

# Workforce Development News

*Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute*

*Sierra Vista, Arizona September 24, 2015*



## Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduates

Back Row left to right:

Marybeth Cox, Scott Matthews, Sam Klein, Deanna Degirolamo, Efrain Pinedo, Loraine Mulia

Front Row left to right:

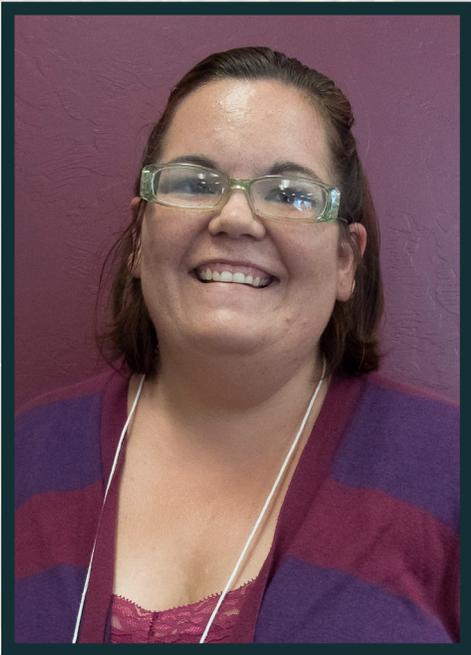
Meghann Moore, Ashley Jones, Jennifer Cardenas, Sarah Henderson, Sherri Skinner, Daina Hakes



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## Hope and Recovery

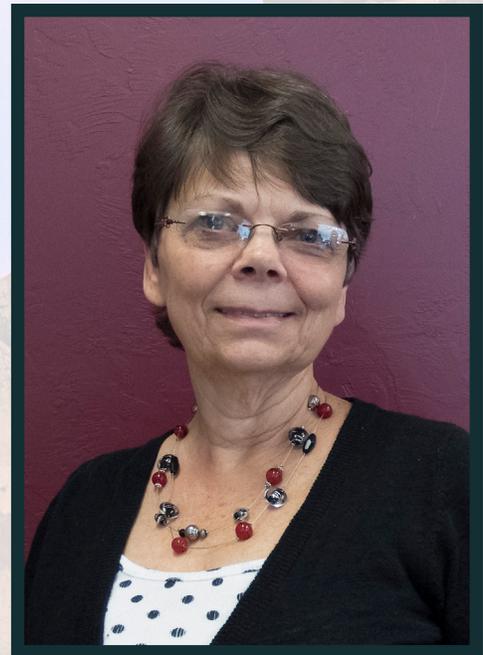
Jennifer Cardenas

My personal experience of hope was actually very recent. I didn't have much hope for my recovery until my children came home from foster care in March. Only then did I feel that I was truly able to heal and actually start my recovery. While my children were in foster care, I felt lost, like one of my limbs was missing. When they came home, I felt like my heart and my body and mental health could finally start to heal. From that moment on, I started to feel differently about myself. I have started to love myself and my self-esteem has slowly risen. I definitely feel I can be an effective Recovery Support Specialist, because my experiences make me who I am. I may have been diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder, but I am NOT my diagnosis.

## Someday is Really Today

Daina Hakes

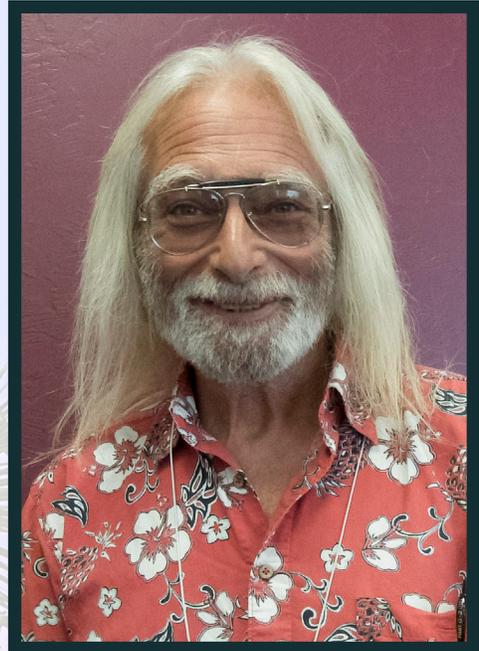
What does hope mean to me? It means getting up every day when you would rather stay in bed. It was like that for me for years... the black cloud over my head and wanting to stay in bed. After years I experienced a crisis that left me wondering whether it was really worth it or not and at that point I made a decision that it was worth it... the pain, heartache, and all. For me, Hope is believing in something greater than myself and giving control over to the one I call God. It is future driven, but also the living in the moment, knowing that SOMEDAY is really TODAY. I have given control to Him. Every day I stay on my road to recovery by constantly trusting and hoping in someone greater than me. In addition, I look for evidence in the small things in life. In the giving thanks and looking for the positive. Hope is the source of healing!!



