

Workforce Development News

Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist Institute

Tucson, Arizona November 12, 2015



Certified Peer Support Specialist Graduates

Back Row left to right:

Scott Clark, Edward Gomez, Jesse Martinez, Kathryn Reeder, Lawrence Rodriguez, Erin Fingal Schoonejongen,
Jesse Levin, Ralph Yordy, Lynn 'Lindsey' Balderston, Selene Vanity Milroy, Amy O'Brien, Yoland Matthews,
William Baer

Front Row left to right:

Elisabeth Weihmann, Emily Richardson, Sheryl Heffner, Kenneth Clark, Georgia Comfort,
Ginger 'Roze' Rich, Andrea Sainz



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Hope

Erin Fingal

It's OK I've made mistakes. It's OK I've isolated myself from fear when depressed. It's OK I've spent too much money, done dangerous, destructive things when manic. It's OK I spent too long in an abusive marriage. It's OK I lost myself. It's OK I've lost jobs and ruined opportunities. It's OK I didn't handle my mother's death well in the beginning. It's OK that it took a long time for me to get to this point. It's OK I am who I am. It's OK.

Because I'm here now. Six months ago I was as good as dead, and would be now if I had not been offered the strength to see hope. My, new to me then, RSS, was persistent (annoying at the time!) when I was afraid to leave the house and deteriorating quickly. I sat on the bed day in and day out wanting to die- thinking of how to do it and without enough energy to accomplish it- even calling the National Suicide Hotline, who just made me angry, which just made me worse. I was losing everything; I did lose everything. I threw myself into Assurance Health and Wellness (thanks, again, to my RSS who I no longer think to be annoying! In fact, just the opposite) where I was already a member, and utilized every resource they had. I gained a real support system. They reached out to me, and I slowly started feeling comfortable reaching back. And so I started getting better. I'm happier now than I can remember being, with nothing. I wasn't aware of what everyone else saw: it was a good thing that I escaped the situation I was in, as hard as it has been to pull through. I was living a toxic life with toxic people, which wasn't helping my diagnoses, let alone my physical well-being. I learned to see this, and that is when everything changed. The past is the past. All I can do is keep moving forward working through one experience at a time. Life is hard. I accept that. Life is beautiful, too. I live by that. My disease/s don't define who I am, they never did,

but I wasn't taught to know that. Everyday I am discovering more about who I am and who I want to be, and also focusing on all the amazing things I have done! I had forgotten about that girl who had "big dreams" and believed she could accomplish them. I remember her now, and guess what? She's back.

Point is, I don't think my whole backstory matters. In the long run, we all have something in common. We need support. I didn't have any for the longest time; all I had was my cat (who still helps, yes!). We need support that helps us realize that the past is OK. The future is still ahead. There is hope, just grab on to it! We all just need to heal in our own way. This is the strongest group of people I have ever met and I am honored to have been a part of this class. Now I have gained even more support-friends.

"... and then the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom..." - Anais Nin

Out of the Ashes

Em Rose



Nobody ever starts drinking or doing drugs with the intention of becoming an "addict." Those of us who have suffered the consequences of substance abuse didn't start by throwing our moral compass out the window. In fact my journey started out much like anyone who has ever had a sip of alcohol. With that first sip my life was forever altered. My most recent addiction ended on May 31st 2014 with the birth of my son.

In November of 2013 I was deep into an addiction to methamphetamine. I found myself pregnant. I had no idea who his father was. I was scared, lost, alone and hopeless. I tried and tried to stop using on my own to no avail. As I lay in a hospital bed after giving birth to my son, who was substance exposed and premature, I tried to figure out how a once promising, intelligent young lady had turned into a monster. The Department of Child Services immediately removed him from my care and custody and placed him with my amazing sister.

I was shattered. I thought my life was over. I had the biggest pity party you've ever seen for about two hours. And then I made the decision

that I wanted to get better. I wanted to love me. I wanted to feel whole again. I wanted to live. That decision right there was the beginning of my story of hope. Hope starts from within. I was incredibly fortunate to obtain a support system that fostered my desire to recover, including my RSS Linda. She guided me, she called me out, she encouraged healthy decisions but most of all she listened to me. I went to groups with other mothers who shared commonalities of my situation. I wasn't alone. I found hope in each and every one of those women. I was inspired. I found my passion. Its amazing how out of the ashes something new and amazing can transpire.

