAA) and gave a heartfelt talk about how much the HMAA meant to Jeff. Our very own Jim Dropik and his wife Marilyn spoke as well. They shared their own recovery journeys and also reflected on the loss of their son, Dillon. All of the talks were very impactful and touching, and I would like to thank Jim, Marilyn, and Lisa for having the courage to share with us. Pete Jones also did a great job sharing his early recovery story with us. In addition, we had a terrific lunch provided by Rogers. We played games, we enjoyed each other's company, and we shared laughs. As always, the day ended with a campfire open AA meeting on gratitude. Rob McCreadie led the meeting, and it was one of our largest campfire turnouts ever! I left the event feeling exhausted but so emotionally and spiritually fulfilled. My heartfelt thank you to all of the board members, alumni, residents, friends, and family that joined us. I also want to give a special shout out to all the

folks that helped out with planning, set-up, clean-up, food service, etc. It takes a village to pull off an event like this, and the demonstration of service was on full display. I am already looking forward to next year.

Our next big HMAA sponsored event is the **FALL BALL**, which will be held on **Saturday, November 7th** at the Oconomowoc Community Center. This will be an evening of BBQ, live music, and fellowship. We will have a speaker and once again Chasin' Mason will be providing the musical entertainment. Tickets for the event will be \$20 and will go on sale as we get closer to the event. Please be on the lookout for more details. Tickets will be limited, so please act quickly when they go on sale. Please reach out to Brad Ingram or me with any questions. Hope to see you there.

Finally, I would like to share some RISE ABOVE podcasts that I did recently in conjunction with Roger's Behavioral Health. The first podcast is on my own recovery journey, and the second is on the Herrington McBride Alumni Association. Please give them a listen and share them with whoever might need them. Also, here are many other outstanding Podcasts that are part of this Rise Above series. I'd encourage you to check them out.

<https://share.transistor.fm/s/53ef7eab>

I'd love to hear your ideas on how the HMAA 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 the blessings of recovery with all of you.

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

Save the Date
5TH ANNUAL FALL BALL
Saturday, November 7, 2026
39TH ANNUAL WINTER RETREAT
January 8-10th, 2027



Redemption By Eric E



18 months sober

Where do I even begin with this? I can't speak of a troubled childhood, bad parents, rough living conditions, or any of that. I have a wonderful family and was afforded luxuries that so many others weren't. I actually remember spending nights as a teenager praying to God that I wouldn't become connected or addicted to drugs and alcohol. I didn't grow up with parents or extended family consuming copious amounts of alcohol, and drugs weren't even in the picture. Yet, I felt compelled to pray for a freedom that I hadn't even begun to understand. Perhaps that was some foreshadowing. Come to think of it, there are so many events that could have led to the foretelling of my impending alcoholism, but I never took notice.

My addiction to alcohol came with little fanfare or some monumental event. Rather, it came over time and was a very "slow burn." However, once that fire started smoldering, it turned into a full-fledged inferno. I was calling in sick to work while still under the influence from the night before. I skipped family events to hide my addiction and to make sure I was somewhere near a gas station, liquor store, grocery store, or my hidden stash, avoiding yet another 10–20-minute disappearance from a birthday party, family dinner, or night at the movies. I could speak of all the lies, deceit, selfishness, and consumption for pages and pages. However, I must speak of

the life after alcohol and benzos—a life that has filled my soul with purpose and clarity.

I went to inpatient treatment three times at Rogers in Oconomowoc (2015, 2018, and 2020), and each and every time, a man came to visit me there. Each time, this man tried to compel me to seek additional treatment after inpatient at the Herrington Recovery Center on the same campus. Each time, I thanked him for his care and concern (at least, I hope I did), and each time, I told him something like, "Thank you, but I will get it right this time."

I was wrong. Plain and simple.

I thought that I had all the tools needed to succeed on my own—AA, therapy, lessons in PHP/IOP, family, friends, and, most of all, the self-will to get over this cunning, baffling, and powerful liquid.

Then, after my 2020 stint in inpatient, after all the warnings about my liver, my career, and my broken family...I found myself, once again, under the weight of an endless supply of alcohol. I failed once again, and this time, I did more hurt than I could have ever believed was possible.

How could a man with a soft heart, a man who cries at nearly every movie, a man who once had a loving family of four kids, a caring and supportive wife, a home he owned, and a prosperous, budding career throw ALL of it away while also hurting every single person in his family and circle of friends with words and actions that were unconscionable?

