

# Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Yuma Arizona, December 2014



## Integrated Healthcare Graduating Class

*Back Row (L to R)*

Jasmine Tequida, Angelique Clark, Robert Rosner, Thomas Greenhoe, Mercedes Mommer, Ramon Altamirano,  
Kevin Wood, Rachel Belen

*Front Row (L to R)*

Jesus Esquerro, Lupe "Patty" Pierce, Joyce Guinn, Marissa Bungay, Jacquelin Russell, Kera Pickering



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF ARIZONA

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Improving Lives.

# Solitary Confinement

By Ramon Altamirano

*Soledad (a Spanish name for solitude)*

*Many years I spent with her*

*Many years I longed to rid of her*

*Day after day I became accustomed to her*

*She was soul-less*

*Dark and cold*

*Very faithful and painful*

*Confined I found myself to her*

*She never loved me*

*And I never loved her*

*I prayed to rid of her*

*I meditated to rid of her*

*Finally by reaching back into my ancestral roots of Toltec wisdom*

*I was able to stop the internal dialogue*

*And get a glimpse of the soul*

*A glow of love*

*A radiance of constant energy*

*That inspires and glorifies life*

*My energy source that gave me*

*The strength to defeat my Soledad.*

# A Rocky and Bumpy Road

By Joyce Guinn



I'm not really sure exactly when my experience of hope occurred. I was losing everything, the love of my life, my daughter and myself, due to my substance use and severe depression. My fiancé gave me an

ultimatum to either quit using or he was leaving me and taking our, then two and a half year old daughter, with him. I was at such a low point, rock bottom, but I knew that I couldn't let that happen. When I stopped using and he stayed with me, helping and loving me, I knew there was hope for me. Hope to have the future I wanted, needed and deserved. He, along with my mom and little brother- the only two family members that knew what was going on- stood by me every step of the way, during which time my fiancé was going through the recovery process along with me. Him being strong enough to realize that we needed to quit using and opening my eyes to what I was losing, was the best thing that ever happened because I knew right then that I had a future.

It was the hardest thing I've ever had to do, but the most rewarding as well. Telling my mom and brother was very difficult because I hated that I disappointed them. I expected the absolute worst, however, they surprised us both by supporting us every step of the way. It was the turning point for me, the hope I was given by having the support of the people I loved most, gave me the strength to continue down the rocky, bumpy recovery road, filled with more potholes, twists and turns than I ever expected. I got through it, and am still getting through it, by taking it one day, one minute and one breath at a time.

## I Promise

By Rachel Belen

I was laying in my hospital bed at the Tucson Medical Center. I had just woken up after an exhausting delivery of my child. I alerted the nurse that I had woken up. As I lay waiting to see my newborn little girl, I turn on the TV to see a parade, celebrating the new year 2014. I realized the excitement I have been waiting for was finally here and the sad fact that I was by myself, washed away, knowing my little girl was coming. When the nurse brought her in I begin to cry. As I was crying, I spoke into her tiny little ear and whispered, "I promise I will never leave you, I will protect you, I love you so much. So, so, so much."

That was the beginning point of my recovery. That day, I gave a promise to her and know in my heart, it is the beginning of a beautiful journey. And a happy new year.



## The Ultimate Turning Point

By Marissa Bungay



My personal experience of "Hope" would have to be when I found out I was pregnant with my first child. At the time, my life was out of control and I was very deep into my addiction. I was living on the streets and basically not going anywhere in life. I didn't have any hope or determination to do anything positive and had no sense of well being. Therefore, when I found out I was expecting a child it became the ultimate turning point for me as a person and for my recovery. I was able to change my views on my life and pursue what I had always wanted which was to help others in recovery. I now have my son to not only push me forward, but I've gained the drive to keep going in life.

# Motivation to Break the Mold

By Mercedes Mommer



Most of my life I knew I was different. My perception of reality was different than those my age. I was more mature, and the people I chose to be around, and get along with, were much older than me. As a teen, I had much more responsibility than others my age. My younger siblings became my responsibility and I ensured they were cared for and had the necessities. They were my main focus.

Meanwhile, both my parents lost their jobs and my dad began selling and using drugs more heavily. When he got incarcerated, the day of my high school graduation, is when things truly got worse. My dad was not himself, he became suicidal and threatening. My mom became scared for her life. I began drinking heavily, using drugs, and my temper was triggered by the smallest of things. My depression would be so bad I would stay in bed for days. I lost all my motivation to change my life, break the mold, and to set an example for my siblings.