# Looking Forward with Hope

Sam Klein

This R.S.S. training course has given me a powerful experience of hope. I feel it has been a turning point in my life. I was naive about the prospect of recovery from what western medicine has labeled Bi-polar Disorder. Until I was homeless, hopeless, and penniless. I saw myself as a healthy spiritual person in conflict with a highly dysfunctional society. However, I did lose my family, my business, my music and photography equipment and it sank in that I was having a problem here! It's been a long, hard road to get to a place where I felt worthy to take this class. I would like to thank all of the people and agencies that have been and still are my supports. As of today, I'm only halfway through this course and I feel transformed. I feel worthy. I feel empowered to be the best me I can envision. This class has filled me with hope in attaining my dreams. Most of all, this course has provided me with tools that I can use in my journey and tools I can use in support of another's recovery. I look forward with hope, confident that what I've learned here will empower me to lead a richer, fuller and more productive life in my community.



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# Recovery is Possible

Deanna Degirolamo



What hope means to me in my recovery is that it is a small prayer for a person who feels helpless. In everyone's journey in life, they will encounter a point of confusion and their life may feel out of control. In my experience, hope is never-ending. Without the support of my family, friends, and professionals, I wouldn't be where I am today. I remember a point in my life where I felt lost and hopeless. I thought I was never going to get better. I remember my family and friends saying they had hope for me. They knew that I could get better. In return, this gave me motivation and determination. I believe that without someone telling you they believe in you, you may lack confidence. I now understand that recovery is possible for anyone who encounters substance use or serious mental illnesses. With a little faith, hope, and friendship, I know that I can make it possible.

# Hope, Prayer and Faith in God

Cynthia Jones

After a devastating end to a fifteen year marriage hope was all I had to believe in. I didn't understand the true meaning of a solution until I created a problem that devastated my family. I thought I was missing affection for so many years. I had given my all to my husband, mother, sister, brother, children, church family. I remember when it came to my needs they were always pushed to the side. One morning I woke up to no feelings, I felt empty and done. I remember all those years of just needing a hug or a kiss goodnight. It was all I sought. I remember just walking out on everything and for the next five years I created a life of trouble, drugs, and loneliness.

The only hope I had left was God, but during my rebellion I decided my personal relationship was enough. All signs told me different, that I still had purpose and God would use it even from a jail cell. I was now 3 years into my mess and my husband was divorcing me. He had given up, my mother had died and my life was empty. How could I give up thinking I was missing something? I was too ashamed to admit I was using, but you could see it in my actions, attitude and physical appearance. 4 years after my marriage of 10 years I remarried and I gave birth to a daughter to the same man, but the problems still existed. I delivered my daughter knowing I had a warrant for my arrest from an incident that happen three years prior. I had realized I needed love and support to make it and at this point my support was no longer around.

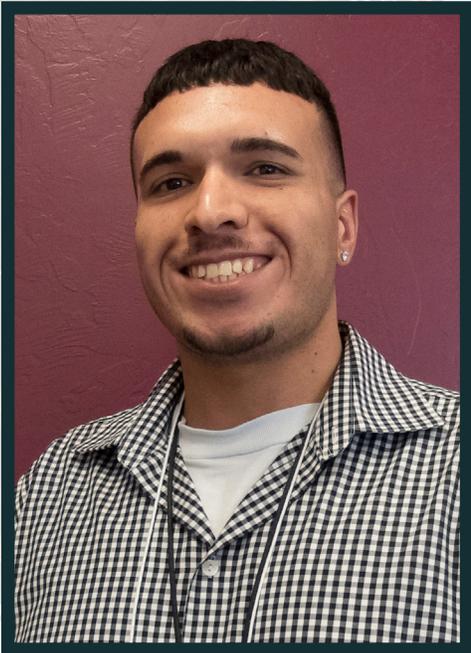
Christmas Eve the year before our 15 year anniversary he did exactly what I had expected. Knowing I had a warrant he filed divorce three months prior and left me with a baby and no where to go. I owned up to my faults but never seeing drugs being the cause of my failure until a year on the streets. I was arrested and my baby was put into the foster care system.

