

# Journey

ISSUE 10

## PEOPLE LIKE US LIVE LIKE THIS

Maulian Dana,  
Penobscot Indian  
Island Reservation

Maine's  
First Co-ed  
Recovery  
Residence



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# Journey

ISSUE 10

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# From the publisher -

Greetings!

We're talking about home in this issue. At Home—with ourselves and in our physical space.

Google says, "Home means an enjoyable, happy place where you can live, laugh and learn. It's somewhere where you are loved, respected, and cared for."

When I first got sober in 1993, I lived in several different residential programs—from a half-way house to a transitional residence—and only after about 18 months did I finally get my own apartment.

With each progression of living with others, I experienced love, respect and care — although I'm pretty sure it was only in hindsight that I came to realize it. When I was going through early recovery in sober living, the boundaries and structures seemed restrictive, unfair, and unbearable. But I needed them. I'm not sure at what point I became grateful for what I had, and it may not have happened until I left.

The reality was, I had a roof over my head, guidance in living sober, and direction on how to clean up the mess that I had made with my life. With each move, I learned new skills, new communication styles, and new ways to treat my physical environment and how to work with others and ultimately how to treat myself.

I've been in the same home now since 1996, and it has served its purpose well. I raised my kids here (although I think it may still be debatable whether I raised them or they raised me), and both my husband and I have worked from home for decades. Today, I'm grateful for the roots that I have here—in my home and in my neighborhood and in my community.

Not everyone needs a sober living residence. But for those who do, thankfully there are options. We're excited to shine a light on some of those sober living residences here in Maine—including Maine's first co-ed sober living residence, El Rancho de la Vida—and provide information for those who may be looking for a place to land.

Our cover story on Maulian Dana, the first Tribal Ambassador to the Penobscot Nation, focuses on how community can be a positive force in personal recovery.

This issue also talks about coming home to our bodies; both Kimble Greene's article "*There's No Place Like Home*" and Niki Curtis' "*Home isn't There, It's Here*" talk about self-acceptance and how to change the dialogue we can have about ourselves.

I'm still learning to treat my physical body with the love, respect and care that it deserves, with some days being better than others. I'm guessing this will be a lifelong quest, and that's okay. At least I've stopped with the self-loathing that I wasted so many years feeling.

Journey is on a mission to make recovery from addiction visible—every way we can; in print, online, on YouTube (and eventually a podcast!). We recently launched a new YouTube channel, which you can find by typing Journey Enterprises in the search bar. To amplify hope, we're releasing personal recovery stories each week to celebrate freedom from addiction.

If you'd like to share your story, please reach out to me at [carolyn@recovery-journey.com](mailto:carolyn@recovery-journey.com). Your story can shine a light for someone looking for a way out.

With immense gratitude,

*Carolyn*

# visible recove





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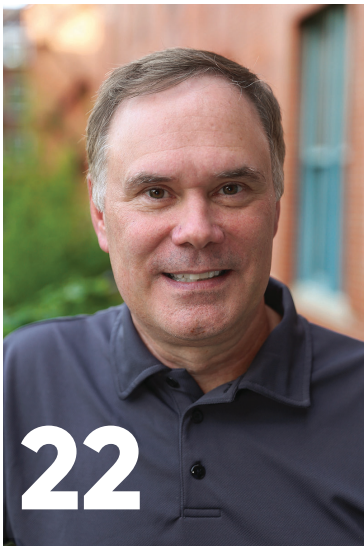
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# ery saves lives



Sarah Coupe sits with women at the Grace House | photo by Brian Delaney

# Recovery residences

## Homes full of hope and encouragement

by Alison Jones Webb

**M**ost people enter recovery at home, and family members learn alongside their loved ones how to live a new life in wellness and hope. But when living at home isn't possible, going to a recovery residence – also known as a sober house, sober living or a halfway house – is an important option.

“For me, living in addiction became a life not worth living, and I wore out my welcome at home,” says Josh Leonard, who feels lucky to have met someone from Scarborough Police Department’s Operation Hope at a meeting in Biddeford. This “Angel” helped him apply for a treatment scholarship and eventually move into Portland Sober Living in downtown Portland. He lived at the recovery residence for two years, then became a house manager there two years ago.

“It was a tough transition from my old life to recovery,” Josh says. But at Portland Sober Living, he witnessed the hope that recovery brings, and that made all the difference. “Seeing others who made significant changes in their lives that resulted in complete transformation is one of the benefits of recovery residences.”

Maine has experienced an explosion of new recovery residences in the past few years in response to a growing need for transitional and supportive housing for people in recovery. In 2016, house owners banded together and formed the Maine Association of Recovery Residence (MARR), and in 2019, the state funded MARR to certify houses, develop training programs for house operators and peer leaders and expand recovery residence services to additional counties in Maine.

“There are a couple of things people should understand about recovery residences,” MARR’s Program Manager Ron Springel explains. “First, they come in all shapes and sizes, and monthly fees vary.”

Low-cost residences offer informal peer support but few programs and services. More expensive residences offer a variety of services, including help with job hunting, transportation, gourmet food, health-club memberships and treatment-oriented programs on-site. Some residences are started by people in recovery and have a particular focus – on the spiritual aspects of recovery, for example. Others are owned by treatment agencies.

MARR inspects and certifies recovery residences in Maine, where there are now 114 recovery residences. Of these,

42 are MARR-certified, which means they meet national quality standards. These 42 are located in seven counties, and 22 are for men only, 17 are for women only (two of these allow women with children), and one is coed. A list of MARR-certified recovery residences in Maine, with locations and contact information, can be found at: <https://www.mainerecoveryresidences.com/residences>.

One of the newly certified houses is a women’s recovery residence in Machias, which began accepting applications for residents on Aug. 1. The house welcomes all paths to recovery, including medication-assisted treatment (MAT), and will serve women in recovery and their children. The house accommodates up to 10 women, depending on family size. The residence is the result of an innovative collaboration between four nonprofits: Healthy Acadia,

Downeast Community Partners, Community Caring Collaborative and Aroostook Mental Health Center.