You know the answer to that question... Alcohol. Plain and simple. The cunning, baffling, powerful alcohol.

A liquid nearly brought me to my end...a bottle of booze! A substance without a heartbeat, soul, or mouth. It led me to my near end, and I tried to make it my end, as I believed it would either be a slow and miserable death, or I could end it "quickly" and skip all the other pain and suffering.

That was February 4, 2023, in a bright, well-maintained,

wonderful two-bedroom apartment next to my cat. Yet, all I could see was darkness and isolation.

God, however, had a much bigger plan for me. I just refused to listen.

The events that transpired that day are for another story, but needless to say, God won that cold Saturday night.

On February 5, 2023, I was driven to the Rogers inpatient unit for a fourth time, but I didn't last long there, as I was transferred to the local hospital, where I spent three days in the ICU due to alcohol and drug withdrawal.

It was during this time that I wasn't visited by the same man who had come to see me the other three times. This time, I had to call that man, Bob O., and make him a promise: I **WOULD** be at Herrington the next morning, and I **WOULD** commit to the program.

You see, I realized that I **NEEDED** to do something different, just as he already knew since we met. I **NEEDED** to get out of Eric's way and get my feet on the path God was laying right in front of me.

While a resident at Herrington, I started finding myself again. I healed through groups, through my therapist, and through the group of men and women who were living together while going through the same things I was. I broke through self-imposed barriers and continuously turned my next action and decision over to God instead of myself.

Early on, I made a decision to try to find a blessing each day. But the beautiful thing was that I didn't have to look far or hard. The blessings came freely and in multitudes! All it took was looking for them instead of looking for all the things I didn't have or all the things others had. I just needed to look within, and I found that I was blessed beyond my wildest dreams.

I still have the "Daily Blessing" list I made while a resident there. Herrington was so life-changing during those 32 days that I decided to make a career change and started working at HRC in Oconomowoc soon after departing my residency.

I needed—absolutely needed—to make recovery number one in every aspect of my life. I needed to surround myself in it and rebuild my life at 45 years old.

It was not easy. It was not without pain and sacrifice. But now, the results and benefits can't even be counted. Each new day in recovery seems to multiply the benefits of the last. It is better than compounding interest. I recently heard, "Success isn't made in a microwave," and it broke me down into tears because it is so true!

I went from thinking that three days in inpatient would magically make me a "recovered" alcoholic to realizing that this disease, this affliction, this life-ending habit, needed time and effort. I will never be fully "recovered." I will forever be in maintenance mode...and trust me, that is more rewarding than being cleared of the disease.

With time, consistency (something none of us could ever really

comprehend), and God (also someone that some of us still don't understand—and that is OKAY!), I am winning. Truly, I am winning one of the hardest battles I have ever fought... every. single. day!

That is more rewarding than anything material, more profound than a paycheck, and more fulfilling than love from another person. No matter what happens during the day, my greatest success is going to bed alcohol-free and ready to face whatever may come tomorrow.

Every single day, no matter how many "losses" I experience... God and I win the big one. Every. Single. Day.

Had I succeeded in my "mission" over 3.5 years ago, I would not know all the wondrous and beautiful people, events, and places God still had in store for me.

Think of that...I spent 18 years under the thumb of alcohol, and now, in 3.5 years, I have lived a new and beautiful life. I have met more people than I could have imagined, and I have been to places I had never been before. I am no longer with Rogers, but those nearly three years provided the foundation I needed to prosper in this new life.

God has given me more than I ever believed I deserved after all the messes I created. Through working the steps, putting my life into the care and will of God, and staying connected with those who still suffer...ALL of the Ninth Step promises have—and are—coming true. Most of my broken relationships have been repaired, and those that haven't, I am ready when they are.

No matter where you are, no matter how far down you think you have gone, no matter what...life is waiting for you. Everything you want is on the other side of fear, and fear...it is a liar.

I promise you this. I know this. And I am living this...every single day.

Break your chains. Live loud and free. Embrace your Higher Power.

I will be there for you, cheering you on, and I can't wait for you to live your new life!

With love for you, I will pray that God blesses you on this new path of hard-fought successes.



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!



Pause, Pray, Proceed

By: Rhea K.

