

# Recovery Support Specialist News

June 2013  
RSS Institute #34

HOPE !!

Hope is a bird  
With wonderful feathers  
Sits on the boughs of the  
soul  
And sings the song of  
how to be remain alive

It sings when the dream  
breaks  
It sings when overturn  
the ships  
You are at the bottom  
and  
Far away is the beach  
At that time it teaches  
you  
How to ride from bottom  
to top  
How to swim to reach to  
the beach  
How to rebuild the  
broken wings of your  
dream

Then you get an energy  
inform of a wind in the  
tune  
To be alive strongly  
better than before  
And it will continue to  
sing till you want to  
listen.

poem by: Abdul Wahab  
(inspired by Dickinson)



## “Dan Steffy Finally Becomes a CRSS” September CPSA CRSS Celebration



Dan and Pat Benchik



Beverly, Lori Ashcraft, Keynote Speaker,  
and Jody



Paige, Wendy, Gordon Janel, and Christina

Photos courtesy of Maya Luria, CPSA

Family & Community Medicine  
“Healthy Families, Healthy Communities”





# Divine Love for a Foolish Man

By Brett Smith

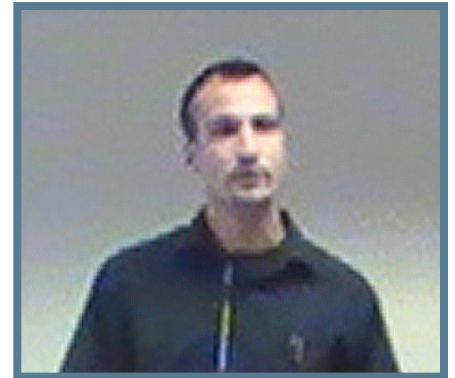
I've heard that losing hope in life can be a treacherous journey and have a major impact on one's thinking. It wasn't something I gave much thought towards growing up but it definitely became a reality for me later in life. I was twenty five and the drastic turn of events that day I thought would stick with me forever, but that's the miraculous power of hope, to take something drastic and turned it into something beautiful.

I was beaten, broken, and at the end of my rope.

Lying all alone in a hospital bed that twenty eighth day in November, I had to ask myself how it could come to this and a series of bad decisions was my only answer. The feeling I had that day was best described in a book I read once describing it as a bitter morass of self-pity, quicksand stretched in every direction. I used a lot of drugs and was lying there fighting for my life and it wasn't such the fact that I could have died, it was that I could have died knowing I could be so much more. I cried out to God and asked for help and for the first time I admitted I had lost hope. I didn't die that day obviously; in fact I went to sleep.

When I woke up I felt a remarkable weight lifted off my shoulders. Granted I still had the wreckage of my past but some deep inner feeling told me that I needed to push forward and forget what was behind me. I walked out of the hospital confused as to what happened but all I know is that I felt like I had been given a second opportunity at life and a strong sense of Hope.

*continued on page 3*



## Practice Gratitude – Increase Both Happiness and Life Satisfaction

This is a seemingly simple strategy, but I've personally found it to make a huge difference to my outlook. There are lots of ways to practice gratitude, from keeping a journal of things you're grateful for, sharing three good things that happen each day with a friend or your partner, and going out of your way to show gratitude when others help you.

In an experiment where some participants took note of things they were grateful for each day, their moods were improved just from this simple practice:

The gratitude-outlook groups exhibited heightened well-being across several, though not all, of the

outcome measures across the 3 studies, relative to the comparison groups. The effect on positive affect appeared to be the most robust finding. Results suggest that a conscious focus on blessings may have emotional and interpersonal benefits.

The Journal of Happiness studies published a study that used letters of gratitude to test how being grateful can affect our levels of happiness:

Participants included 219 men and women who wrote three letters of gratitude over a 3 week period.

Results indicated that writing letters of gratitude increased participants' happiness and life satisfaction, while decreasing depressive symptoms.