I graduated my treatment program in June of this year. My son is now home full time. And now tonight, on my 31st birthday, he is sleeping soundly in his crib 20 feet away from me. The glow of his night light soft on his cheeks gives me hope for the future.

I will graduate the University of Arizona's Workforce Development Recovery Support Specialist Institute in 3 days. Recovery is 100% possible. Not just recovery to live a normal life, but to thrive with out limits, exercising and eating healthy. I had regular visits with my son. People noticed how sad I had been when I first entered the S.T.A.R.S. program in May, but noticed as I progressed through it, that I was smiling, laughing and enjoying myself so much more! I regained my sense of self and humor and that yes, I was okay being who I truly was! I wanted to stay sober now for myself, my son, my mom and my sister. I wasn't drinking because I hated myself anymore. I wanted my son not to drink, so now it was important for me to set a good example for him. Now I truly feel that the world has opened up so many possibilities for me and God is directing me in my path in this life. I am abundantly hopeful for a very bright future!

I Didn't Know What I Didn't Know

Edward Gomez

I have always believed in hope. Hope that there will be a better day for me. Hope that I will learn and grow. But hope for my recovery is a matter, an experience, I had never considered. I suppose I never really had to consider recovery, not by force or by awareness. Recovery, what is that? I never heard of it. Recovery? What does that mean? I'm ok, why shouldn't I be? I was a high functioning addict and wasn't even aware that I was. I sure didn't think about it, ever! At least not until I was abruptly and virtually overnight forced off all the opiates I was addicted to. And they were a lot! I went into severe withdrawal symptoms for a long time. Wow! What a very rude and brutal experience! I didn't know what I didn't know. Well, I do know, long story short, I realize for once in my life I need, can, and am finally on my way to recovery. And the best thing about it is there is hope! Hope that I will recover. A desire and belief that I will be alright. Hope that everything will be better than I thought it could be. To me this is true hope. Realizing there is something even greater than I had ever known, which I can regain, or capture that I lost or was taken from me as a child or anytime in my life for that matter.



knowledge that, despite all the dysfunction in my life, despite all the wrongs I have committed – not just against others, but against myself as well – I deserve to regain the good I was born with – the good I can become. Hope that I will be that I am meant to be. Whatever that may be, I believe it is meant for just me.

Hope is being filled with belief or

Renewal of Hope

Jessie Levin

My journey in recovery has been the most fulfilling part of my life thus far. Having had spiritual awakening and a new perspective on life catapulted me into recovery. A renewal of HOPE, willingness, and determination to be the best me I could be. I went from the darkest depths of depression, trauma, and substance use...To a 'Miracle'. I've learned a discipline in life that resulted in the most beautiful priceless sense that of "Peace of Mind".



Living in Recovery

Felis Valenzuela

Hope wasn't a word I would have used six months ago unless it had 'no' in the front of it. I would have used so many other words to describe me and my life style. I was a manipulator, a liar, and most of all a disappointment to everyone that was important to me in my life. I felt like there was absolutely no hope in my life and that I would never recover from this horrible disease and all of the damage I had done. I was ready to give up. Things and people that had mattered to me meant nothing anymore. I had turned into everything I had never wanted to become. I finally decided I either needed to check myself into a mental hospital or make it easy on everyone who loved me and give up! I had no self-worth and thought it would be better to just give up. It was then I had a small spark of hope and decided my last shot was to check myself in, but to be honest, I really didn't have a lot of faith in it working at all but I needed to go for at least my babies! It was miserable. I didn't accomplish anything in there but more self-doubt.

It wasn't until I finally got out and met my peer supporter when things finally started looking up and I was able to put hope back into my heart. I pulled up to Assurance afraid to even move. My first reaction was that I didn't belong there but something made me go. I walked in and immediately got introduced to my peer supporter. He made me a little nervous but

was training a girl who decided to sit next to me and asked if we could talk. It was the first time I finally could relate to somebody! She just listened to me and when I was done sobbing she told me a little about herself. I fit in somewhere. I found someone who had been through similar situations and addiction and she had been clean for over two years and was doing so well. It was then I felt hope! She helped me realize I could get there too! I could beat this awful disease and live in recovery! She contacted me daily for the first couple of months and if she was busy there were other peer supporters in my IOP and other classes that were there to listen and help guide me in my recovery but never telling what I should do, just there to support me.