During the time my dad was on probation, he was given many chances to get clean and stay clean. He kept dropping dirty UA's and going to jail, again leaving me with the responsibility of my siblings. My mom still hadn't found a job, and was not in any better state than me. I felt used, unappreciated, worthless, and alone. Drugs masked those feelings and I would forget about the bad things for a little while. When my dad was sentenced to go to prison, I knew I couldn't let my siblings down anymore than they already had been. I set goals, and stuck to them. Lexi & Tommy continue to be my motivation and strength. As time went by, I realized I needed to care for myself because no one else would.

I'm more in recovery of my feelings and emotions and how I deal with them instead of covering them up. I feel my experience of hope was when I realized I'm not a victim. My life is my choice.

# Tenia Esperansa

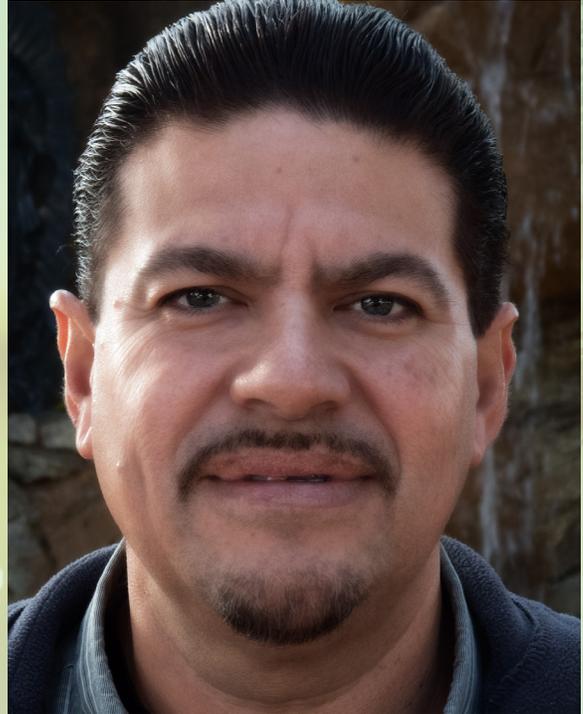
By Ramon Altamirano

First of all I will define Hope so that whoever reads this can understand with clarity what it is and how I used it. Hope in the noun version is the feeling that what is wanted can be had. Hope as a verb is to look forward to with desire and reasonable confidence, to believe or desire.

I personally use hope to achieve things that I desire so the hope I used for achieving what I am about to write about is in the "desire and reasonable confidence" translation.

On July 17 of 2014 I went in front of a judge from Yuma County Superior Court to be sentenced. During the time before sentencing I was under the influence and addiction of methamphetamines. I had been using this drug since 1990. However, the importance of this story is not the drug but the despair in my life, a purposeless and hopeless life. I had already served a ten year sentence and throughout that time had stayed sober. Now thinking back I understand why I stayed sober. I had Hope in my life, ( tenia esperansa). I basically looked forward with desire and reasonable confidence that one day I would get out alive. I knew that in an instant I could easily either pick up more time or be killed while in prison. So my Hope kept me sober and with a goal.

After getting out I did good for a few years until little by little life consumed me and subconsciously I lost what had gotten me out of prison, Hope. I picked up the felonies that brought me in front of the judge and because he, as a judge, believed that I was Hopeless he sentenced me to 3 1/2 years. When I heard him say 3 1/2 years I envisioned myself going through the same prison process and the same hurting of my loved ones. The words of my attorney brought me back to reality when she spoke. I clearly remember her saying, " Your honor, I would like to file a motion to mitigate the sentence". Because of this motion being sustained it somehow gave me enough time to get into a state of mind that brought Hope back into my life.



Because I had a violent prior, I could not qualify for drug court and technically, because of my priors, my case could end up being aggravated instead of mitigated. However I did not loose Hope . My attorney advised me to make my own rehab program. That could be shown to the courts so that we could convince them of my ability to improve my life and be a productive citizen.

Due to the motivation from having Hope, I found myself determined not only to get the help I needed but to go above and beyond that. This is where my journey of recovery was dictated and inspired by the role of Hope.

I was able to find a residential rehabilitation that would take me within a couple of days, so I made the necessary steps to proceed. The treatment was for thirty days which I was miraculously able to complete without being sentenced first.