*Retrieved from: 10 Simple Things You Can Do Today That Will Make You Happier, Backed By Science. Written by Belle Beth Cooper  
Posted on Tuesday, August 6th, 2013. <http://ht.ly/p9iZ4>*





*Divine Love for a Foolish Man, continued from page 2*

Walking from that hospital with nowhere to go had me in fear of where I was to end up and the fact that it started raining didn't help matters much but I stayed determined. I found myself at the door of the Salvation Army where they took me in and gave me food and shelter. I've met a lot of amazing people since then and my life has taken a complete turn around.

Somebody once told me that your equipped with what you need no matter what you go through in life, you just have to take the cotton out of your ears and put it in your mouth. Some very wise words that couldn't be coincidence because it is listening that has the biggest impact on me. Those people inspired me and instead of picking out my deficiencies they pointed out my strengths and encouraged me to reach for the stars. Just when I thought I'd lost hope I finally saw it taking a rise in my life once again, but this time on a much bigger scale. What happened that day spiraled me into what I'd like to call a fourth dimension of existence. Where goodness, wellness, and emotional prosperity are essential for maintaining a healthy mind, which in turn makes for a better life.

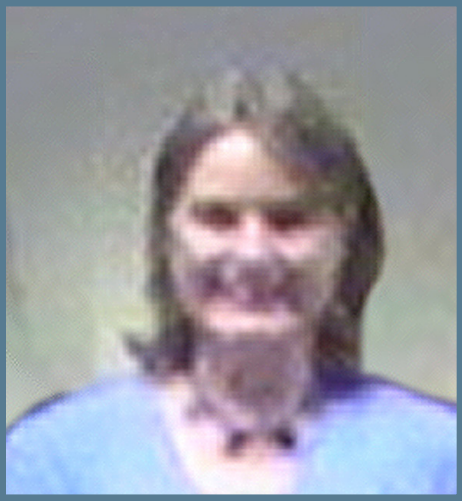
Since being rocketed into that fourth dimension I've been enveloped in this passion for helping other people. I've noticed that the most powerful tool for helping me with the mental struggles of everyday life and the strongholds that block me from moving forward (i.e. fear, resentment, anguish, regret, self-pity) is close work with someone whom I share a similar experience. I never would have imagined that all the stuff I've been through can be beneficial to another person's life. That makes me happy.

I've come to the conclusion that it wasn't so much the places that I ran to that helped me achieve this amazing sense of Hope, but it was the people. I have so much gratitude for the kind people that didn't judge me and chose to help me. I like to call them "Addiction Slayers" but I guess a better word for them now is...

Recovery Support Specialists!!

## Experience of Hope

By Dorthea Nobile



A significant epiphany in my recovery process occurred the day that I was fired from my position as a Radio DJ. Hours before, my supervisor had been informed of my SMI diagnosis by the only person with whom I had shared this information in the 5 years that I had worked there. After having completed what was to become my last shift at the microphone, I had been ominously shuttled into an office crammed with 3 very tall and substantial men, one my supervisor, and a woman from the Human Relations Department. All were seated as I was escorted into this surprise meeting by a Security Guard.

This obvious attempt at intimidation and humiliation was followed by my being escorted by the same Security Guard outside the building, where I was informed by the HR woman that I could no longer be on the campus of the University. This news, in addition to the experience of the termination meeting, was another deep emotional blow. I was just completing my first two years at a Junior College and had been accepted into the Music Education program at this very University.

*continued on page 4*

### *Experience of Hope, continued from page 3*

During my time on-air, I had become a bit of a minor celebrity and was very popular as an MC and voice-over artist. My employment record was clean and unblemished. Yet I was summarily and inexplicably fired due to an SMI diagnosis. My condition had been so well managed that there were no obvious symptoms or decrease in work capacity. Indeed, as I learned later during the wrongful termination negotiations, my supervisor had no inkling of my diagnosis until he was informed about it by an equally ignorant co-worker in whom I had regrettably confided.

I was in therapy at the time. Through the support and guidance of my therapist and those whom I met at recovery support groups specifically tailored for those with my diagnosis, I was able to express my feelings of hopelessness and fear and eventually, to plan a course of action.