After about four month of being clean, I realized I could and wanted to help people just like these incredible angels had helped me. I wanted to give people hope back into their life just like they had done for me! My recovery hasn't been the easiest but it has been possible. I know with God, my peer support, and the incredible support system I am worth it and I can do this. After going through this incredible Institute it made me realize everything does happen for a reason and this is what I am supposed to do! Even if I can just help one person and give them hope again, this journey would have been well worth it!

Hope Became Reality

Georgia Comfort

Hope is an optimistic attitude of mind based on an expectation of positive outcomes related to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large.

Hope is the reason I am here today. Hope is many things to different people. It could be a birthday wish, a relationship, the outcome of a final exam. To me hope was the difference between life and certain death. And hope kept my spirit alive.

My life has been one crazy adventure after another since the age of 9 when I was first introduced to cocaine. It was love at first sight. And like many love stories there was of course a tragic end to that chapter of my life. Actually growing up in the system, foster homes, Juvi, residential treatments and eventually jail and prison were all traumatic and very tragic. In looking back at my life, tragic endings are what I expected out of mostly everything. I'm not sure when my hopes and dreams became obsolete and tragedy and pain became my life story. Ever since I can remember I was always the "Foster Kid". Or the "Drug Addict" or with a doctors help "depressed, OCD, Angry, Morbid, or mentally unstable". I was talked about as if I wasn't in the room, I had more therapists than I care to remember. Even the teachers in school had such low expectations from the troubled foster kid that I didn't even have to go to class. It was as though my living arrangement was who I was as a person, Trouble. I had ideas and hopes and dreams that I vowed to bring to life and show the world I'm much more than the label of the week.

As I grew older Hopes of a better life, more meaningful relationships, friends, normalcy, and the white picket fence faded more and more as my addiction and unhealthy behaviors



grew to monstrous proportions. Finally I was sentenced to 10 years in Arizona Department of Corrections. And the world stopped turning. I was stripped to the bone of every possession and left vulnerable and afraid in a place where I knew no one. Sitting on my bunk I prayed, I remembered those hopes and dreams I had for a better life, for family, for something so much more. I grew those hopes, into plans and hung on to my better life. That was my sanity, That is how I survived in my incarceration. I had hope and I had faith that I could and would make something good out of something so terrible. I have always been the optimist looking for the silver lining in everything and everyone. Hope is how I stay that way and faith is what proves me right every once in a while.

I made it out alive with my hope and faith all packed up and moving on to bigger and better things. Well I don't care who you are you can have the best attitude in world, all the hope you can muster, plan until you are blue

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Hope by Georgia Comfort continued

in the face, if you don't do the work necessary to fix the original problem then it's just going to break again. That I did. Myself and all my baggage I hang on to so tightly came crashing down once again. This time my bottom was not destructive in the legal sense, however it was in the mental and emotional sense. I was going to break and I knew I had to do something or I would be gone forever. I couldn't take any more and I remember sitting in the middle of the room huddled with my dog and crying uncontrollably for hours. So many things going through my mind from what is wrong with me to every mistake I ever made coming back to remind me of the failure and loss in my life. I felt such heartache and pain I honestly thought I might die. After the crying subsided I wrestled my way to my feet and into the bathroom to wash my face and clean myself up, for what, I didn't know.

And something happened, When I walked into the bathroom and looked in the mirror ,there I was. The real me. Not the label, not the shut off, shut, down have to be strong girl, It was me standing there vulnerable and disheveled with puffy bloodshot eyes and runny nose. And all I could say is I'm sorry I missed you. At that moment I knew things had to change. I made promises to myself that day. I promised to get clean, I promised to be 100% with myself, to be open, to be proactive and to get me back and love me again. Sitting there looking in the mirror I remembered my hopes for my better life and family. I remembered what I

wanted to badly and never could quite get my hands around. And I also knew I couldn't do this on my own.