*continued on next page*

# A Place of My Own

By Robert Rosner



April, 2014 I chose to stop using alcohol as part of my recover from being traumatized in the mid part of 2013.

In July of 2013, I delivered a newspaper to one of my customers that lived in a small

apartment complex. There was an odd smell emanating from his apartment so I contacted the law enforcement to investigate it. My customer had been deceased for more than 24 hours and after the small investigation was done I went into a crisis. The investigators called a crisis team for me. They advised me to get treatment.

I went through the process, was assigned a case manager but continued having issues with my vision and unwanted thoughts up to the mid part of April of 2014. I ended up living on the streets and after about a month toward the end of March I became suicidal and was hospitalized for a week.

After my discharge from the hospital, a plan was made to help me from becoming suicidal again. At this point I saw that I needed help because I was facing having to live on the streets again. This helped with my self-determination to speak up to my case manager and say that I needed a place to live. The living center approached me and offered me a place to stay, which helped me to get back on my feet and to become more successful in my life.

Hope for my life has been the result of taking these actions and now I have a place of my own and a bed to sleep on.

## *Tenia Esperansa* By Ramon Altamirano, continued

Throughout this time my girlfriend never left me behind nor did my parents. They were part of my inspiration and Hope. Also, another big inspiration was my daughter Destanie, only eight years old, who I could not let down.

Due to my strong determination and Hope I was able to convince the judge to over-turn the sentence from 3 1/2 years to intensive probation for five years. My attorney was in awe and told me to consider it a miracle so I understand that something out-of-the-ordinary was at play but more importantly it was me that put it all into the works, and with the help of loved ones we changed the outcome of things. I find this to be motivational and magical in a sense. This experience was definitely a turning point for me due to the knowledge of the steps that I used to accomplish my goal. Now I know that I can re-use the steps like a formula to obtain positive results.

# A Future of Possibilities

By Kevin Wood

In 2009 I lost all hope for everything. I became homeless for a year and a half, went to a treatment program and did the 12-step programs but could never find my higher power. They say there is always hope for recovery but I just wasn't sure. I had a mental illness for a long time and Julie, my case manager, said that this class would help me a lot. She has faith and hope in me that I could help other people.

I have only had the support of a few people close to me. I have lost two of them in the past month – my girlfriend and my brother. Sometimes I blame myself for my girlfriend. I know she would be here taking this class with me, and the hopeful part of me knows that she was.

I have never been too smart in school. I have no social life at all and I hope one day I will. I need to find some groups. I hope this will happen. I hope I pass this class. I think and I hope I can help other people with substance use issues and mental illness.

So much has happened since 2009 and I take full responsibility for my actions. I lost all hope and at times I felt like I didn't want to live, but hope has kept me here for a reason. Hope to help myself. I will always be in recovery and hope I make it. I say a lot of things but never act on them. I hope though – I hope for a future of possibilities that will enrich my life experience and create an environment for uncommon and unexpected positive outcomes to be made. I don't have many real friends because they are all still doing dope. I hope one day I can help them if they want it.

*Kevin passed his exam with flying colors.*



# One Woman's Path to Enlightenment

By Jasmine Tequida



The famous Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step", and so it was true with myself and my journey towards hope-my light at the end of the tunnel. I had found a woman I could learn to trust, a friend, a sponsor. As I began working with her and following a few simple instructions, she began helping me find my voice. She accomplished this by truly listening to me and not giving up on me. She supported me in an accepting and empowering way. Several years ago, with her at my side, I began taking the journey of

hope, which for me, came through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We would meet at the Colorado River's edge. As we sat, bathed in sunlight, she spoke to me of spiritual truths and spiritual principles.

I will never forget the real turning point for me was when we got to Step Twelve, "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs". There is a portion in the Step working guide that talks about it being alright to have an eclectic mix of spirituality. This was especially powerful for me because I did not know that. It seemed so simple and yet I felt as though it was a gem of knowledge that had somehow been hidden from me my whole life. Upon this truth I was able to build a relationship with a loving God. I have been able to love myself because I now see myself as God sees me.

In short, I am grateful for the life I have been given and the many opportunities that continue to spring forth for me. I know now that the sky's the limit and the only real limitations that I have are the ones I put on myself. I am happy to say that the same woman who sponsored me then is still my sponsor over 6 years later. I have a real connection with my God, myself, and the world around me and this is evidenced by the meaningful relationships I have with those I consider family and friends. My thanks to my supportive family, friends, and treatment team. My thanks and gratitude to my sponsor for she was the foundation and spring-board for all of the healthy relationships I now have.