What It Was Like:

I grew up in an alcoholic home. My dad was a functioning alcoholic until he wasn't; he died of our disease 15 years ago at age 53. As the oldest daughter of six (five girls, one boy), I was parentified from a very early age. My parents gave us a strict Catholic upbringing, and Mom felt strongly that she needed to homeschool. I went to a private preschool, was homeschooled from first grade through 10th grade, and then went to a public high school for my junior and senior years.

During my childhood and adolescence, Mom was always either pregnant or caring for a baby or toddler, so it was essentially up to me to raise the older children and teach myself out of textbooks. I was an inquisitive kid, and I read every book in the house, including our encyclopedia set (this was the early '90s). Growing up, I was painfully shy, insecure, obsessed with what others thought of me, and fixated on the illusion of "perfection"—grades, extracurriculars, etc. I was the golden child/family hero and the one who managed the family's emotions.

The messages I received growing up were that 97% results were not good enough, perfection was expected, and it was my responsibility to always suppress my own emotions, wants, and needs for others. We were expected to be "productive" every hour of the day. I still have difficulties taking time for self-care and have a tendency to overextend myself.

As early as six years old, I felt "different" and "apart from," but finally going to a "real" high school emphasized just how big the gap was between myself and my peers. I was desperate to fit in.

I was introduced to alcohol by older friends/a boyfriend at age 16. From that very first sip, I felt warm, pretty, funny, likable, and outgoing—everything I longed to be. There wasn't much to do in my small Wisconsin town, so high school kids would drink at bonfires every couple of weekends, but I was always on the lookout for parties where alcohol was either supplied or accepted. I would have been drinking every weekend if I could.

I had been a dedicated dance student, starting at age two, but at this point, I started skipping ballet classes and rehearsals for the dance company I had been invited to join.

I was accepted into UW-Madison on a full scholarship for dance, but very quickly, my drinking became a daily habit (except Tuesdays, my one night at the library/studio to get everything done). I can still remember the bar specials on and around State Street for each night of the week.

Ballet/modern dance classes at 8 a.m. while still drunk/hungover got old really fast, so, like any good alcoholic, my solution was to switch majors, despite my dance professors urging me to stay or declare a double major. I had been on the dance team in high school, but made the decision to walk out of tryouts for the UW Dance Team because I'd rather spend my Saturday mornings on Breeze Street, hours before the actual game itself, taking three-story beer bongs.

I somehow graduated with a Psychology degree in four years. I put off grad school and married the college boyfriend because I wanted stability and a family. It was probably the first of my major fear-based decisions. I was afraid to be alone, and it took 41 years to actually be okay with myself and by myself—to prove that I could provide my own stability and take care of myself and my kids without a man/partner.

We drank every night during our marriage. He would suggest we cut back, but my solution to that was just to hide bagged alcohol in the closet, bathroom, kids' room, spare wheel well of my SUV, etc.

We had two sons, and I was hit with postpartum depression after each of them. I didn't know how to ask for help. My husband neither ever noticed my struggle, or he never cared. I continued to do everything the hard way (exclusively breastfed, cloth diapers, crunchy mom, etc.) and tried to be the best of everything to everyone but myself.

Unfortunately, the only way I knew how to cope with the crippling anxiety was to stay buzzed most of the day. I was drinking at work, drinking at home, keeping alcohol in my car, and driving with my kids. Eventually, my husband called the police, who came to my home, and I was humiliated enough to make some kind of change.

I started with outpatient therapy in 2018, which quickly progressed to IOP, then PHP—all of which I did take very seriously. I showed up and faithfully did the work but then would come home at the end of the day and everything was expected to be "normal" family life.

I couldn't cope with doing the deep emotional housecleaning for eight hours and then coming home to a 3-year-old, a 1-year-old, and an emotionally absent spouse. I started drinking after treatment and then during sessions (I used my potty-training son's bagged urine to pass all my tests) and was eventually confronted by staff as I stumbled out of my classroom at the end of the day, unable to form a complete sentence.

I finally was hospitalized at Rogers, and fortunately, a bed at HRC opened up within days. I spent three weeks in residential care. I finally could breathe and focus on myself. I was heartbroken to be away from my young sons. I was still breastfeeding at the time and continued to pump for my son while at Herrington, but I knew I was where I needed to be.