The National Alliance of Recovery Residences (NARR) has established national quality standards, and certification of houses ranges from Level I houses, which provide informal peer support and little structure, to Level IV houses, which provide clinical treatment on-site by credentialed staff.

<b>NARR Recovery Residence Levels of Support</b>				
	<b>I Peer-Run</b>	<b>II Monitored</b>	<b>III Supervised</b>	<b>IV Service Provider</b>
<b>Administration</b>	Democratically run  Manual or policies and procedures	House manager or senior resident  Policies and procedures	Organizational hierarchy  Administrative oversight for service providers  Policies and procedures  Licensing as appropriate	Overseen organizational hierarchy  Clinical and administrative supervision  Policies and procedures  Licensing as appropriate
<b>Services</b>	Drug screening House meetings  Self-help meetings encouraged	House rules provide structure  Peer run groups  Drug screening  House meetings  Involvement in self-help and/or treatment services	Life skill development emphasis  Clinical services utilized in outside community  Service hours provided in house	Clinical services and programming are provided in house  Life skill development
<b>Residence</b>	Generally single – family residences	Primarily single-family residences  Possibly apartments or other dwelling types	Varies – all types of residential settings	All types – often a step-down phase within care continuum of a treatment center  May be a more institutional environment
<b>Staff</b>	No paid positions within the residence  Perhaps an overseeing officer	At least one compensated position	Facility manager  Certified staff or case managers	Credentialed staff

All recovery residences provide a drug- and alcohol-free environment, which may include medication specifically for mental health and substance use related disorders. NARR provides specific guidelines for residence operators to support individuals receiving MAT for opioid use disorders. This step, supporting MAT-friendly houses, acknowledges the importance of medication-assisted recovery as a valid pathway to recovery. In Maine, 26 of the MARR- certified houses accept residents on MAT.

“A recovery residence is a place where individuals work together for a common goal, strive to help each other and the community, and redirect their lives in a most positive manner,” Ron Springel says. Most houses have strict rules about curfew, participating in weekly drug tests, attending house meetings, completing assigned chores, maintaining cleanliness in common areas and shared bedrooms and participating in meal preparation. By being accountable to each other, residents learn – or relearn – how to have healthy relationships, a skill they can later apply to other relationships in their lives.

Living with fellow travelers on the recovery journey can have a lifelong impact. Ron considers the recovery residence where he lived in Portland a touchstone, a place he returns to frequently to attend meetings and renew his connections with men in recovery and find opportunities to give back to the place that gave so much to him.

He is often asked which recovery house is the best and has a wise response: “The best recovery

house in the world is where we learn how to recover.”

For Sarah Coupe, owner of Grace House in Portland and a founding member of MARR, living in a recovery residence creates an opportunity to “merge

**“the best recovery house in the world is where we learn how to recover.”**

broken souls with healing opportunities. Expecting someone whose life has become

unmanageable to turn it around on their own – it’s very rare that that happens.”

Recovery residences can help communities, too, she says. Grace House residents come with the consequences of their addiction – lost work, broken families, debt (especially healthcare debt from emergency room visits), court fines and jail time. They come to the house to be healed, and one of the ways they do this is by giving back. They volunteer at local churches serving meals to the elderly and at a nonprofit that distributes donated clothing to people who need it.

“This is an important part of the recovery journey,” Sarah says. “They learn to think of others and to understand how they are a part of something bigger than themselves.”

Living in a recovery residence provides a new start. And toward that end, a requirement in most houses is that residents work, volunteer or go to school. For Josh, “living in a recovery residence gives people an opportunity to make mistakes, correct them, face adversity, and overcome it, to build character.”

## What is MAT?

MAT stands for “medication-assisted treatment” and refers to medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the medical management of addictions. These medications are intended to be used along with other recovery supports like counseling, recovery residences and peer support. Some are controlled substances and not without risks, but those risks are minimized when they’re properly prescribed by a healthcare provider and taken as directed.

A significant amount of research documents the effectiveness of MAT in supporting recovery from substance use disorder. Medications that help treat opioid addiction are methadone, buprenorphine (commonly called by the trade name Suboxone) and naltrexone. Medications for alcohol use disorder are disulfiram, acamprosate and naltrexone, and medications for nicotine dependence are varenicline (also called by the trade name Chantix), bupropion and nicotine replacement therapy (often patches, lozenges, or gum).

MAT is one of many pathways to recovery. For some people it may be a stepping stone to abstinence-based recovery, and for others it may be part of their lifetime path.

# Looking for a safe place to live in recovery?

**T**he single most important question to ask is, “Is this house MARR certified, and if not, why not?” And then be sure to ask the recovery-residence operator:

**1. Do I get a written and signed resident agreement?** This should include behavior guidelines, what fees are due and when, and circumstances under which you may be asked to leave. You should not waive any individual or fair housing rights.

**2. How do you ensure that the environment is free from alcohol and illicit drug use?** Recovery residences have different strategies, and the operator should be able to tell you how they create a recovery environment.

**3. What supports are available to help me live in recovery?** The house should expect you to engage in positive relationships with other residents and people in the broader community. This could include regular house meetings, regular attendance at support groups in the community, recreational activities and the expectation to live in the house as a family. Attending a support group meeting in the broader community and taking advantage of volunteer opportunities like serving food in a soup kitchen should also be encouraged if not required.

**4. Does this house feel like a home?** You should have access to a common area where residents can meet

informally, and you should be able to buy, store and prepare your own food. There should be a space for storing your personal items. You should have access to basic utilities, hot water and functioning appliances. Furniture should be in good shape.

**5. How do you ensure residents’ safety?** The house should follow all building and fire codes, use smoke alarms, fire extinguishers and carbon monoxide monitors and should not be overcrowded. Naloxone must be on every sleeping floor of the residence. Each resident should have emergency contact information readily available.

**6. What is the average length of stay in your house?** While there’s no solid evidence yet about the best length of stay, if the average is low – two months or fewer – this might signal that residents are not properly screened and need a different level of support than that residence provides. If the average is high – over 9 or 10 months – this might mean that residents are not moving on in their lives to independent living arrangements.

**7. What are employment requirements?** Residents should be required to work and pay for their own rent and food by the second month living in the house. This requirement solidifies their commitment to contributing to communal living and creates accountability to people outside

the house as well (their employer and co-workers).