# Turning Point

By Tommy Greehoe

My personal experience of HOPE started on November 30th, 2005 at 10:45 in the morning. Coming out of an alcoholic blackout, I was involved in a hit-and-run accident. I heard the sirens as the police kept getting closer and was thinking, "Finally the day has come so this can end." "This" was in reference to a substance abuse problem that included alcohol and pills and had gone on untreated for over three years since my last exit from AA. I was excited that I was in handcuffs going to the Yuma County Jail and that it would get ugly before it got any better. I was charged with a felony DUI that was my second one in three days. As I sat in jail and got better each day I knew eventually this was going to be my "turning point" in my belief to be able to get sober. Whether I liked it or not, Yuma County and the State of Arizona would play heavily in helping me get clean and sober from my substance abuse co-occurring disorder.

Being locked up in county jail and sentenced to state prison I had put together 8 months clean and sober. The longest "honest" time for me in a number of years in the AA program, staying sober. As I was released from prison my thoughts returned to the day of my arrest and accident and the process of recovery was in full bloom. I got down on my knees and thanked my GOD for helping me get through my prison sentence and asked if he would help me make positive decisions in my life. With a brand new attitude I faced my three years of Supervised Probation welcoming the rules and regulations that they set and was willing for the first time in my life to try the program their way and recover from



a hopeless state of mind and body by "the book." With my sponsor, meetings, AA steps, and a new outlook of Hope, I was able to put together my longest period of abstinence from drugs and alcohol. Today I have a conscience contact with GOD who I call my higher power, and he has walked with me on my new journey called life, helping me make positive decisions that continue to give me HOPE.

# A Bright Future

By Kera Pickering



My personal experience of hope starts just a few months ago. Although I've been in and out of institutions, hospitals, psychiatric care, anger management classes, and even jail since the age of 16, I've never experienced any hope for change in my life until now. I have been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, severe depression, anxiety disorder, PTSD, OCD, a substance use disorder, and an anger issue. I never thought I could change my life or my behaviors, nor did I feel or see any hope for any kind of change. I even got to a point in my life where not only was I unable to care for myself but also for my 2 daughters. When I came to realize this fact, I lost all hope for myself, my kids, and our future as a family together.

I spent many years learning about myself and about my diseases but didn't know that I held the power in me to recover from it all. It wasn't until I found The Living Center here in Yuma, Arizona that I began to have hope for my life to be any different. I found my

experience of hope in Joe Castillo at TLC. It was through Joe, other staff members at TLC, and even the friends who go to TLC that I have been empowered to change my life.

It was because of the love and hope Joe had for me and held for me that I could begin to live my life with love and hope for myself. It was because someone never gave up on me, loved me unconditionally, and held hope for change. He saw a better future for me so that I was able to blossom into the strong hope-filled person I am today.

Just in these past few months I've grown and learned so much, but I know there's so much more for me to still learn and grow into.

I've been told that I'd have to take medications for the rest of my life and maybe take classes for the rest of my life and then I'd be able to manage my life better and could possibly live a "normal" existence. Today I see a brighter future for myself where medication and classes are only a tool, but with the help and Peer Support of people, I can recover from not just some, but all my ailments.

Today I have hope that not only can I change, but my family can change for the better as well. I see a brighter more hopeful future for myself and my kids and because of this I am currently working and will continue to work without giving up my hope for a better future and a better life for myself and my kids. Because of the Peer Support that I have received I've been able to grow and change from the inside out. Because of the Peer Support, love, and hope I am receiving from people today I'm filled with hope and drive to live a different and productive life. I feel in my heart that I really can have the life I want.

I know my recovery will be ongoing and will be lots of work every day for the rest of my life, but all the work I put into my recovery so far has been worth it and will continue to be worth it. Despite all my flaws, I am still able to live a normal healthy productive life and I am able to have and live the life I want for myself and my kids, together as a family.