The following day I walk through the doors of LaFrontera where my life changed and my hopes started to become reality. I am forever grateful for the facilitators of the STARS IOP, Pathway Introduction to Behavioral Health, to my class mates, the counselors and most of all my awesome support system. I have some really amazing people in my corner who have helped walk this path each and every step of the way. Encouraging me and believing in me. The knowledge and education I gained from attending LaFontera programs is priceless. From truly understanding me, my emotions and habits, to my coping skills and rational thinking, communication and healthy relationships skills. Setting healthy boundaries and following through on them. Having the courage to stand up and be me, be proud of me and know that I am learning and growing on a daily basis and it's a beautiful thing. My hope's and dreams of a better life, being a better person and believing that it is possible are all coming to life. Hope got me through the darkest days of my life. Hope has also brought me to where and who I am today. I have kept my promises to me and now it's my turn to share my story with others and hope that I can help just one other to never give up, to never lose faith and to always remember that hope can come to life if you allow it,

Thank you for allowing me to share a little of me with you!

A Very Bright Future!

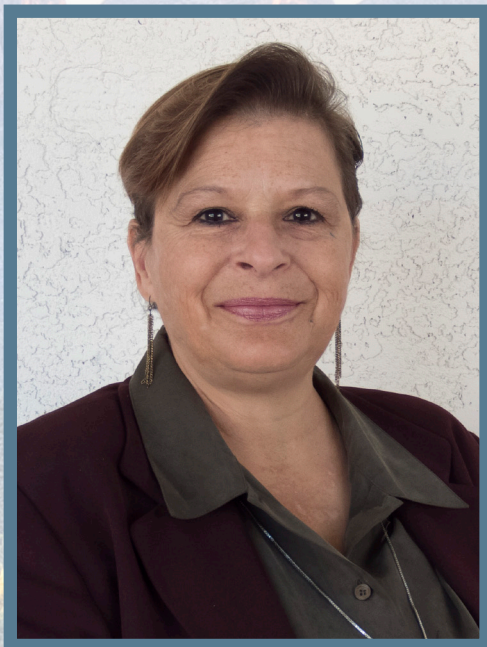
Amy O'Brien



My true seed of hope for my recovery from alcohol and mental illness was probably when I separated from my husband of 18 years in April of this year. DCS was involved in our case and I moved out to live with my sister-in-law. My husband berated me for years and I truly felt "beat down". I had very poor self-esteem and didn't take care

of myself physically, emotionally or spiritually then. When I moved into my sister-in-law's house, at first I was sad about the separation.

But after only about 3 months, I was starting to thrive! I enrolled in a parenting class through the parent connection, joined La Frontera's "S.T.A.R.S." intensive outpatient program, went to regular and Christian AA meetings, joined a new church, and joined a divorce recovery group. Eventually I started exercising and eating healthy. I had regular visits with my son. People saw how sad I had been when I first entered the S.T.A.R.S. program in May, but noticed as I progressed through it, that I was smiling, laughing and enjoying myself so much more! I regained my sense of self and humor and that yes, I was okay being who I truly was! I wanted to stay sober now for myself, my son, my mom and my sister. I wasn't drinking because I hated myself anymore. I wanted my son to not drink so now it was important for me to set a good example for him. Now I truly feel that the world has opened up so many possibilities for me and God is directing me in my path in this life. I am abundantly hopeful for a very bright future!



With Love and Hope

Ginger Roze Rich

When I think of hope, I think of being able to say, "I know what that feels like."

I know what it feels like to be abused, sexually, physically, mentally, and spiritually, from before I could walk, until I left home at 16. I know what it feels like to be neglected and abandoned. I've experienced foster homes and an orphanage. I know what it feels like to be trafficked, sold and beaten by a pimp. I know what it's like to feel all alone in the on the streets of big cities that were foreign to me. I know what it's like to be raped, kidnaped and beaten. I know what it's like to have a baby taken and sold on the black market. I know what it feels like when your baby is murdered. I know what it's like to be in an abusive relationship. I know what it's like to be told you are mentally ill, specifically, borderline personality disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. I know what it's like to kill someone in self-defense. I know what it feels like to be in a dangerous gang. I know what it's like to be an

I.V. drug user, a meth addict, a heroin addict, a crack head. I know how it feels when C.P.S takes your children. I know what it's like to be in a mental hospital. The list goes on and on.

The point is, I've been granted the opportunity to experience some of life's most painful and terrifying things. I know what it's like to have to face my past and try to understand why all these bad things happened in my life, knowing all along, I wasn't a bad person.

I finally came to the realization that bad things weren't the only kinds of things that ever happened in my life.