My response, after an initial period of shock, was to summon the anger that I felt towards the ignorant assumptions of my employers to advocate for myself and pursue a wrongful termination suit against my former employer. This required a strong focus during a time when my self-confidence and self-esteem were at a very low point. I worked diligently to assemble a document called a "Chronology of Events". This was a presentation, along with exhibits, explained my complaint in chronological sequence. In order to secure an attorney who would take

my case, I had to have a dossier that basically outlined my experience, so that they could quickly decide whether or not they were interested in taking me as a client.

Although this process was difficult, challenging, and fraught with setbacks, I successfully secured a lawyer who advocated for me and negotiated the settlement that allowed me to continue my studies and graduate in 1998 with a Bachelor Degree in Music Education.

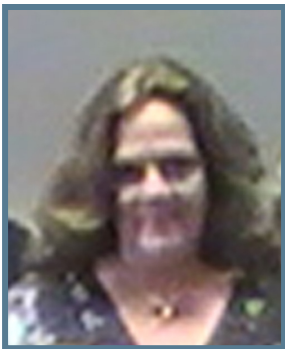
In 2000, I was deemed eligible to receive Social Security Disability payments and was enrolled in mental health and medication programs at CODAC. It was through my association with CODAC that I was able to attend Camp Wellness, which led me to the RSSI!

Through the use of resources that I first encountered in my pursuit of the lawsuit, I eventually went on to obtain a Master in Social Work degree in 2001. Completing the stressful yet successful mediation of wrongful termination by my employers showed me that I could marshal my talents, access my survivor network and resources to triumph over the fear and ignorance that often surround serious mental illnesses.



## **I never looked back**

By Katherine Gardner



In September of 2004 I had a supernatural experience. It was a cloudy afternoon the day that I had walked to the park and I laid down on the cool grass. I looked up at the clouds and saw a cloud formation that seemed to be in the shape of an angel. As I stared at the angel formation of clouds, I felt this incredible warmth and

peace come over me. I felt as if nothing mattered but that moment in time.

I instantly knew I was experiencing the warmth of the love of Jesus. I heard Him say "I love you and if you stop

using drugs I will give you a baby boy at the age of forty and I will restore your relationship with your boys. I will restore all that the cankerworm has eaten in your life. Follow me, I love you with perfect love. Come out from among them and serve me. I will not forsake you, Thus saith The Lord."

Then this beam of light shone through the cloud formation and as the breeze blew through the angel cloud it seemed to shape it into this bright heart and at that very moment I felt as if my heart would burst with joy.

That moment stopped a 27 year methamphetamine addiction. I never looked back and my son was born six days after my fortieth birthday. He restored the relationship I have with my other two boys and all that almost three decades of addiction had robbed from me. It may seem hard to believe but I had no hope and had never felt love until that cloudy day when the sun shined.

# Hope

By Robyn Flannery

When I was fourteen after two years of unexplained symptoms I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. I was prescribed medication and saw a psychiatrist on a regular basis. It didn't take long to feel better so I decided I was well and I didn't need psychiatric treatment anymore.

When I turned 18 I went to college and with the heavy caseloads and late night studies I found myself in another manic episode. So I went home and shortly after my parents took me to a hospital. At the hospital they put me on medication and introduced me to COPE. I then found a job and was doing really well when I stop seeing my psychiatrist after I moved out of my parent's house.

A couple years later I was in a promising relationship when the stress of the relationship and work triggered my bipolar illness. I checked myself into the hospital and stayed for a month after that I was under court order treatment. With the failure of my relationship and the loss of my job I felt the weakest I had ever felt in my entire life. It was then I met my ex husband and thought I found hope with him. I was off court ordered treatment and he convinced me to stop going to COPE. I soon found out that was another big mistake and my ex husband soon turned abusive. It increased with the arrival of my baby girl. With postpartum depression and my mental illness I didn't stand a chance. I was court ordered and after a year my parents adopted my daughter. I found myself in a vicious cycle of recurring manic episodes and hospital stays, I seem to have lost hope and found my diagnosis was controlling my life. I resented my illness and myself.

My life changed when I found myself in the Crisis Response Center that had just opened. I met several peer supports there. They told me their stories and I couldn't believe they had overcome their illnesses. Up until then I had thought I couldn't lead a successful life. Here was the proof otherwise. In fact one RSS had been through a similar situation as mine. I left there with a renewed sense of hope. While I was there I set goals. I went to a place called Hope Inc. and I volunteered on the warm line. I was surrounded by people who had different struggles and seemed to learn how to cope.