**8. How many house managers are there, and how long have they been in recovery?** There should be a manager in the house at all times who is solid in their own recovery. While there is no recommended length of time, anything less than a year of recovery may not be enough to appropriately manage a recovery residence.

**9. Is the owner of the residence involved?** Owner involvement shows an interest in the people living in the house.

**10. What is your relapse policy?** You want your loved one to be in a safe and drug-free environment, so the house should have a policy that ensures that drugs will not be available. This doesn’t necessarily mean that a person who relapses is automatically discharged – which might not be safe for that person – but it does mean that bringing drugs in the house and relapses are handled swiftly and with the safety of all residents in mind.



*Alison Jones Webb is a public health professional who has worked in the field of substance use prevention, treatment and recovery in Maine for over*

*15 years.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

The roots of peer recovery housing go back to the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous in the 1930s and 1940s, when people in stable recovery would offer housing – usually a room in their homes – for people in early recovery to help them get on their feet. This informal network continues to this day.

According to Dave Sheridan, executive director of the National Alliance of Recovery Residences, the sober-housing movement in California expanded options in the 1970s to stand-alone residences based on the 12-step model that were run by people in recovery for people in recovery. This was the beginning of the sober-housing movement in the United States.

# People Like Us Live Like This

by Amy Paradysz

## Maulian Dana Penobscot Indian Island Reservation



*photo by Brian Delaney*

**M**aulian Dana, the Penobscot Nation's first Tribal Ambassador, made a choice on June 4, 2018 to stop drinking—altogether, forever—and has kept that promise to herself.

“Every time I hit a milestone or feel proud of it for whatever reason, I do a post about it, and I hope people are inspired,” Maulian says. “By textbook standards, I wasn’t a raging alcoholic, but I definitely had a problem. I think there are a lot of people who fall into that gray area and think that they’re not ‘enough of an alcoholic’ to seek treatment but it doesn’t make them feel very good.”

It wasn’t easy, but she could—and she did—just stop.

Ever since childhood, Maulian—who is now 36—had felt anxious, even about little things. And there were big things, too.

“My parents got divorced,” she says. “Then I had a rocky relationship with my kids’ father, and I ended up kicking him out when they were 1 and 3. I was pregnant with my first daughter,

when I was graduating from college. So I was constantly trying to figure life out, providing for both of them. I had accumulated a lot of stress over the years on top of my anxious nature. And then I got into politics.”

She wouldn’t drink Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday and then—with a sense of relief and a little entitlement for having worked so hard—would open a bottle of wine on Thursday while she made dinner.

“And then Sunday night into Monday I would have this crushing shame that I had polluted my body for four days,” she says. “I want to be a healthy role model for my kids, and they had seen me with a wine glass or a beer attached to my hand all weekend.”

One Sunday—June 3, 2018—she went out for brunch and had mimosas, then went home and drank wine, and someone who had very different political views stopped by her house.

“I wasn’t the best version of myself,” Maulian said. “And of

course I woke up the next day feeling like crap physically, emotionally and spiritually. I thought about my kids—‘Do they deserve a mom who is going to be drunk, yelling at people she barely knows, about politics on a beautiful Sunday afternoon?’”

That Monday morning, Maulian texted her boyfriend Lloyd Bryant and said that she thought she was going to stop drinking—for good.

He replied: “I think you’re about to be the best version of yourself.”

They were a year into their relationship, and, for her first year of her sobriety, when she still sometimes craved “liquid courage,” he would gently remind her of the promise that she had made to herself. “You’re going to feel great today,” he would say. Or, “You’re so strong. You’re setting a good example.” Or, “People are probably envious of you that you’re able to do this.”

Another key to her sobriety was her Alaskan husky, Olive.

“It got to be a habit that every time I felt jealous or sorry for

myself, I would take Olive out for a walk,” Maulian says, adding that she lost 30 pounds in that first year—which was quite noticeable on a woman just over five feet tall.

“I had to make a shift from exercising to try to be skinny to exercising for my health and well-being, and that shift coincided with my sobriety,” Maulian says.

“Before, I would run a bunch of miles, then do a Body Pump class, and it felt like it was never enough because I never lost weight because I was drinking. When I cut the alcohol out, the weight started coming off. I’m still working out, but I do things now in a mindful way. I run with my dog, I work out at home, and everything is about how I feel rather than how I look.”

Her relationship with fitness has always had a spiritual element. Before she was born, her father Barry Dana—former chief of the Penobscot—started the Katahdin 100.

“He ran the 100 miles as a spiritual journey, offering up his prayers and his suffering,” she says. “I’ve done it in some form every year. I’ve done relays to get there, I’ve canoed it, I’ve run it. Sometimes I just go to be part of the ceremony; when my kids were little I wasn’t running much. A week before the Katahdin 100 there’s a sweat lodge, where you sweat out all your toxins. It’s a cleanse and you pray, and the idea is that you get yourself ready for the ceremony. In the week between the sweat lodge and the ceremony, there’s no drinking—and if you smoke, there’s no smoking. The idea is that you stay pure. In that week, I always felt so good. I remember thinking, I can feel that good and that connected to who I really am without alcohol in the way of it. I can do that all the time, if I make that choice.”

Once Chief Kirk Francis appointed Dana as Tribal Ambassador in 2017, she realized that anything she said or did—whether she intended it to or not—could be taken as representing the tribe.

“I think about the effects that alcohol has had on indigenous people throughout history,” Maulian says. “I’ve grappled with some guilt about this thing that was weaponized against my ancestors. I have rampant alcoholism in my family that has caused so much trauma, and I see my aunts, uncles and parents all still healing from this. Neither of my parents drink, and I would feel guilty that I was drinking when they were strong enough to resist it. I felt like I was picking up a bad cycle again by being a drinker.”

Her early months of sobriety were marked by feelings of jealousy (that other people were drinking), anger (at herself, for not being able to handle alcohol) and awkwardness (of learning how to handle social situations without a “social lubricant” or worrying that she might be perceived as preachy).

Slowly, though, it began to feel natural.