I know what it's like to find that baby that was kidnapped and sold. I just happened to find him on Mother's Day. I know that was no accident, but a gift from God. I know what it feels like to be a mother to two beautiful girls, to raise them and to be loved by them. Even though I had no real parents or family, besides my children, I know what it's like to be loved, cared for, and encouraged by people, I call, earthly angels. I also call these angels family.

I know what it's like to seek recovery and find it. I know what it's like to find God. I know what it's like to find peace of mind. I know what it's like to use my experience, my whole library of experience, good and bad, this valuable wisdom, to help others. To be a light for them. To be loving, even though there were times in my life, people weren't so loving to me. They served their purpose. I believe that if we are allowed to experience hell and do the work to be the heroes of our lives. From that, hope is born.

I want to put a shout out to my sweet children who have found themselves using again. I want you to know I still love you. I could never be angry at you

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With Love and Hope continued

Ginger Roze Rich

for using , cause I've been watching and I know how life can get you so far down, you feel the only choice you have is, die or use. Once you use, you feel like you've disappointed me and the whole world. You use some more, to avoid feeling all the shame. You go through your day laughing, joking, having best friends, and lovers, all of whom use with you. They help you feel accepted. They all tell you you're beautiful. "You're the best." The drugs help you feel all these things are true. And for a time, you believe it. You're having "fun". Using helps you do and feel all these things. But when you finally pass out, wake up in the morning, look in the mirror... it hits you... your heart sinks... deep into your soul. The pain, shame, hatred for yourself, anger, hopelessness, fear, weakness and sickness comes bubbling up into your throat. Screaming, "Why am I here again! HELP ME!!!"

Baby, I won't hurt you. I am not ashamed of you. I love you. I have hope for you. Right here, sweetheart. I'll give you joy again, I'll give you strength. You can be healthy again. Just whisper my name. My name is Love . I have people all around you, just jumping up and down, eager to be there for you, saying "pick me!" I want to help you!

Just in case you think you don't have another recovery in you, I promise you, you do. As long as you are breathing air, you have another one in you. So, call or text anyone of your friends in recovery. Right now. Don't take time to think about it. Just do it. All you have to say is "help". We, together, will do all the rest. For now, I will carry you until you can stand. My children, in recovery, will hold your hand till you can walk. Just for now, this is all you need to do. Signed love.

LOVE is God.....GOD is Love.

When Hope Found Me...

Yolanda Matthews

Hope, gives one the strength to want to survive. One who travels through mazes of uncertainties with inner strength to conquer all challenges. One of many struggle with trauma as other would say "It's what we make of our lives". A traumatizing divorce left me feeling inadequate, unable to love and unworthy.

I sulked for days that turned into months, watching my children take a downward spiral as family ran to their aid. I watched helpless until I found the "Will" with the support from my higher power and family to walk out of the darkness.

Hope in Having Peace in My Life

Kathryn Reeder

My recovery of Hope. Started with a lot of hopelessness. I am a mother of 5 and lived so many years on autopilot. Believing there was no hope, nothing was going to change. So to help manage my unmanageable life I used meth. It gave me energy to continue every day. I could speak to people and stand my ground when using. I wasn't scared of everything like when I was sober. Being hopeless is exhausting and frustrating. My discovery of Hope happened at an unusual place for me. I was in jail. I had completely destroyed my life and lost my kids to CPS. Now this was my 4th time in, but instead of just releasing me, as they did so many times before, they ordered jail. I was not going anywhere and am forever grateful to the judicial system and CPS. I was there for about 3 months when I started talking to people, especially the guards. They knew my brothers and sisters because each of us had been in there multiple times. Now talking I could do, but this time I listened which was new for me. I went to meetings and church. I think at this point, I saw things differently because I had no responsibility, no decisions to make and the guards gave us orders.

So for the first time that I could remember, I was sober and realizing what my life had become and how my addiction was not assisting me like I had thought. I realized I needed help and the tools to change my life. I finally saw there was a different way



to live and that gave me the Hope I needed. So when I signed my plea agreement, I asked the judge if I could stay in jail until a bed at a rehab opened up for me. I learned a lot in jail and that was my first step in advocating for myself. I went to rehab 6 months later and was so scared. What kept me going was the thought of having peace in my life and my children's lives. Every day I listened and got stronger. I worked hard to understand my addiction and my mental disorder. Having Hope and Determination has forever and continuously changed my life and my children's lives.