My hope began when I was incarcerated for 11 days and from that moment sobriety was the only option, cause now the fight for my baby was at stake. I didn't own up to the reasons why they took her until I was sober enough to realize this was real. I was alone and only had hope, prayer and faith in God.

My first action was knowing that all I had was hope. My second was acting out who I was sober and what I was really fighting for: my child; my respect; and my freedom. I am proud to say this has lead me to many painful awakenings, but as the months went by my knowledge grew stronger and my sobriety has now taken over and I am now the person I want to be. After a 9 month battle I walked out of the courts with high honors from the judge and my child is now in my care. I am no longer on the streets. I have home of our own and strong support team. My children and I are all reunited. Hope was all I had left and I believed and people believed in me and this is why my life is turning back around for the good.

# Enjoy Life Every Single Day

Efrain M. Pinedo



My personal experience of Hope came when I first began recovery. After using drugs for two years, I had started to believe that there was no hope for me. Despite all the destruction I had caused, I managed to get back on my two feet with the help of others. I realized that recovery was possible. The first couple of months was hard, since all I knew and lived was drugs, but by the grace of God, I was able to start my journey in recovery. Since then, I've learned so much in recovery and what it has to offer me. I learned how to become a responsible and productive member of society. I learned how to live on life's terms. I learned how to stay clean. And most importantly, I learned how to forgive myself for my past. The past that had me thinking that I was worthless and that I did not belong in this world. The moment that God showed me that recovery was available to me was the day that I saw and felt Hope standing right in front of me. As I continue on this journey, I get reminded daily of how much I matter in this world. I get to enjoy life every single day knowing that I'm clean and healthy. Today, I get to live life. With much gratitude, this is my own experience of Hope.

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## The Wellspring of Hope

Tim Connolly

For me, hope is deeply connected to acceptance. I build hope by accepting the things I can't control, which means moving my focus from those things. I am then free to focus on acceptance of the things I can control and my ability to take positive action in these areas. Changing my focus promotes hope by allowing me to see my own progress. Seeing and focusing on my progress builds trust in myself. This is the wellspring of hope for me today.

# Planting the Seed of Hope in Recovery

Marybeth Cox



Hope is a word that owns its definition yet its meaning is unique to every individual on different levels. A seed of hope is the beginning of every good thing in our lives. Hope gives birth to overcoming life. It always believes for the best, even in the face of the worst circumstances. For believers in recovery, hope is much more than a wish, yearning or a positive outlook. It is based on the factual knowledge that the possibility of recovery for anyone with a mental illness or a substance disorder is 100%. It does not deny the present darkness, but it reminds us that dawn is coming.

What do we do when we have “lost all hope?” There are no hopeless situations, only people who are hopeless about them. Without hope nothing is possible. So why would anyone hinder hope in someone when it could be the healing turning point in their recovery? Why do we let doctors tell us we have come as far as possible and this is it for us? Why do we let stigmas overrule our own thought process and impede us from learning how to have the best life possible?

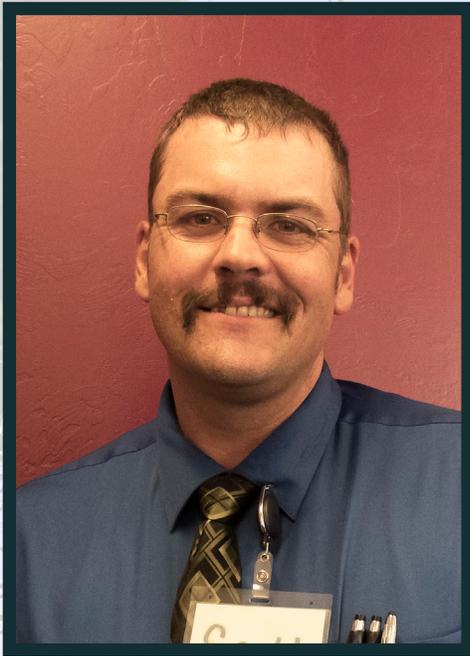
People use the word hope daily. “I hope I make it to work on time,” or “I hope my football team wins tomorrow.” It is more conceivable to use this word when speaking of our own healing process because at least we play a part in that. Unlike the wishful hope we place on everyday occurrences that we have little to no control over. Hope provides human beings with a sense of destination, and the determination to get there.

People who score highly on the “hope scale,” tend to be more successful at achieving their goals and it contributes to greater levels of self-esteem, and well-being. Self-esteem and well-being can be considered two very important factors when on the road to recovery. So is there ever really such thing as false hope? I truly don’t believe there is. The human spirit is strong and it seems to run forever on a morsel of hope. Without it you have nothing. With it nothing else matters.