“It’s the best thing I’ve done for myself, ever,” Maulian says. “I think that was part of the problem. I had gotten so used to taking care of my kids, and as the oldest of five siblings I had been used to taking care of other people my whole life. I thought I was taking care of myself by drinking. I would make it through another workweek, and my kids were doing well in school, and I’d say that I deserved it. But there are so many healthy ways to deal with stress.”

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*Amy Paradysz is a freelance writer from Scarborough and a member of the Journey team.*

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# Maine's first co-ed recovery residence

*El Rancho de la Vida 'steers' the way to wellness*

by Amy Paradysz

In the ranch-like atmosphere of Sunrise Ranch in Riverside, Calif., Jamie Lebish was able to drop his façade and focus on his early recovery from opioid addiction in the late 1990s.

Twenty-two years into long-term recovery and 11 years into a career in addiction treatment, Jamie is establishing Somerset County's first recovery house, taking inspiration from that Californian ranch. El Rancho de la Vida, or "the ranch of life," is the first co-ed recovery house in the decidedly un-ranch-like state of Maine.

It's an unlikely love story. Jamie finds it slightly surreal to be living his life's ambition now, at 61, with the woman he intended to marry in his twenties. He and Katherine Andersson-Caldwell went their

separate ways more than 30 years ago. In the years in between, they each married, raised children and had an experience with addiction: he got hooked on opioids after a serious car crash; she was an ally for a family member with substance use disorder.

Jamie and Katherine reconnected five years ago, first on Facebook. Then on the phone. Then she flew from California for a visit. "When we saw each other again after 34 years," Jamie says, "our romance took off."

Together, they talked about starting a nonprofit recovery house and a treatment center dedicated to helping people with substance use disorder.

It was a dream. Or, it was a dream, until she came into an inheritance

from her uncle Jon Andersson. With that seed money, they leased a house on the Good-Will Hinckley campus in Hinckley, Maine, which they are calling Andersson Ranch.

By early March, they were moving in, setting up the house with ranch flair, applying for grants, and signing on an operations director, an interim medical director and an interim clinical supervisor. Then, just as they were ready to welcome residents called "ranchers," the pandemic hit the pause button. Several of the 11 spots remained unfilled for months on end.

"We'd probably have a waiting list right now if it weren't for the pandemic," says Benjamin Smith, operations director.

However, one thing the El Rancho team has in spades is radical hope.

“Intense amounts of hope, way more than people would normally associate with recovery,” Jamie says. “We want to provide radical hope, astonishment about regular life, about themselves, about the meaning of existence. When people start to wake up again, they realize they have all these gifts—their children and their talents and their partner.”

It all starts with a safe place to live, a sense of purpose and a community.

“We want to be sure that people are treated holistically—in other words, the whole person,” Jamie says. “Nutrition, good health, doctors, social workers, a case manager—all the wraparound services, in a hub, spoke, and wheel, where this is a central location and we send them out to different spokes.”

Though not an actual ranch, the house is a rural area, “away from triggers for most people,” Katherine says, with walking trails and plenty of land to someday introduce equine therapy.

The El Rancho team wants it to be a place where nonviolent people in recovery—regardless of gender or sexual orientation—can find a safe home for up to a year while they take the next steps toward wellness. Officially the fee starts at \$1,000 a month, but ranchers who qualify for financial assistance may be able to move in for \$600 a month with a \$500 deposit.

“We call ourselves life ranchers,” Jamie says, launching into the pun. “We want to help ‘steer’ people’s lives.”

Jamie is a case manager (MHRT-1) and certified alcohol and drug counselor (CADC) and certified residential medication aide (CRMA) who refers ranchers to other professionals such as physicians and social workers and connects them with resources such as food stamps and Section 8 housing.

“We are the last stop before independent living, like getting an apartment or a house with someone,” Jamie says. “They get out of treatment and come to a place like this to get it together, get a job or go back to school and find a permanent place to live. And we help with all that kind of stuff.”

Sunday dinners and house meetings help forge community, while work requirements and curfews establish structure.

The choice to welcome couples is intended to fill a niche not available anywhere else in Maine.

“There are a lot of couples who are using together; their lives are miserable but they can’t seem to get past using every day,” Jamie says. “They fight and bicker, or they get along and just do drugs together. But as they have children and things start to deteriorate, they’ve got to do something. If they really want to recover together, they will work their way through. If we present them with radical hope, they will try to get their lives back.”

Despite being a new couple this time around, Jamie and Katherine are finding themselves modeling what a healthy relationship looks like.

“We respect each other and love each other and put up with each other’s idiosyncrasies and differences,” he says. “And we work it all out through humor and dialogue.”

El Rancho de la Vida is a Maine Association of Recovery Residences certified Level III residential recovery house, with plans to add a full treatment center in 2021. For more information: [elranchodelavida.org/](http://elranchodelavida.org/)

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*Amy Paradysz is a freelance writer from Scarborough and a member of the Journey team.*

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# RECOVERY ALLIES

## Probation Officers

*Wearing multiple hats*

by Alison Jones Webb



photo by Brian Delaney

**T**he purpose of my job is genuinely to help people move on with their lives.” That’s how Alicia Smith, Probation Officer with the Department of Corrections, describes her job. She works in Portland now, having transitioned recently from working primarily with people in Drug Court and Veterans Court.

That’s not how people usually think of probation officers, who are charged with monitoring their clients’ court-ordered conditions (which often include not using drugs or alcohol), tracking their activities, and sometimes sending them back to jail until they can see a judge if they violate the conditions of their probation. Clients most often end up in jail if their conduct creates a public safety issue, and probation officers have the option of summoning a client to court if their conduct warrants it. But for other violations, probation officers

often use a “graduated sanctions approach” – they acknowledge the client’s violation and then make a plan to keep them in the community, where there are more supports like treatment and housing, than in jail.

Smith explains it this way: “We understand the individuals we work with don’t choose to be addicts and their journey to recovery isn’t easy. Our role is building working relationships with them. It’s a balance between holding them accountable when appropriate and supporting them to get the treatment and services they need in working on their recovery.”

Michael Lyon is one of three Regional Correctional Managers in Cumberland and York Counties. Lyon says that probation officers wear two hats – one as a law enforcement officer and one as a social worker. “A good officer needs to know which hat to put on in

any given situation. Probation officers are case managers with accountability,” he says.

