

University of Arizona  
Recovery thru Integration,  
Support & Empowerment-RISE  
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**Bimonthly  
Newsletter**

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October  
December  
February  
April

Next Newsletter Comes out  
in **June**

To receive the RSS Newsletter please reply with the following information to:

**RISE**  
**1450 N Cherry, Tucson, Arizona 85719-4207** or  
E-Mail: [beverlym@email.arizona.edu](mailto:beverlym@email.arizona.edu)  
Telephone: **520-626-7473** Fax: **520-626-7833**  
On line at:  
**[www.fcm.arizona.edu/outreach/rise](http://www.fcm.arizona.edu/outreach/rise)**

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This newsletter is for anyone inspired by the information interested in the growing RSS Program, and becoming employed to provide support to others in their journey of recovery.

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**Recovery Support Specialist  
Newsletter**

Issue #23  
April 2009



**From Being Empowered to  
Empowering Others**

**George Storm, RSS**



For years, even after knowing that I had a substance use disorder, I found myself unable to control my urges. At times I achieved significant periods of sobriety only to succumb to an urge.

Over the years I also participated in groups where relapse seemed to be based on guilt and shame. I simply quit going, rather than stand up in a group and say "I relapsed again". I felt hopeless.

Luckily I stumbled into a behavioral health clinic where I met a Recovery Support Specialist. She was able to guide me to effective tools enabling me to control my urges. I changed the way I acted and reacted, and actually changed the outcomes of situations through self-management. I was empowered to become an expert in my own recovery.

At a point in my life where I had not worked in over three years and was lacking goals or motivation, I was given a simple message of hope: "you can do it". Learning that my RSS was also in recovery and now guiding others in their recovery was an inspiration for me and I decided that I also wanted to become a RSS. I learned that a RSS is not so much a degree of learning as much as it is a degree of caring.

A short year later, I am a Recovery Support Specialist myself. I am so honored to join the company of earlier "agents of change" who are giving of themselves to help change the stigma of mental illness and substance use disorders. We define who we are with our unlimited possibilities. I had no idea how much depth a RSS has, but through the Institute I learned many new tools which will enable me to treat others as they would like to be treated. I learned the importance of using person-first language, the value of listening, the value of empowering others by looking to strengths rather than weaknesses, and the vision that recovery and hope go hand in hand.

**Advisory Committee**

- Kathy Lewis  
CRSS
- John McElroy  
CRSS
- Ken Rogers  
CRSS
- Patricia Porras  
CRSS
- Dan Steffy



Certified Recovery Support Specialists are invited to join the Advisory Committee.

Please call RISE at 520-626-7473 for the date and time of meetings.

**News of Note**

Angela Dingledine, CRSS resigned from the RSS Newsletter Advisory Committee. She has left CPSA Member Services and is on a new path. We would like to thank Angela for all her help with the Newsletter and wish her the best in her journey.  
Good Luck Angela and Keep in Touch

**Jeffrey Russ Orchekowsky  
December 2, 1971 – March 16, 2009**



It is with sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Jeff Orchekowsky, RSS. One of his proudest achievements was graduating from Recovery Support Specialist Institute 16 and the friends he made there. Jeff was a person of charm, love and joy. He searched to find the best in himself and others. Let us remember his life with love and reach out to others with compassion.

**Love given is love received, we never run out.**

**All Recovery Support Specialists (RSS)** are invited to a reception on Thursday, May 28, 2009, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the COPE Mesquite Office, 2435 N. Castro (one block west of Stone, north of Grant). Beth Stoneking, Dan Steffy and Beverly McGuffin will be giving an update on the RSS Institute's Past, Present, and Future. John McElroy, CRSS, along with the Benchiks will be hosting the event.

Please R.S.V.P. to Aaron Valencia at [avalencia@copecommunityservices.org](mailto:avalencia@copecommunityservices.org) or (520) 792-3293

Beth C. Stoneking, PhD, MSW, CPRP Publisher  
 Beverly McGuffin, RN, MS, CPRP Editor  
 BreAnn Currie 2 Page Designer



**Word Quest**

Find all 16 words

|                  |                   |                   |                     |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Balance</b>   | <b>Expert</b>     | <b>Listen</b>     | <b>Privilege</b>    |
| <b>Beautiful</b> | <b>Fellowship</b> | <b>Love</b>       | <b>Satisfaction</b> |
| <b>Enhance</b>   | <b>Grateful</b>   | <b>Meaningful</b> | <b>Succeed</b>      |
| <b>Examples</b>  | <b>Guide</b>      | <b>New</b>        | <b>Warmth</b>       |

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## Did you know...

During these tough financial times, many people feel they have to push themselves to unhealthy levels in order to succeed. But high-pressure jobs and long hours take a real toll on their immediate and future health. Whether running for president, moving up the corporate ladder, or juggling the family's activities, success may come at a hefty cost.