“Everything that is done in the world is done by the hopeful.” -Martin Luther King Jr.

# Hopes and Dreams

Scott Matthews



There are things in the world that create hope and invoke inspiration for many. The idea of hope was foreign to me for many years except for my selfish desires. My personal ideals had to be modified to restore any sense of hope for a productive and rewarding future. Once I reestablished hope within myself, ambitions followed and then actions to fulfill my goals.

## **My current immediate goals are as follows:**

- To complete the RSS institute course I'm attending.
- To utilize the knowledge and skills learned in day to day life.
- To further my education within the Recovery Field.
- To establish employment.

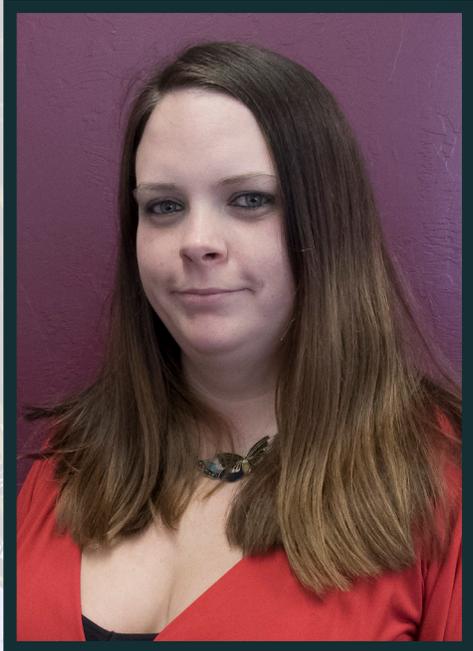
## **My extended goals are currently as followed- but not limited to:**

- To continue with my education.
- To find a healthy and fulfilling relationship with my soul mate.
- To continue to be a productive member of the community.
- To fulfill my role as a son , a father and a friend to the best of my ability.

The goals listed above are a few of my hopes and dreams and they are only achievable with dedication, motivation, morals, virtues, beliefs and love. I can turn the hopes of myself and hopes of others for me with the discipline to create goodness and the ability to do the next right thing.

# Seeing the Light

Meghann Moore



My own personal hope started when I went to rehab. I was not aware of what was about to happen to me. I went in for a chance of recovering from my own personal hell. I only went to rehab because I wanted to show my mom and my besties mom that I cared enough to try and stop using. They would cry every night because of what he and I were doing. We end up going, get released a few days later. He relapses which then I end up doing too.

I check myself into the rehab again and this time I stuck it out and while detoxing off the drugs they tell me they want to hire me once I get a year clean and that I could help people. They see that I would be good for this line of work. I thought they were

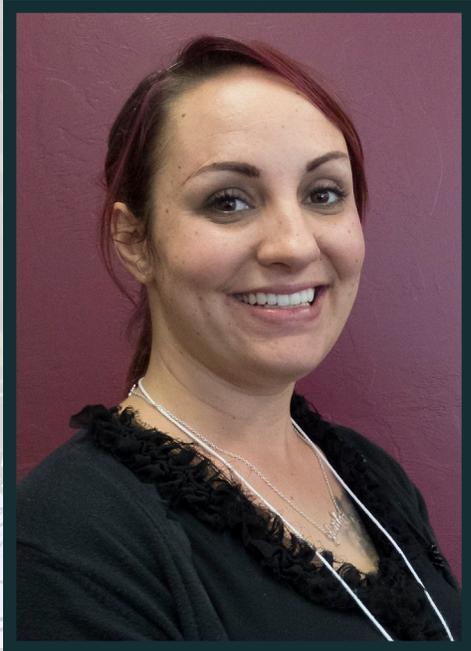
just telling me this because they wanted me to try and stay clean. I ended up going to a half way house and I thought about everything I wanted and everything I needed to do to get to where I want to be in life.

At home I start the process of recovery. My ex comes back into my life. I get pregnant and almost died at three months from an ectopic pregnancy. I go through some more hell with this man. It was then that I realized I could stay clean and deal with things that are thrown my way. This stuff should be knocking me down to my lowest point. I didn't let it this time. I got up, dusted myself off and called SEABHS. I then took Matrix and Anger Management classes. I learned a lot about myself and things I want to accomplish in my life. I finally started to see the light at the end of many, many years downward hell.