Clients might not trust law enforcement, especially in the beginning, Lyon says. But probation officers try to build trust, to offer support and accountability at the same time. “We want to get to know clients, who they are as people, what their interests are, what their hobbies are, what motivates them, and then work with them to get those things back in their lives.” If clients are willing to show up and do the work, probation officers can be part of the solution.

Smith agrees. “My job is about building rapport with clients, supporting them, and getting them the help they need.” Smith and the 24 other probation officers in the region are familiar with community resources – like recovery residences, treatment providers, Portland Recovery

Community Center, Preble Street Resource Center, and MaineWorks – so they can link clients with the right services to help them get back on their feet.

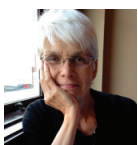
“When people are struggling with their recovery, we reach out to community resources to help get the person back on track with their recovery,” Smith says. “We realize now that it’s not about putting people back

**“We want people in recovery to be healthy and get the support they need”**

in jail, it’s about finding what they need to support their recovery.”

When asked what she likes most about her job, Smith says, “I love the fact that I am here helping people. We do play that law enforcement role, but the whole purpose of why we’re here is for people to be contributing members of society. We want people in recovery to be healthy and get the support they need. I love the fact that I can help with that process.”

For Lyon, the best part of the job is witnessing the growth of people as they get involved with their families again, can be there for their siblings and their kids, and are present as parents. “It’s amazing to watch people become active members in the community, active in their families. Those successes drive every officer. You can’t put a price on that.”



*Alison Jones Webb is a public health professional who has worked in the field of substance use prevention, treatment and recovery in Maine for over 15 years.*



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# Home is not 'there,' it's 'here'

*Lifting the curse of everything will be better if ...*

by **Niki Curtis**

**T**hroughout my life I have always felt that when I got “there,” I would finally be okay; life would be what it was meant to be, and I would have finally arrived. Life could then be celebrated!

“There” was a place where I would have the right job, my body would be the perfect shape and size, I would have the ideal love relationship and I would be well known and well loved by everyone. Peace would filter through every area of my life and if I wanted something, it would be easy to get. The harder I tried to get “there”

the farther away I seemed to be. I was never fully happy and even if I did manage to achieve one of these signifying events, I couldn’t take any satisfaction in having achieved what I wanted because underneath it all, I didn’t feel I deserved it.

This cycle of striving, achieving, and never feeling satisfied was a hole in my soul that I had no idea how to fill. The more I failed, the bigger the hole got until all I could see was the utter blackness that surrounded me and I felt like I was in a free fall straight to hell.

What I failed to mention about this journey are the drugs, alcohol,

men, food, and negative thoughts about myself that were directly tied to the “there” of yesterday’s shame and regret or the “there” of fears, insecurities and doubts of any of my tomorrows.

The attempt to fill the hole with these things only enlarged the sense of emptiness. How could I possibly be able to exist “here” without them when I was supposed to be somewhere else, anywhere else? Every single struggle was a direct consequence of the fact that I wasn’t in that far-off land of “there,” a never-never land of sorts.

I blamed others, my unworthiness, and all the things that had happened to me for the inability to move toward a place that only ever existed in my mind.

This dream, this promise, this curse of “there” has been lifted from me. I am now HERE, home in the place I always wanted but didn’t understand. It seems that Glinda the Good Witch knew what she was talking about—this hidden place was inside me all along.

I laugh at that now, the kind of laugh that knowing mothers share with each other when talking about the trials of their children. I laugh at myself with a growing self love that I discovered when I finally stopped hating myself long enough to see myself through the eyes of love.

One of the most crucial pieces to my transition to this place of peace and contentment was the willingness to surrender everything I thought I knew about EVERYTHING!!

Sounds overwhelming?

I thought so, too, until the day that I walked into rehab and for the first time ever, I knew that HERE was the right place for me.

I was so willing to let go of what I thought I knew about addiction, but little did I know that I would have to let go of everything I knew about everything, especially myself.

I had always been driven by a strong desire to know everything that was going to happen, I needed to know all the steps to get to a goal and the idea of not knowing had me living in an anxiety induced trance. That trance got me stuck where I was, over and over and over.

As I sat in rehab, learning to surrender all of my old ways of dealing with life, I found that real hope that comes with an innate knowing that there is a solution, that maybe I had value and wasn’t

so far gone that I could recover like others.

I learned that the moment that I was in was the ONLY thing that I had any control over.

I couldn’t change the past and I sure couldn’t orchestrate the future, so putting all of my heart and energy into the HERE and NOW was my primary purpose. It sounds so unbelievably simple in theory. It is, but part of my humanity is that I complicate the simplest matters.

Most of life’s everyday happenings elicited one of two responses: “holding my breath” when waiting for what I wanted to fall in my lap; and projecting to others “don’t hold your breath” when they had normal expectations such as expecting me to pay a bill on time.

For example, asking for a raise wasn’t in my toolbox; I “held my breath” hoping it would just happen. I would hold my breath waiting for the other shoe to drop when I continuously showed up late for work.

In my active addiction, there were many breaths held while telling myself not to hold my breath, “knowing” the truth that the fellow addict I just sent with my money wouldn’t return with what they had promised.

I struggled with every aspect of being a responsible adult and couldn’t understand why I was stuck.

Recovery taught me that the

first thing to do in any given moment or situation is to breathe in, and the next right thing is to breathe out.

So many of us forget to breathe out.

We take that big breath in and hold onto it like it is the last gift we will ever receive.

We hold onto that breath while our thoughts are trying to get over THERE.

We feel the tension and anxiety from trying to hold onto that breath.

We have no trust that another breath will come although we have our lives as proof that there is more air for us. In my mind, the idea of enough was what I would have and be when ... well, you know, when I was THERE.

I learned that following my breath was a crucial way to stay in this moment. That breathing was something to be celebrated most of all. I was alive, I had hope, I could learn about recovery and I could recover.

By shifting my focus away from having to get “there,” I have had opportunities and internal growth. HERE, right now—\*breathe in\* \*breathe out\*— is perfect and it is where you and I are meant to be.