The 7 worst habits of these workaholics include:

1. Forgetting to relax: Some stress can be good because it keeps you alert and motivated; too much stress, however, will take its toll on your body.
2. Eating on the go: Who has time to sit down for a healthy lunch? But beware of frozen meals, fast, and processed food that can be high in sodium, calories, and fat.
3. Putting off sleep for work: Lack of sleep can cause irritability, difficulty concentrating, memory problems, poor judgment, and obesity.
4. Not making time for exercise: Humans were not designed to sit at desks for 8 hours a day. Exercise has been shown to reduce the risk for nearly every major disease and to help fight anxiety and depression.
5. Working when sick: 3 common-sense reasons to stay home: avoid spreading the infection, you'll be less productive, and you need your rest to get better.
6. Drinking (too much): Moderate alcohol consumption has some proven health benefits, but excessive drinking can lead to alcoholism, liver disease, and some forms of cancer.
7. Skipping annual medical checkups: Depending on age, family history, and lifestyle, a comprehensive medical checkup and special screenings is recommended every 1 to 5 years.

Eventually, something's going to give. If your patients keep burning the candle at both ends, the flame will burn out faster. But, if they maintain a healthy balance, they will be happier and healthier overall.

That's my opinion. I'm Dr George Griffing, Professor of Medicine at St. Louis University and Editor in Chief of Internal Medicine for eMedicine.

**Your Recovery Capital is multiplied by increasing your positive health habits.**

## **Acquire the Recovery Fire! 3rd Annual National Peer Specialist Conference August 26-28, 2009 Hyatt - Phoenix, Arizona**

**Wednesday, August 26th 1:00pm – 5:00pm; Thursday, August 27th 9:00am – 5:00pm; Friday, August 28th 9:00am – Noon**

The conference will feature both plenary and breakout sessions. The plenary sessions will address broad peer specialist issues while the breakouts will be dedicated to workshops that focus on specific topic areas. About 30 workshops total will be offered.

**For more details and information go to**

**[www.naops.org](http://www.naops.org)**



***ADVANCED PEER PRACTICES–THE NEXT GENERATION***

**Will be available on August 24 & 25**

**Cost reduced rate of \$75.00 with textbook**

**Registration begins April 2, 2009; Online Class begins May 1, 2009**

**Register online at: [www.recoveryopportunity.com](http://www.recoveryopportunity.com)  
or Call Lisa Anderson 602 636 4411**

National Association of Peer Specialists NAPS Membership costs \$10/year and includes a monthly newsletter full of information.

**Randell T. Snedden**  
**RSS Institute 16 Graduate**



The Recovery Support Specialist Institute? WOW! Anyone working in behavioral health could use the skills taught in the Institute to enhance their effectiveness as a helping professional. I learned how powerful hope can be to a person on the road to recovery from mental illness, substance use, or both.

A RSS gave me hope. He is somebody who had over eight years clean and sober, always seemed happy, and was living comfortably. He gave me hope, encouragement, and a lot of support. Hope is what helped me believe that recovery is possible. Hope is the substance that gave me encouragement, belief in myself, belief that I too could recover and live a productive and satisfying life. Hope is the beginning of what, for me, as a person with a co-occurring disorder, has been the driving force in my own recovery and the beginning of fulfilling my dreams for happiness. Hope has carried me through four years of clean and sober living. Hope is what brought me to the Recovery Support Specialist Institute. Hope is the foundation of my recovery, the place where recovery began to take shape. The RSS Institute teaches the tools we can use as peers to give that hope to others as shining examples of what recovery looks like.

The RSS Institute has taught me how to be a professional in a dynamic way that is beneficial, not only those that I serve and support, but also to myself! My thanks to all those that have had a part in creating the RSS Institute and for the opportunity to learn skills to empower my community and myself. My best wishes to the graduates of the Recovery Support Specialist Institute, now and in the future, who have opened their heart to help others.

**Important Things to Learn from the Institute**  
**Keri Ferrell, RSS Institute 17**



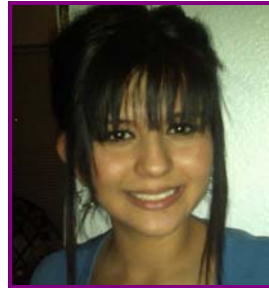
My name is Kari Ferrell and I am a graduate of the 17<sup>th</sup> Recovery Support Specialist Institute held in Benson. To tell you about all that I learned would take up much more space than I'm allowed in this newsletter. So I'll tell you about a couple of the most important things that I learned.

One of the main lessons I learned was to listen, listen and listen. This turned out to be a major chore for me. It may sound strange to some that a person has to learn how to listen. Listening is not as easy as you think. People who work in the field of "recovery" are people who have a need to help other people. One of the main things helpful people do is offer advice, right? This seems fairly simple and reasonable until you stop and realize that if you are talking and "offering advice" then you are obviously not listening. While I've not mastered the art, I can certainly say, that thanks to the trainers and my classmates and the roll-plays we did, I have made great strides in my ability to listen. Now working with participants I've discovered things about them that I didn't know because I never really listened to them and what they had to say. Rather, I was deciding what I needed to say next to help them, when all they really needed is to be heard.