# Something More Powerful Than Myself

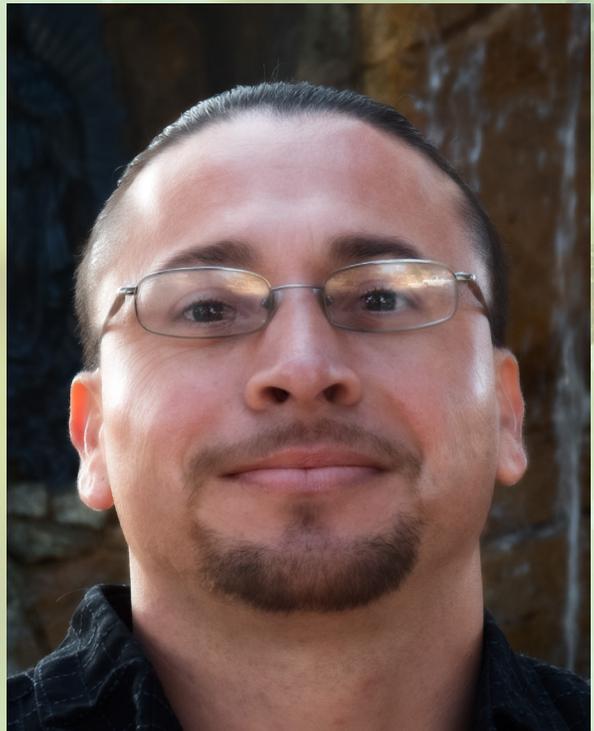
By Jesus Esquerra

My whole life has revolved around gang violence, drugs, and prisons. It was the cycle that I had gotten accustomed to. A lot of people had said that I wasn't going to see the age of twenty. I have been shot and stabbed, and always ended up in a hospital. There was even a time where I was shot at by a shot gun and hearing the pellets zoom by my ear, I knew I was being protected by something more powerful than myself.

Just recently I wanted to end my life because I didn't think I could amount to anything because I was a junkie that needed dope just to get out of bed. They say that getting high makes you feel good, but I learned that it is the opposite. It makes you feel like death is a better option.

After getting out of Federal Prison, I had to take care of my state charges and I went to see my Probation Officer. She asked me to give her a urine sample and it came back positive. She asked me what I wanted to do and I said "send me back home to prison" Saying that made me realize I needed help. I asked her if I could go to a rehab instead because prison would be too easy for me and I would just continue my cycle. I was at a point of desperation.

I was able to get into a rehab and I learned about myself and coping skills that I can use to stay sober. That's when I woke up from the nightmare I had created from the age of 11. I'm 34 and I have found that my purpose in life is to help others to learn from my mistakes so they don't have to go through what I went through and letting them know that there is hope for us. I am healthy and feel alive.



# Change

By Hinda Schryber,

Read by Kera Pickering at Graduation

*There comes a time when change has to take place.*

*I don't know anyone who can carry on doing something,  
without being valued, or respected, or appreciated in any way.  
I don't know anyone who can continually give and never get  
anything in return.*

*I don't know anyone who doesn't have a soul that has to be  
nourished or a heart that has to be loved.*

*I don't know anyone that can put up with continual bad  
behavior.*

*I don't know anyone that doesn't make mistakes.*

*I don't know anyone who isn't injured in some way.*

*I don't know anyone who can carry hurt or injury around with  
them for a long time without exploding.*

*I don't know anyone who can go without a hug, virtual or  
visual, when they are hurting.*

*I don't know anyone who is angry and doesn't get ill.*

*I do know that for the severely emotionally injured the world is  
just not a safe place. There is always another injury lurking just  
around the corner.*

*I do know that a lot of these people go inside of their minds  
and disassociate from everything and everyone around them.  
That way the world, for them, becomes a little bit safer.*

*continued on next page*

*Change* By Hinda Schryber, continued

*And we call them insane and mentally ill, and crazy, and unpredictable, and scary.*

*And we medicate them, and we lock them away so they wont hurt themselves or others.*

*And they can make sense of this - just another injury.*

*And I wonder what would happen if we dared to give them what they need.*

*If we dared to love them in the midst of their hurt.*

*If we dared to go near their heart and their soul.*

*If we dared to let them into our souls.*

*If we accepted them for who and what they are- for the victim of the injury that they did not ask for.*

*If instead of being afraid of them, we were kind to them.*

*If instead of punishing them for their defensive acts, we hugged them.*

*If instead of reminding them of their bad ways and threatening them, we rewarded them for all the good that they do.*

*Don't you think then, and only then, they might possibly have a chance to Change?*

*Then maybe their hurts could heal.*

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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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