*Niki Curtis of Portland is a woman in long-term recovery whose passion is helping and teaching others to love themselves.*

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**Always count your blessings!**

# Calling all inner healers

*Spa Tech may be just the ticket*

by **Patricia McCarthy**

**S**pa Tech Institute founder and co-owner Nancy Risley started taking exceptional care of her body and mind after having a near-deadly case of hepatitis when she was just 13.

“I think when you have an experience like that, your life changes,” she says. “My interest became in my own recovery, and learning everything I could. I was always a person following my inner truth, always dedicated to my personal mission of just finding what makes it all work.”

In the 1960s, when Nancy wanted to delve more into holistic health options, there were slim U.S. pickings. “We didn’t even have massage licenses at that time in this country.” Open to everything, she studied nutrition in college and traveled to England and California to learn and eventually teach massage and polarity therapy (which balances energy flow in the body), channeling, astrology, meditation and more. Sensing a “huge need” in this

country, she created the Polarity Realization Institute in 1980 in Gloucester, Mass. That became Spa Tech in 2001, with its three locations in Massachusetts and one in Westbrook, Maine.

Its students now learn therapeutic massage, holistic massage, polarity, skincare esthetics, barbering, cosmetology and other subjects that are the continuation of Nancy’s pioneering explorations, including her 16-hour energy system clearing program called RYSE – Realizing Your Sublime Energies – that Spa Tech teaches three times a year.

Spa Tech’s students run the gamut – those who enroll right out of high school, grandparents following their passions, college graduates seeking something more satisfying, parents needing a career that’s both flexible and meaningful.

Most students have a few things in common – “it’s for everyone who feels they have an inner healer inside of them,” says Nancy.

And, adds Kris Stecker – who is Spa Tech’s president, a polarity therapist and Nancy’s husband – most students are seeking careers that let them be creative and directly help people.

Spa Tech training and employment are appealing to people in recovery from addictions, who typically learn the value of self care.

“We don’t go out and recruit people from the recovery community. But I think pretty much everybody who works with the company understands that we all are in recovery, whether we know it or not,” says Kris. “If we’re serious about our personal development and being more successful and authentic and living our potential, we all have things we have to deal with and grow from to get to another level in order to succeed in our lives.”

That’s perhaps never been truer than in 2020, with everyone confronting the challenges of pandemic restrictions, including



Spa Tech, which remained up and running throughout with classes online during the shutdown

With CDC restrictions and safety protocols in place and operating at limited capacity, some in-person, hands-on training is now happening again, with students masking and partnering as much as possible with just one other student.

Ability to train hands-on and gain muscle memory is limited, but many current students already have experience with that work and can acquire it on the job, Nancy says. And if a pending graduate doesn't feel prepared, Spa Tech always offers this: "If they finish and don't feel ready, we give them a merit scholarship and give them free education so that they're ready to roll."

Getting back into the groove with new protocols is daunting, but new ways aren't all bad.

"One of the things that's been really interesting is that some students have actually done better online with assimilation of the theory," notes Kris. "I think it's partly that the medium has forced them to pay closer attention without the distraction of being able to sort of space out in the classroom. And they're actually testing better. The hardest challenge we had when they returned to school was keeping them from running up and hugging each other all the time, because these are People People,

and they are all about touch!"

Adds Nancy: "Yeah, they like each other, seriously! I can speak for body work more than anything, but it's sort of a soul group, you know? You get with other body workers who have that healing energy and you recognize it in each other. And maybe you haven't seen a lot of that until you got to school."


Helping students to feel empowered is a top priority. "We're really in the business of not only giving people careers, but giving them the self-confidence to overcome doubts about their personal ability to succeed." Kris says. "The biggest thing that holds people back is self doubt."

Kris and Nancy both clearly love the work they do and its ripple effects.

"I love the students. I love the industry," says Nancy. "Over 40 years ago, I was the only game in town. And now we have literally thousands and thousands of graduates. And our graduates don't just touch one person. They change thousands of lives for the better. As the years go on, I just look at this and I'm blown away."



Patricia McCarthy is a writer, editor and photographer from Cape Elizabeth.



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# THIS RECOVERY LIFE

submitted by  
**ASHLEY RENY** Portland, Maine



I'm 33 years old. I grew up in Sabattus, Maine in a very loving family who gave me everything I could have ever needed. Tragically, my father committed suicide when I was 19, and about a year after that, I started using substances to numb myself from the pain. Fast forward 10 years, and nothing scared me any more. I was chasing drugs and getting chased by probation. I found myself sitting in jail, knowing that I was hurting myself and the people I loved, wishing I was dead. And then, on my last day using, I overdosed and almost lost my life.

The next day, I moved into a recovery house in Portland, terrified and in withdrawal. A year later, I picked up my one year chip and moved into another recovery house where they asked me to become the house manager. I was scared and nervous, but I accepted the job.

In retrospect, it was one of the best things I've ever done.

These days I work as the Executive Director of Journey House Recovery, a statewide nonprofit organization that operates four low barrier recovery residences across Maine. Every day, I get phone calls from desperate men and women looking for a shot at recovery, and I work with our wonderful team of young recovery leaders to offer them a safe, supportive and sober place to live. I'm now 4 ½ years sober, happily engaged and the mother to two beautiful children.

I love doing this work and seeing others succeed, reach goals, and just live a happier healthier lifestyle. It's so satisfying to help people in the way that I was helped and to give them hope that there is a better way of life.

Through all of this, the most valuable lesson I've learned is that, if I want to help other people, I've got to keep working on myself, one day at a time.

# ON THE JOURNEY!

**Rebecca Laber-Smith**  
So. Portland, Maine

## **What has surprised you the most about sober living?**

How good it feels! And that I'm never bored! Contrary to my pre-recovery beliefs (that I would never have fun again and that I was doomed to a lonely, friendless life) I have richer experiences sober and am friends with a much wider circle of interesting people than I ever imagined possible.

## **What is your greatest joy?**

I had a one year old when I got sober. I now have two kids and they're young adults. A woman who sponsored me early on promised I had no idea how my sobriety would impact my kids. That promise has definitely come true. My children have never seen me drunk and have matured into creative, kind, smart people whom I could not possibly be more proud of. To know I was fully present as their mom - for the good, the bad, and the ugly - is my greatest joy.