I am so grateful that someone spoke up about how much it hurt them watching me slowly kill myself with the life I was living. I promised a friend who has passed that I will never do drugs again and I will work on me and I will accomplish something in my life. Since then I finished Anger Management and am a CRSS. I am thinking more clearly and more positive. If I can help at least one person then I know that everything I went through was for something or someone who needed the help and needed to know someone has felt their pain and got through it. I am here to help people and I truly believe that is why I went through what I have. I now have a high hope for myself and that I will get the things I want and I know that I can endure a lot. I now have hope that I can make something of myself.

# Hope, Courage and Believing

Ashley Jones



Hope to me is having courage. It is believing you can do anything that you put your mind to. Hope comes in many different forms. One person may have a different idea from another. I was hopeless at one point in my life. It was because I had no faith in myself. I was harder on

myself than anyone ever could be to me. I realized at that point it was me. I was the one who was the problem for myself. When I realized this, I was then able to say to myself I have so much to offer, so much I can do for myself and others as well. That's when hope became a part of me. I have hope. Hope in myself. That's when faith truly became a big part of my life.

The over arching message of recovery is Hope! Recovery to me means that we are all different. It doesn't matter what anyone says about you. They really don't know who you are only what you do. I personally have had quite a journey in my own recovery. I was always upset, and did not understand why. I finally realized I never knew who I was or what I truly wanted in life. I knew I wanted children but that wasn't all I wanted; it was my identity.

I would not be the person I am today if it wasn't for the support I have had through my troubles. The best me is sober. That's my idea of some type of self recovery. Building my strengths makes me feel like I can achieve anything I put my mind to. Staying positive can really make a difference as well. That's my idea of hope and recovery, helping one another get to a better place in our lives.

# Self Love has Begun to Bloom

Lorraine Mulia



Like many of us, I was aware at an early age that I had some needs that were not being met, yet I knew I had a deep love for my parents and siblings. When my father died in a very tragic way from an accident in our home when I was two and a half, life showed to me an unexpected turn, and by the time I was four I decided my life was going to be an unhappy one and perhaps difficult. My younger years were careful ones in which I observed life mostly and stayed close to my mother and soon to be step-father. Later on, as I became a teen and really started to enjoy somewhat of a blossoming, I also opened up a bit more in my studies and really began to like school in my high school years. Even though goal setting was not a huge desire, I started to dream a future.

By the time I got into College and a few times prior, I was experiencing some amazing spiritual gifts. This is what I call my hope seeds. They started in my teens and went through my life at important turns. These amazing and thought

provoking experiences have truly been my torch of hope. These moments always showed me there is more to life and the flesh than what is presently seen, and I always felt loved by a tremendous unseen source. This gave me comfort and desire to press through many a dark night!

Getting back to my past for a moment, I was diagnosed with bipolar depression, and later found out about cyclothymic disorder, and I believe all this stemmed from post traumatic stress disorder from childhood. I have had some debilitating depression intermittently in my life a few times, and an underlying depression most of my life.

I did not complete college, yet, I later went on to study voice and was performing on the east coast as a professional lead singer. This was a time of expression and hope. Later, I went to stay at a spiritual school and had a wonderful son. Even though my hopes and dreams were stifled under depression in my twenties, thirties, and forties, hope began to ignite for me again when I had my son. I raised him, igniting him with the best I had so that he would grow up in an honorable and loved way, which also fed me hope. Now he is married and having a child!

Hope and great imagination came to me when I was singing and recording wonderful lyrics while I was in my spiritual school. My voice was at it's peak and I could touch people deeply. This was a great time of hope and expression!

Hope has come to me in many ways since I have been in Sierra Vista. My greatest experience of hope in the last ten years has been finding a wonderful therapist and really getting a handle on my self understanding. I have realized I am so much more than my hiding, running and fear. My heart has been ignited again through self knowledge, and self love has bloomed. This course has been another huge measure of hope for me! I realize that there are others that are overcoming limits and are breaking through. I am excited and hopeful about the strength and perseverance of the human will and spirit! I am hopeful for the growing knowledge of the different aspects of mental health, and I am happy that it is all evolving for the better.

Hope has become a part of my everyday fibre and I feel more prepared than ever to move courageously forward.

# Keep Moving Forward

Sherri Skinner



For as long as I can remember, I have been “damaged goods.” My childhood was traumatic. I was abused physically, emotionally, and sexually starting from my very first memories. Back in those days, parents loved to brag about how they kept their kids in line, so I didn’t dare speak up. I chose to rebel instead. I ran away from home the first time and told my friend’s dad about the sexual abuse. CPS came and spoke to my family, but to my surprise invalidated everything I said, although my stepfather admitted to some of it saying he did what he did to embarrass me, and the entire event was made out to be my fault. I was grounded, and then even verbally and emotionally abused because I spoke up about my previous abuse!