While I was at the Crisis Response Center they had also told me about the RSSI and I made it a goal to attend. As I prepared my application I felt overwhelmed and tossed it aside. A year later I was assigned a Recovery Coach who recommended the program once again. This time I went through the application process. I now know that I can be more than my illness and I don't resent it. I am learning to use it as a tool to help others.







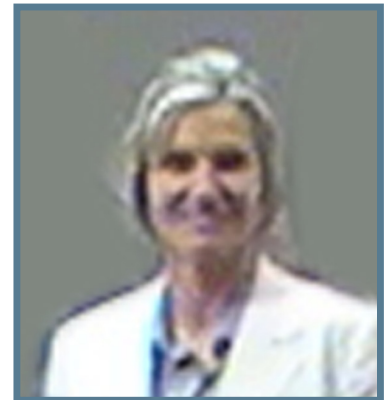
## Confident Expectation

By Teri Simpson

Prior to recovery I did not give hope much thought. If asked my definition of “Hope” I would likely have said “wishful thinking”. I now believe hope is a “confident expectation” or “assurance”. It is what gets us through suffering and loss. I believe doctors and counselors encourage their patients with the worst of diagnoses not to give up their Hope for a very good reason. When I look to the Biblical meaning of Hope it means we should expect things like Glory and Grace with Confidence because the Lord has promised them to us.

Knowing that the Lord has promised us Glory and Grace gives me assurance that sad times will pass and mistakes will be forgiven. I have learned where and how to ask for help when I need it which has been very difficult for me in the past. I felt asking for help was a personal weakness ... a lack of independence. Through my recovery I have come to see it as empowerment. I could not have achieved this with out hope.

Imagine a diagnoses of “no hope” either referring to someone’s behavioral health or physical health. For me, that is what puts the word “hope” into perspective.



## Exercise as an Antidepressant

The following exercise tips offer a powerful prescription for boosting mood:

- Exercise now...and again. A 10-minute walk can improve your mood for two hours. The key to sustaining mood benefits is to exercise regularly.
- Choose activities that are moderately intense. Aerobic exercise undoubtedly has mental health benefits, but you don’t need to sweat strenuously to see results.
- Find exercises that are continuous and rhythmic (rather than intermittent). Walking, swimming, dancing, stationery biking, and yoga are good choices.
- Add a mind-body element. Activities such as yoga and tai chi rest your mind and increase your energy. You can also add a meditative element to walking or swimming by repeating a mantra (a word or phrase) as you move.
- Start slowly, and don’t overdo it. More isn’t better. Athletes who over train find their moods drop rather than lift.

*Adapted from Johns Hopkins Health Alerts*

*Retrieved from: [http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression\\_tips.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_tips.htm)*

# Overjoyed to have come so far

By Leesa McKendall



My Journey to Recovery all started, when I hit rock bottom. My kids were removed and my boyfriend and I were evicted and locked out of my home. This was when I realized I needed to get help. At first I felt helpless, hopeless, and scared out of my mind. Not to mention I was coming down off of methamphetamines. Which made it very hard to think clearly. I was homeless and my family was very upset over what had happened. No one knew how to help me. All I could do for weeks was cry and sleep. I felt an immediate need to try to change myself overnight. After only being clean for 3 weeks, I enrolled in a Physical Therapy program at Carrington College. Later, I learned that I was setting myself up for failure. I ended up having to withdraw after a month. It was too big of a goal, too soon.

Within two months, we were able to get into our own place. This felt great! I could feel things coming together. I started attending my groups at CODAC and worked on my case plan. My family started seeing the changes we were making and we started communicating again. My children returned home, and we were learning to be a family again. Things went smoothly for a while, until my boyfriend tested positive more than once and was forced to leave home. This made me very scared and confused, for he had been by my side this whole time. I was scared to do it without him. Eventually, I had to make a decision to end the relationship. I was not able to help him without jeopardizing my own recovery. This was very hard for me. This was when I realized I needed to set my own boundaries.