## **What new hobbies have you explored in Recovery?**

The first thing that comes to mind is making jewelry. I always called my sister the "artsy one" and believed I didn't have a creative bone in my body. The truth is I was afraid to try. Sobriety gave me the courage to risk being a beginner. I started playing around with beads, and pretty soon had made so many gifts for friends/family that I opened an Etsy store. Until recently, I sold my wares at First Friday every month with one of my kids. I also developed a yoga practice and became certified to teach. I've taught teenagers, folks with disabilities, and women

in early recovery in a variety of places, including the McCauley Residence in Portland. Recently I've been brushing up on my French in the hopes it could prove useful at some point.

## **If you could plan a perfect day for yourself, what would it involve?**

Yoga, time with my family and friends, a hike in the woods, and a delicious vegetarian meal prepared by someone other than me!

## **What tool(s) do you rely on when you're having a bad day?**

The first thing I do is read a passage from one of my recovery books. I'll go straight to the index and look up whatever I'm struggling with - pride, forgiveness, resentment, etc. Then I take time alone (preferably in nature) to meditate on the reading. This will sound kinda bonkers, but I live near three cemeteries and I get a lot of peace by walking or riding my bike there and talking to dead people. They're excellent listeners, they never judge me, and they help me put my mortal problems in perspective. I feel closest to my Higher Power there. I'll also try reciting the 12 Steps, doing a gratitude alphabet, or at least 3 things I'm grateful for in the moment. And of course I call a close friend!

## **Name one of your goals for the future.**

My parents are in their late eighties and really struggling, both physically and mentally. I



want to give them everything I can - my time, my attention, home cooked meals, and most of all my love. It's hard for them to hear, they don't move easily anymore, and they forget things. My Higher Power puts opportunities for patience in front of me all of the time, which I consider a sign that I continue to need practice. I learned in recovery that it doesn't matter what kind of parents I have, it matters what kind of daughter I am. This is true in all of my relationships.

## **What's one piece of advice you have for someone just starting their Recovery?**

Don't leave before the miracle happens! I was four years sober before I stopped craving alcohol. Those first four years were so, so hard. I white-knuckled it a lot of the time and assumed I would forever miss booze. When the craving finally lifted, it was a miracle. As it turns out, there have been many more in the fifteen years since. Sobriety will eventually become one of your most precious treasures, the key to all of the other joys you're sure to experience if you just stay.

# Doug Dunbar's journey

*Alcohol worked for a while as a way to self-medicate, until the price to pay was too high*

by Journey's Editorial Team



A person who has desperately needed hope, knows like no other, the power of visible recovery and the hope that is generated from knowing you're not alone. That there is a solution and many people are able to help with those very next steps.

Doug Dunbar from Hermon, Maine suffered from lifelong mental illnesses (OCD and anxiety) that alcohol seemed to alleviate for a period of time, but eventually led to 4 months in jail.

Today, he is recovered and feels privileged to help other people dealing with addiction and substance use disorder to find their way to recovery. Doug shares his journey:

"I grew up in Bangor. I didn't drink. I was the kid who drove people so that the few that wanted to drink had someone to safely get them home at night. I went to college in Worcester, Massachusetts, and I drank some, but I never liked the taste of it.

My drinking began when the terrorist attacks occurred on September 11th, 2001. However, something that predates all of that is that from my earliest recollections as a child, I had two mental illnesses that I told no one about.

When the terrorist attack occurred, my symptoms went out of control. The next night I was having dinner with a friend at a restaurant in Washington, and we drank a lot of wine. I realized this would help. I began to self-medicate. I started with a bottle of vodka. I could get it down the way you would get down a bad-tasting medicine."

This was the onset of alcoholism for Doug. It started with a few drinks a week, and it progressed. At that time, his family and friends still didn't know about his mental illness condition or his self-medication plan. He was meticulous about hiding everything as he started drinking in an alcoholic fashion.

While working as Maine's Deputy Secretary of State, Doug warned people who had lost their driver's license after receiving an OUI. He knew the consequences, but he couldn't help himself from experiencing those consequences.

"I was able to conceal my first few encounters with law enforcement. I eventually became the poster child for what can happen when you allow issues related to alcohol and driving to snowball. All the things I had cautioned people about, I did. On my sixth arrest, I spent about four months in jail. I was released in March 2018 to enter the Penobscot County Adult Drug Treatment Court. Fifteen months later, I graduated. When you graduate, you get a coin, and I carry it every day as a reminder of what I've been through.

My journey to recovery started before I stopped drinking. After my third arrest, I turned to my employer's Employee Assistance Program, and I got connected with a mental health counselor in Bangor.

We agreed that I needed medication for my OCD and anxiety. These were ingrained in me and talk therapy with a counselor wasn't going to be adequate. It seemed like a good plan. However, I was too far gone in my alcoholism to give up drinking. I made an attempt, but I wasn't successful. There is a lot of hope and ways to heal, but for me, it's been through mental healthcare and being active in the recovery community."

Doug worked in government for 30 years and never gave much thought to people who were suffering from addiction and were trying to get their lives together.

Today, he tries to reach out to businesses and employers to pass the message that people in recovery can be an asset. He says he is a much better employee now than when he was hiding and drinking. His work was suffering since he wasn't fully engaged with what he was doing.

Doug is passionate about helping people who are in early recovery, including those reentering communities from jail or prison.

He helps individuals connect with services through his role at Eastern Maine Development Corporation, a non-profit assisting people with challenges and barriers to gain education, training and meaningful employment.

Doug shares, "For me, full hopeful recovery is about having a purpose, contributing and staying in contact with people."



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# Sober living comes full circle

*Biddeford couple invests in the lives of people newly in recovery*

by Amy Paradysz

**F**or someone right out of rehab, getting their finances in order enough to rent and furnish an apartment and set up utilities—all while keeping focus on their ongoing recovery—can be too much.

“What I needed was someone to manage some of those things,” says Daryl Blums, who lived in three sober houses in his late 20s. “Then I was able to focus on myself and my recovery.”