From that point on, I was moved around from therapist to therapist, and even thrown into a treatment facility for troubled teens, because NO ONE could get through to me that all I had to do was sit still and be a

good little child. I smoked; I drank; I dabbled in substances. I skipped school, but still managed to attend Honors classes and pass school. My step father was so fixated on me, that he would follow me as much as possible, even check up on me at lunch. I ran away from home again when I was 15, this time staying gone a week. I spent that entire week so wasted and not wanting to deal with the reality of my life. I lost my virginity to a guy that I never even talked to before and never talked to again. I put myself in a lot of situations that could have ended up worse than they did.

After high school, my self-destructive ways continued to get much worse. I married an abusive man that cheated on me. We had a child and he was abusive to her. After I left him and moved back in with my parents, my stepfather abused my daughter. This is when I first started to turn around and realize my own strength. Whereas my mother wanted to pretend nothing was going on, I came to realize that although everyone invalidated what I had been through when I was younger, this man was doing horrible things and needed to take responsibility for his actions. I called and reported everything, and my stepfather spent 6 years in prison. My family was upset at first, but I knew I did the right thing.

I had worked on my recovery a few times, but the last time I relapsed for a few years was when I went back to school. My excuse was that drinking a glass of wine helped me with writing my research papers. After I graduated with my Bachelor’s degree, the drinking still continued and became even heavier after a cancer diagnosis, issues with my ex, and worries of a job layoff. After receiving two DUIs within a year, the second one causing an accident with my eighteen year old daughter in the vehicle, I knew it was time to say goodbye to alcohol forever.

## Keep Moving Forward continued

Sherri Skinner

I could barely look at myself knowing I had put my child in danger. I had become everything that I never wanted to be. Now I know I was being hard on myself and I needed that, but what I really needed was to replace my self-destructive ways of coping with stress with much healthier ways.

I enrolled into Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services (SEABHS) Matrix Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP). I have been attending this program for almost a year now. I have also been attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) for the last six months. This has taken up most of my time and has been the majority of my focus for the last year.

In addition to my daughter's life being put in danger by my reckless behavior, I was in danger of losing custody of my five year old son. I never drank or got drunk with him around, but it would have come to that eventually. His father is obsessed with gaining full custody from me, so he was waiting for me to do something to slip up so he could file for sole custody.

My ex attempted to go through CPS to gain full custody, but that didn't work since I had self-enrolled in SEABHS' IOP and parenting programs. He then tried to do so through the court system, but again since I had taken steps on my own to address my issues, the judge did not grant his request. The judge did order me to remain sober, attend AA meetings, basically putting some safety nets around my son. These

are not an issue for me, as I plan on continuing this behavior for myself.

So now instead of thinking of myself as "damaged goods," I know that what I actually am is resilient in my ability to bounce back after I take a hit, and that I will always persevere and move forward, no matter how bad a situation seems. That's what recovery life is really about. In fact, I'll end with my all time favorite movie quote. This is what Rocky Balboa tells his son in the final scene when his son complains that he has been living in Rocky's shadow his entire life, and how unfair that is to him.

*"Let me tell you something you already know. The world ain't all sunshine and rainbows. It is a very mean and nasty place and it will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. You, me, or nobody is gonna hit as hard as life. But it ain't how hard you hit, it's about how hard you can get hit, and keep moving forward. How much you can take, and keep moving forward. That's how winning is done. Now, if you know what you're worth, then go out and get what you're worth. But you gotta be willing to take the hit and not pointing fingers saying you ain't where you are because of him, or her, or anybody. Cowards do that and that ain't you. You're better than that!"*

# A Journey to Hope

Elyce M. Valiquette

My story began in 2006, when I moved from Phoenix to Hereford, Arizona. In Phoenix, I was able to obtain positive support from my physicians for an immune disorder. My body does not produce enough antibodies to prevent infections. My physicians treated me with antibiotics and infusions to maintain a quality of life, otherwise I would have been living from one infection to another, unable to function, work, or live independently.