I found a sponsor, attended AA meetings every day, and immersed myself in recovery. My insurance ran out after 12 days, and I was terrified to go back home, so I entered sober living at SALS/WisHope for the next six months. I finally felt like the Rhea I was supposed to be and stronger every day.

After moving back home, I tried to make my marriage work, but things deteriorated quickly, and I filed for divorce after being back home for a month. The day after I filed, my soon-to-be ex-husband began bringing alcohol back into the house and leaving it at home with me and the kids while he went to work. I quickly got my own apartment and moved out three weeks before the COVID lockdown. Between the divorce, lockdown, quarantine, and co-parenting with an individual hellbent on sabotaging my recovery, my emotional sobriety deteriorated, and I started drinking again.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a progressive disease—between 2020 and 2025, I ended up with two DUIs, a jail sentence/house arrest, an interlock, supervised placement with my kids, court-ordered breathalyzing four times a day for my ex-husband, WCS monitoring my sobriety, and three tries at IOP (virtual and in-person).

I was miserable. I had extremely limited time with my kids, and I was still drinking around the breathalyzer. I had my alcohol portioned throughout the day just enough so that I could blow clean four times a day—which, with my BMI, was less than two drinks at a time. I wasn't even getting a buzz except for overnight, when I could slam a small bottle after my 9 p.m. test and still blow clean in the morning at 7 a.m.

This was me “managing” my drinking. Surprise—it didn't work.

Every three months or so, I would get the “eff-its,” go on a two-week bender, and have to start over. I was lying to my therapist, my lawyer, my family, my kids, my boyfriend, etc., and living in a constant state of fear, which compelled me to maintain my drinking even under the ridiculous circumstances I had backed myself into, just to feel five minutes of relief.

What Happened:

I finally was able to string enough clean tests together for the GAL to consider unsupervised placement when my ex hit me with a petition for a 16-panel hair follicle test. My lawyer and I were able to get alcohol excluded due to my extensive breathalyzer schedule, and I passed.

It was at this point that I was granted the gift of desperation. Up to now, I would wake up in the morning determined not to drink that day, and I would end up at the liquor store by 11 a.m., not wanting to be there with my whole heart.

I remember the moment I surrendered. I work from home and was sitting in my home office, utterly defeated, with my forehead on my keyboard wrist rest. I had my first real conversation with my Higher Power, which went something like this:

“Please, please help me get through the next 10 minutes, and I

will work this program to the best of my ability. I will go to any lengths necessary.”

I started going back to meetings regularly. My sponsor found me, and we began step work immediately. I did my 90 in 90, was “voluntold” to be the new secretary of my Friday women's meeting, and accepted service positions at other meetings as well.

After a few days/weeks, my obsession was lifted, and I made a deal with myself that any time I had even a passing thought of going to a meeting, I would find one on the app and go. My relationship with my HP blossomed into an integral part of my life.

What It Is Like Now:

I am filled with gratitude.

I am more comfortable with myself than I have ever been. I discovered my sense of agency. I don't live in that constant state of fear and helplessness. I'm willing and eager to try new thoughts and behaviors that are suggested to me. I can listen to criticism without becoming defensive. My perspective has shifted dramatically.

I have found my circle of women (whom I affectionately refer to as my “CoWs”), and I am able to help others who are going through situations similar to what I have experienced. I have my kids back, my interlock is out, and I was able to cancel my SR-22 insurance last Monday! I started my MBA at the U of Illinois. My interactions with my ex-husband have mellowed, and I have been able to set boundaries for respectful communication.

I continue to do all of the things I need to do to ensure my daily reprieve. Pause, Pray, Proceed has become my way of life. I speak to my HP every day, throughout the day, and ask for help and guidance with whatever situation I find myself in that is even mildly uncomfortable or uncertain.

I have learned how to ask for and accept help, and I experience the unconditional love of my HP and my friends in AA on a daily basis.

My life is not without its struggles, but the situations that used to paralyze me and send me into a spiral are now things I can discuss with my sponsor, my friends, and my HP and ask for help.

I'm learning more every day and maintaining the level of program involvement that has served me thus far. I have service commitments at multiple meetings and attend at least three times a week. I am actively working steps with my sponsor and reaching out to sponsor other women.

I have faith that everything will turn out okay. I'm no longer on my own against the world, but an active and joyful participant in life.

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

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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:

Christa Bando, Editor

christa.bando@gmail.com | 414.807.6645

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