A Stepping Stone

Lawrence Rodriguez



When I finally admitted I had a dual diagnosis problem is when my life began to make sense. This year I had a breakthrough with my therapist Ms. Robin A. After several sessions

of her digging into my past is when she finally answered a question I had had for many years, "why have I gone to prison three times and my younger brother and sister never been there once"? The answer was because they never saw what I saw being that I'm the oldest, I saw a lot more. The violence, guns, domestic violence all snow balled into the streets, jail, prison over and over. Eventually I began to cope with my P.T.S.D. and anxiety and depression by self-medicating.

Bottom line my therapist said had I learned about my mental illness way back I may of not gone to prison three times because I may of learned coping skills to help with my issues. I believe so because since my new knowledge on mental illness I am clean and sober since Dec. 20 2014. I'm managing my anxiety and depression and have stopped the vicious cycle by choice. The RSS I am now certified with is a stepping stone for me to give back and help any all that are willing to listen and learn through my mistakes and recoveries.

Success is Totally Possible

Lynn Balderston



My personal experience with hope has been a long and turbulent one with many twists and turns along the road. Hope for me is an everyday battle and does not necessarily come from one moment in time. My nurse practitioner at CODAC is the one who suggested this course for me to attend and thought I was ready for the challenge. Unfortunately, my feelings of hope were greatly tested in class after having learned that numerous therapy tools had been neglected to be given to me in the last four years as I have sought treatment for my mental illness at CODAC. But that knowledge also gave me greater hope and new skills for me to use to enhance my recovery to greater degree than I ever could have realized. I also found that being in a class with many people who have mental illness with additional comorbidities who have seemingly done so well on their path to recovery gave me a great boost of hope that if they could do it, I can do it. Without hope and faith I would not have been able to make it this far.

I have been working on trying to discover the areas in my life that must be addressed for me to recover to the fullest extent from my mental illness and found many of those answers in this program. I desperately need a support base of friends, a social life, find my happiness, to learn to control my negative thoughts and counter them with positive ones, and to find others struggling with the same mental illness and physical challenges that I have. The new tools I have learned from this class are seemingly paramount to what it is I need to focus on and to do to continue on my journey in a positive manner to recovery as an individual with a serious mental illness.

Becoming a CRSS I believe will possibly help me find my place in the world where I can still contribute my knowledge, education, and experience in a positive way to help others as well as myself to regain the self-esteem and confidence that I have lost. I have been told by many people I should go get my Master's Degree to become a Licensed Professional Therapist and the CRSS program is my stepping stone to the hopeful possible realization of this. I found the physical part of sitting for eight hours a day for several days in a row to be more than my body can handle and that my hearing is worse than I ever realized but this was all part of what I needed to know to make a feasible plan for the future. The recoveries I heard from people in class inspired my determination and my feeling that success is totally possible for my mental illness.

I Was Meant to Give Back

Scott Clark

I would have to say that my experience of hope began about two years ago. This, after being lost for four years, bouncing around through detox after detox, emergency rooms, men's shelters, and finally re-hab twice. It was after my second stint in re-hab at the Salvation Army's A.R.C., that I began to feel hope. A friend, who works as an R.S.S, played a significant role in giving me hope. He's been there for me several times in my recovery. His life now and his example has been inspiring. In fact, the hope I have now has been nurtured through the peer support of several R.S.S's. The role these individuals have played in my journey has been significant. I wouldn't be where I am today if not for their support. Their example has helped me to answer the question that has bothered me for some time now. Why did I have to experience everything I have over the past five years? Other than becoming a far better person than I was before I began that journey, what was the point? I finally realized I was meant



to give back. Using my own experience and knowledge to help guide others who are lost, who have given up hope as I once had, regain that hope on their own journey.

Dope Less Hope Fiend

Selene Vanity Milroy



When I started my journey of recovery I was a hope less dope fiend. My entire living of the undead revolved around finding ways of using and getting more. It all started when I was picked up on a probation violation and put in maximum security at the Pima County Jail. I was broken, fed up and ready to truly put my all into making a positive change in my life. For those dark times it was survival of the fittest and now I am on a mission to give back what was so freely given to me. I have been shown proof that when I go against my natural reaction to use heroin, that my higher power blesses me one hundred fold. My higher power has moved mountains for me and I am thankful that I am doing the foot work for my recovery. I aspire to use my testimony of my experience in addiction to show those that are struggling that is 100% possible to go against the odds. Recovery is possible and

I will continue to fight like hell to stay clean one moment at a time. I aspire to be the best I can be so that I can show others that life is incredible once you break free of the chains of addiction.