When I moved to Hereford, I discovered that the medical school-of-thought was different here. The physicians disregarded my quality of life issues, and would not give me enough antibiotics to stabilize me, and would not listen to my reasoning. I became allergic to the infusions, and without a prophylactic amount of antibiotics, my immune system was unable to fight infections. By this time, my physicians in Phoenix had both retired. Whenever I tried to explain to the doctors that I was unable to remain stable and function without antibiotics, I received a lecture on the evils of antibiotics. I understand that for a person with a normal immune system, taking antibiotics long-term can cause dependency and immunity, and can be dangerous. That is why my physicians in Phoenix monitored me closely and changed the antibiotics regularly, which is the protocol for this disease.

After several months of not getting the help I needed, I had no quality of life left. Even if I could get back to Phoenix, I was too sick to travel. I was suffering everyday with no hope, and too sick to manage on my own. I have no supportive family. My friends also tried to speak to the physicians on my behalf with no results. I could not live with the excruciating physical pain, and no hope of help. I decided it was better to commit suicide than to continue on, suffering needlessly.

However I was no good at killing myself. When I awoke, I called the suicide hotline myself. I was begging for help. I just wanted help to live.

I was put into a psychiatric hospital in Tucson. There, I was given a psychiatrist that had no empathy and decided I was somatic. The more I tried to explain my dilemma, the more she insisted that I was making up illnesses. Every day she added another "disorder" to my chart. She insisted that I take antipsychotic medications, along with pills for every kind of disorder imaginable. (I spit them out when no one was looking). I had a second degree burn on my chest (a result of the attempted suicide), and I was also dehydrated. But she would not allow me medical treatment, even though the psychiatric hospital was on the same campus as a medical hospital. I tried talking with other staff, but their response was always the same, "We are mental health. We don't deal with medical issues". I was not taken seriously because I was a patient in the psychiatric hospital. During the two weeks I was there, I never received personal counseling of any sort.

Because I mentioned that I used to be in a 12-step group for an eating disorder, the doctor decided I was anorexic because I was too nauseated to eat. I had inhaled a substance while attempting the suicide, which clearly would have shown up on a lab test, and was causing the nausea. But she believed I was just putting on an act to get out of eating. I was 108 pounds, a normal weight for my age and height, according to weight charts. I had brought my medical records with me, including lab reports, but **she refused to look at them** or discuss anything medical with me, believing that discussing anything medical would just encourage my somatic symptoms. She made punitive comments to me about my attempts to commit suicide. Luckily, I'd been prescribed antibiotics before I was admitted, so they continued the regimen while I was there.

# A Journey to Hope continued

Elyce M. Valiquette

Otherwise, I don't know how I would have survived physically. I also observed an abuse of power being practiced on other patients. We were treated as "inferiors", as though we were children, deserving of punishment. One patient was reprimanded for leaning against the wall. Others were punished for not forming a line to receive their meds. Once I saw a patient assault another patient. When the assaulted patient complained to staff, he was brushed off and nothing was done about it. I realized then that this is what it must feel like to be a prisoner.

When I finally got out of there I was traumatized, not only by my health condition, but by my experience at the hospital. I returned home right back to where I started from, no help and no hope. This was my turning point. I realized that no one was going to help me, but me. I bought nurses' manuals, educated myself on what I needed, and made regular trips to Mexico to get my medications. Then I started on my journey. I had come to believe that my physical illness was due to trauma from my childhood. I began to study the mind/body connection. I read books; everything from Dr. Phil to Deepak Chopra. I started doing writing exercises, meditation, visualization, and what I call "primal experience", where I moaned and groaned until I was able to get the emotional pain out. This continued for several years, while I was on Social Security Disability Income.

To date, I have not had an infection (for the last four years) that I cannot treat on my own without using synthetic drugs. I've educated myself about the use of herbs and homeopathies, and I work on my emotions daily. I believe that most of my physical problems are due to emotional pain and trauma from my past. My blood work shows that I still have the same immune deficiency, but I no longer have infections that are out of control. I am still re-training my mind and reeducating myself on how to cope with triggers and fears caused by past family abuse. I now use healthy tools to stay well, and I am bound and determined to maintain my personal power. My goal is to return back to work and live a self-reliant life.