Eventually, I got a part-time job and with the support of my Dad, family and my resources, I was able to function as a single mother and do what I had to do to take care of my family. My CPS case was successfully closed. I was overjoyed that I had come so far.

In the beginning I didn't know how I was ever going to get through this. In everything I have learned, I believe all these things describe hope, support, education, personal responsibility and self-advocacy.



## Groovy Green Smoothie

### Ingredients:

1 banana

1 cup grapes

6 oz yogurt

1/2 apple diced

1 1/2 cups chopped spinach leaves

**Directions:** Place the banana, grapes, yogurt, apple and spinach into a blender. Cover, and blend until smooth, stopping frequently to push down anything stuck to the sides. Pour into glasses and serve.

Retrieved from  
<http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/Groovy-Green-Smoothie/>



## Through someone else's eyes

By Caroline Witt



I'm relieved I get to write about hope because it was the very thing that got me stuck on an article we read for class. In this article the psychiatrist told the young woman, "You have a disease called chronic schizophrenia. It is a disease that is like diabetes. If you take medications for the rest of your life and avoid stress, then maybe you can cope". The young woman said she could "feel the weight (of the words) crushing her already fragile hopes and dreams".

I struggled with this article because the very same words had given me hope. When I was diagnosed with Bipolar disorder I was relieved to find out what had been going on with me for so many years.

When I was told how to cope with it, I found great hope because it gave me new purpose for my life. I finally knew how to conquer these tumultuous mood swings I had been battling for so long. As I went to group and 1:1 therapy, I learned many techniques to live a more healthy life and I went on to graduate from college with a degree in education. As I kept reading the article, I realized it was the way the psychiatrist said it to her, as if that is all she could manage to do, as if there wasn't so much more she could still do with her life.

I'm happy I got to read this article because it gave me the opportunity to see through someone else's eyes, which I need to always remember because everyone's experience is not always going to be through the lens of my own story. I want to always keep this in mind as I help others on the journey to their own recovery.

### The Benefits of Walking

#### *Walking Toward a Healthier You*

There are countless physical activities out there, but walking has the lowest dropout rate of them all! It's the simplest positive change you can make to effectively improve your heart health.

Research has shown that the benefits of walking and moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day can help you:

- Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease
- Improve blood pressure and blood sugar levels
- Improve blood lipid profile
- Maintain body weight and lower the risk of obesity
- Enhance mental well being
- Reduce the risk of osteoporosis
- Reduce the risk of breast and colon cancer
- Reduce the risk of non-insulin dependent (type 2) diabetes

*There really are so many benefits for such a simple activity!*





# CRSS Institute #34



*Front Row (L to R)*

Jessica Hess, Caroline Witt, Dorthea Nobile, Michelle Becker, Liana Gutierrez, Shawna Lynn Fitzgerald (Johnson)

*Middle Row (L to R)*

Heather Simonsen, Robyn Flannery, Virginia Poczulp, Brenda Nuez-Lopez, Teresa Simpson, Leesa McKendall

*Back Row (L to R)*

Katherine Gardner, Brett Smith, Willis Taylor, Stephanie Bursey

## RSSI Panel of CRSSs

*Back Row (L to R)* Shanna Moore, Norma Castaneda

*Front Row (L to R)* Floyd Linton, Kyle Long



The Recovery Support Specialist Institute is administered by the Workforce Development Program in the Department of Family and Community Medicine (DFCM) at the University of Arizona. The Institute is funded by the Community Partnership of Southern Arizona (CPSA). CPSA receives funding from the Arizona Department of Health Services/ Division of Behavioral Health Services (ADHS/DBHS), Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).



## Make sure you get your next issue!

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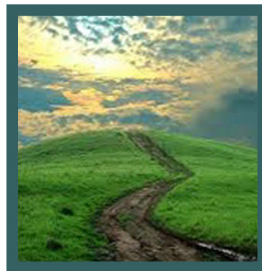
christinabaca@email.arizona.edu

Be Sure To Visit Our New Website at:

<http://www.fcm.arizona.edu/workforce-development-program>

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**wdp** | **workforce development program**

Recovery Support Specialist Institute



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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.

**Family & Community Medicine**  
"Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