Today I am extremely proud to say that I have gone against the odds and that I am a dope less HOPE fiend. I have limitless ambition and the confidence that dreams do come true. I wake up each morning blessed, excited, and grateful that I am no longer in a jail cell, no longer homeless, no longer a victim, no longer dope sick, and no longer do I ever have to be hopeless again. Each and every day I make the decision to live my life clean and it is by far the best decision I have ever made. Today my life is by far anything I could have dreamed of. I finally have HOPE within myself that I am capable of anything that I put my mind to. My entire life I have wanted to help others but I wasn't exactly sure how. I know that I was meant to be a heroin addict for that period of my life. I am thankful that I have experienced and lived thru what I have. I am stronger, fiercer, and more courageous than I could have ever imagined in my wildest dreams. I know that it is my destiny to be able to assist others on their journey of recovery. I want to be the one to help someone out of that dark place and be a shining light for the world to see. I am so gracious that my higher power has blessed me and I will use this tool to the best of my ability. Today I have a beautiful life, an amazing place to live, and supportive loved ones that are my cheerleaders. My experience has molded me into a forever grateful young woman. I am a Dope Less Hope Fiend and I will live it for the rest of my days.

When Hope Found Me...

Sheryl Heffner

It was at the jumping off place, when that fragile, frightened little girl wished only for the end of suffering. The moment where giving up was a solution to the pain, and the point of no return had no meaning. When I was so broken even breathing took great effort, and I was too weak to care. Staring into the ether without seeing, unable to blink or move my lips. The terror consumed me - mind, body and spirit. There was no comfort to be found. I was utterly alone, it was no use. I hung my head in shame.

Some battles are so difficult you wonder how you can even try again.

It was hope, born of that very torment and sickness I longed to escape, that found me at the jumping off place. Somehow, there remained a spark of me- the divine spark in us all- that was touched by the warmth of hope. It was the essence of hope, an overwhelming knowing that I would survive, that carried me through that hell to the realization that I could be more than I had been told. It had resided in my heart all along, and soon a vital spiritual experience began to set my mind free. I was suddenly brave, with value as a human being, and worthy of life. I began to understand true courage, and the empowerment of speaking my own truth. With open eyes and a willingness to try something different, the walls of many years held together by countless tears began to crumble around me.

I shouted "I am enough"! And for the first time ever, I believed it.

Today I believe the Hope that came to me suddenly wasn't really sudden, it had been there all along hidden under sadness and



misunderstanding. It was a seed planted before that little girl became lost and frightened. But it was not nurtured and therefore died. Hope was reborn is an amazing moment, an all or nothing moment, that jolted me out of indecision. It is with me around every corner I turn. An oasis in the chaos that is life. It accompanies me through every fearful step. Today I water the seed of Hope with self-love.

Doubt is my nemesis, and the enemy of hope. Today when I doubt myself, I am saying I doubt the power that saved me from death. The dynamic of hope has taught me to believe and trust in myself, and that I am never alone. My Creator re-creates me every day and now my hopes are many. Ironic. Hope indeed springs eternal.

Hope; Key Component to Recovery

William Baer

When I was in the dark, deep in my addiction I didn't even know what hope was. There were many nights spent in areas that I was lucky to stay alive in. I had no where to go. I would not even contact family and there were many nights out in the cold and wet. I met this guy that worked at the store. I was trying to get alcohol and instead of giving me money, he gave me a card for the Salvation Army. He was the intake coordinator there and he said "call me I can help you get out of this way of life." I held on to that card for three months because I wasn't ready to change the way I was living. There was no hope in my eyes for a very long time and I didn't care whether I lived or died. There were many times I tried to off myself and that never happened. I never understood why I couldn't kill myself. By now I was so far away from hope but for some reason I still had that card. I can't tell you why I still had that card but I thought I would call this guy that gave me the Salvation Army card. I called the guy. I couldn't believe the guy knew who I was. I ended up going to Sally to get clean. The first chapel is when things started looking OK. I had many meetings with



the guy that gave me the card. By the fourth month was when I started looking like I had some hope. I turned my life over to the Lord. The path I took was very dark and I have left things out because they don't need to be said. Today I have hope because I have learned that hope is the key component to recovery.

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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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