My relationships with my co-workers, supervisors and participants have greatly improved since completing the RSS Institute. I will be eternally grateful for all that I learned. I will end by telling you the most important thing I learned from the Institute was about me. I discovered that I was not alone and more importantly that it is OK to be me.

### **In Recovery**

**Michelle “Mishaa” Ramirez, RSS Institute 17**



My name is Michelle M. Ramirez and I am in recovery from a substance use disorder. I began drinking at the age of 13 and then graduated to harder drugs ultimately leading to what I thought was the love of my life, heroin. I could not tell you why I began using drugs, for even I do not know the reason.

I could tell you that I come from a father who was drunk and a mother who was addicted, but that would be a lie. Both of my parents were very successful as entrepreneurs and I was the product of a beautiful marriage. I have the privilege of my parents still being together and supporting me through everything I've done. I was a child full of hopes and dreams who lost everything to a syringe. I always excelled in everything I did especially music. I began playing the violin at the age of nine and immediately fell in love with it. I'd hold small concerts for my family in the comfort of my living room and responded well to my father's criticism; but somehow along the way I just wanted more. I felt completely sheltered. I wanted to break lose, scream obscenities up and down the street without caring about what my dad would think.

Well, I did get to scream obscenities but unfortunately it was in rehab while withdrawing from opiates. Oh the sweet smell of sweat and vomit; how they've marked me forever. I never thought I was addicted. You see, an “addict” to me, was a person who lived on the street and asked people for money to supply their dope habit. That wasn't me! I was a girl with a promising future as a paramedic. I didn't beg for money, not yet at least.

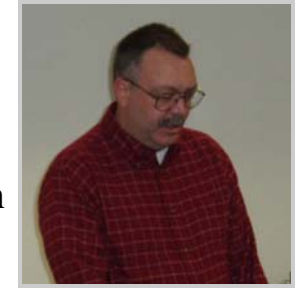
I don't remember much about my last high, since I overdosed and woke up in a bath tub filled with ice cubes, but what I can say is that it was the best high in my life, because it led me into the best high of all, the high of 100%, pure, uncut, sobriety. That is what I call priceless. My journey has been a difficult one but I wouldn't trade it for the world. I've met amazing people along the way whom I love and admire with all my heart. When I first started sobriety I would tell my RSS (Arnold Aguila) “I'm going to take your job”, and I did!!! (Don't worry he got promoted). He helped me so much along the way and showed me that recovery is worth your while.

Few people believed in me and he was one of them. What I love about this job is that you show people that there is a way out. Underneath all those drugs, hangovers and withdrawals, there is a beautiful, incredible world that is waiting to show you the true meaning of life, you just have to want it. Many people may believe that Recovery Support Specialists do not play an important role in the behavioral health field. I beg to differ because the truth is that we are an inspiration to those people who still are in the hell I call addiction.

My name is Michelle M. Ramirez and I am a Recovery Support Specialist who has been sober 315 days and counting.

### **Of Warmth and Fellowship**

**Mike Knust, RSS Institute 17**



The RSS Institute training I received recently has reminded me that I, nor anyone, can recover alone. Recovery is a team effort witnessed in the warmth of fellowship. During my late teens and early twenties I loved my lonely world, but when booze and depression turned my smile upside down I felt the aloneness overwhelm me.

It was in recovery, AA, and the company of new friends that the ice of loneliness and fear began to melt. At first, it was only a trickle—a drop or two; slowly the smiles and laughs and hugs began to warm my Spirit. As the days, weeks, months and years have now gone by, I realize the frozen walls around me have melted.

The RSS Institute training was a team effort, and like all great teams its foundation is based on Love, Service and Fellowship. Vince Lombardi, the famous coach of the Green Bay Packers, once said: “you don't have to like everyone in this room, but you have to Love them because they keep showing up.” I imagine those practices were not easy, yet people showed up day after day.

Perhaps recovery is like that too. The fellowship and teamwork are necessary; we cannot do it alone. It is not always fun and easy, but with a little help from our friends we overcome the obstacles—the icy walls of loneliness and fear, together.

The RSS Institute reminded me of this approach to life and recovery. The partnered exercises, the role-playing and the team-like atmosphere all worked together to foster the warmth of recovery. Working together at the RSS Institute as well as in the community, we can help melt those icy walls of loneliness and fear.

# Recovery Support Specialist Certification Ceremony



**Standing: Craig Dover, Bill Haymaker, Alan Woods, George Storm, Michael Soto, Michael Knust, David Longoria**

**Front Row: Rita Reeder, Tina Jones, Michelle "Mishaa" Ramirez, Kari Ferrell**

## South Eastern Arizona

Graham, Greenlee,  
Cochise, and Santa Cruz  
Counties



## The Panel

Bud Blanchard, CRSS, SEABHS  
Cynthia Aspengren, CRSS, CPSA  
Arnoldo Aguila, CRSS, SEABHS