Upon my return home from the hospital, I submitted a detailed complaint to the State of Arizona, including supporting documentation. They waited one year and 3 months to do their investigation. I received a letter back from them stating that, "**We have found no evidence of wrongdoing.**"

I have three mantras:

1. *Face the pain and get it out.*
2. *Be willing to go to any length it takes to get well.*
3. *Don't allow others to define you.*

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## Belief in Myself

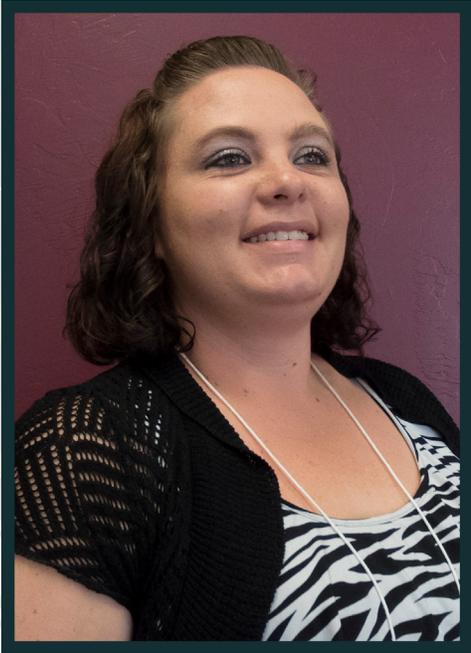
Brock Pierson Crandall

My experience with hope is that it is not real, that it is an idea that is conveyed to us making us believe we are doing something good or we are in a place we should be in life. Hope in my life has never really occurred, it was something I always tried to create without success. Hope had no role in my recovery. I've chosen to

make my own progress. My mother was a big part of my progress along with other family members. From a young age I've always been a person with strong beliefs in myself and the people around me whether it be a stranger, family, friends, or spouse.

# Happy News

Sarah Henderson



I am choosing to write about my first personal experience of hope, as it relates to the beginning of my journey towards recovery. This experience of hope took place in a small community in Cripple Creek, Colorado in 1998. I was 17 years old at that time and a very troubled and lost young lady! I was in excruciating pain and could no longer stand it, so I had my mother take me to the doctor. It was then that my life would be forever changed. I was surprisingly happy with the news I was given, however, the rest of my family was rather devastated.

The very happy news for me, yet devastating for my family, was that I was pregnant. I know, crazy right? A 17 year old young woman happy to be pregnant! Well, I had lived an extremely harsh and rough life up to that point. I was so exhausted in all aspects of my life, and desperately wanted a new one. I felt like I was already in my mid to late 30's. The thought of having a child depend on me and need me was just the change in my life that would bring joy and happiness to me. So of course I was filled with joy and hope for our future!

I had grown up in what was supposedly a Christian home. I was forced to go to Church my whole upbringing until at 12, I refused to continue attending unless I felt like it. I attended off and on in the five years leading up to this event, but never stopped believing in and praying to God. For about a month, before this life altering change in my life happened, I was earnestly praying to God to give me something in my life to get me out of the gutters I found myself in. It was then, when I heard that happy news, that hope and joy entered into my heart!

I have been battling mental illness since I was a child, however, my mother refused to acknowledge there was anything wrong, so I was never diagnosed or treated. At about 11 years old is when I start to remember seriously harming myself and drinking

# Happy News continued

Sarah Henderson

For the first time. I started doing really risky and harmful things. By 15 years old, I was addicted to alcohol, meth, sex, LSD, and so many other things. At any given time I was on at least three different drugs and alcohol. I had done anything and everything to just be numb and take away all the pain and anguish. I was pretty much living on the streets by 15, wherever my head laid down for the night, if I even slept at all, I called home. I lived like this until that day hope came.

When I found out I was pregnant with my oldest daughter, I quit everything cold turkey except the pot and cigarettes. I was already a month pregnant when I found out and during that month I did a lot of drinking and drugs. I was so scared for my child that my carelessness was going to effect her, I made them run all the tests they could to find out if she was okay. Thank God she was perfect and that is what kept me clean from the harsher drugs throughout my pregnancy.

When my daughter was born, they tested her for everything because of the lifestyle I lived. They told me if there was anything in her system, they would take her from me. She was born with THC

in her system. They did not take her from me for that, however, I was put on the child abuse and neglect registry. I am so thankful they let me keep her! She was born in September and I only did LSD once after that and that was that Halloween.

I felt so wrong and like a horrible mother that I have stayed clean since October, 1999. I have smoked pot once since that day because I was in Colorado and it is legal there, but it just made me feel like a bad mother again! My daughter really impacted and changed my life 16 years ago! She brought hope into my useless, meaningless, and dreadful life. Had that moment of hope never come, I cannot honestly say where I would be today! I still battle with mental illness and /everyday is a struggle, but this too I will overcome!

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Workforce  
Development News

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*UA Workforce Development Program promotes recovery and expanded opportunities for people with mental illness, substance use, and dual diagnosis by employing a collaborative approach to advocacy, service, education, and research.*

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