Daryl and his fiancé Katahli Stieg, who have been in recovery for 7 years and 3 years, respectively, co-own and manage two, 10-bed sober houses in Southern Maine: one for men and one for women — under the company name New Hope Alliance.

“It doesn’t matter what people have done in the past or what they used,” says Katahli, who is on call 24/7. “It’s about whether

they are willing to do what it takes now.”

“We’re providing a safe, clean, low-barrier place to live with a framework which residents can use to grow into their recovery,” Daryl says. “There are certain expectations. When you move in, you’ll probably share a room with somebody. You’re going to be drug tested at random. You’re expected to seek employment and to do some 12-step work or engage another recovery pathway.”

Each house has a manager who has been in recovery for at least six months. In addition Katahli and Daryl provide oversight and screen potential residents to be sure they are serious about recovery.

“The hardest part,” says Katahli, who runs the women’s house, “is wanting recovery for people more than they want it for

themselves. I could not do this if I did not have a solid recovery program behind me. It can be difficult sometimes, but so rewarding when I get to watch other women overcome the many obstacles in early recovery. We can’t do it alone; I’m grateful to be able to now give support to other women, just like others so graciously did for me.”

Katahli was 25 when she came into recovery, and never having known adulthood without substances, she didn’t think it could be fun. Happily, she has discovered otherwise.

“I hear women talk all the time about being able to laugh like they’ve never laughed before and that was my experience too,” she says. “When you’re in a community with people in recovery, you get to have sober experiences and it feels new and exciting, like you’re living it for



*Katahli Stieg, Daryl Blums and Ruby  
photo by Brian Delaney*

the first time. I can remember my first sober dance with the women in my old sober house, or the first New Year's Eve spent with people in recovery. Recovery creates connection and unity—having family dinners and going to meetings together. It's a time to come together and support one another."

Residents move in with just personal things such as clothes and toiletries—and sometimes even those are provided, through donations. "Some people don't have much to start with," Katahli says. "People lose everything in active addiction."

Residents pay a weekly rent, including utilities, laundry, internet access and a gym membership—because, as Daryl says, "in recovery we replace

our old habits with healthy new ones."

Living in a New Hope Alliance structured sober house requires drug testing and curfews, attending two to four recovery meetings a week and participating in house check-ins and weekly dinners. People who are serious about recovery but are on probation, in drug court, or on

medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for substance use disorder are welcome. Residents who have been in one of these sober houses for 30 days or more can request permission for an overnight away to visit with their family.

"Each sober house has its own character and its own decorum," Daryl says. "It's a living organism with people coming in and out.

## "Recovery creates connection and unity"

Some leave out the front door with their head held high, and some leave out the back with their head hung low. It's easy for me to feel defeated some days, if someone isn't doing well, but when a person succeeds and moves on, it's one of the best feelings we get to experience!

"What we can do is give people the basics needed to thrive, and from there they can choose to build a life in recovery they can be proud of and — in my case — never believed was possible."

---

*Amy Paradysz is a freelance writer from Scarborough and a member of the Journey team.*

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Photo: Sarah Beard Buckley

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# Back on firm ground with Goodwill guidance

by Patricia McCarthy

**H**eatherly Wing fills up when trying to articulate her gratitude for help she has received in recovery, especially from Goodwill Industries' Job Connection program.

"There are so many amazing things going on there. I can't tell you how much this program has helped me grow," says Heatherly, who was released from Windham Correctional Center in January after a year. "If I had the chance to work for Goodwill to give back, I'd be so excited that I'd be saying 'who AM I right now?!' "

Goodwill was one of her first stops after getting settled at Refuge House, a Christian-based sober house in Portland.

She went in search of Kathy Potter, who had helped her while she was incarcerated at the Cumberland County Jail through a grant called Pre-Release Employment Project that provided transitional employment services.

"I knew I needed help to get on my feet," and what she discovered was an expansive collection of Goodwill services. On the basic front, she was given a clothing voucher – "I got out in the middle of winter and had absolutely nothing" – and bus passes that allowed her to meet her sponsor, get groceries and make it to 12-step meetings and job interviews. She also was able to see a dentist and have a chipped front tooth fixed that had bothered her for years.

Heatherly, 41, was assigned a Life Navigator, who helped



her figure out how to get past "crazy barriers" she had created while abusing substances – like systematically paying off fees to get her driver's license back – to establish routines and reasonable goals, to set up a manageable budget, to make sure she had the recovery resources she needed, and more.

"One of the biggest things was helping me with my personal decision-making. They broke everything into short- and long-term goals. I don't even have a car, but I'm super excited just to have a valid driver's license. I hadn't had it since 2014. If I had tried to tackle that by myself, I'd be so overwhelmed."

Heatherly says the Goodwill programs have helped her to gain confidence and social skills and build better relationships. "They also hooked me up with a

career advisor to figure out what I'm good at, but also what I love. Nobody wants to be stuck in a job they hate, that they might be good at but not love. I've also learned how to advocate for myself, as in asking for a raise, and just so much more."

Her attitude and willingness to embrace such help – and help others along the way – led to her being asked to manage Refuge House just a few months after living there, and she is thrilled with that job. She credits her recent successes to connecting again with her higher power.

Growing up in South Portland, Heatherly says she "always felt like there was something greater than us" but wasn't raised with formal religion. "All of my life I just felt like there was an emptiness, but what was really missing for me was God. I had lots of time to

figure things out in an 8x6 cell with just me and a Bible to thumb through.”

She had tried many ways to overcome that empty feeling: “I was excessive with eating in my 20s. Then obsessed with eating naturally. Then spent excessive time at the gym. At age 32, I got divorced and started drinking excessively. I was hanging out at bars and someone introduced me to opiates, and I was like, hey, why not? That led to heroin, crack cocaine, anything after that.”

Life was tumultuous over the next few years: Not showing up for work as a successful house cleaner. Petty theft. Driving violations. Stints in jail. Sobriety. Relapse. Felony theft for stealing from her clients’ homes. Parole violation. A year in prison.

Heatherly said she clearly needed that year to get her head on straight and connect with God. With that void filled, she now fills her days with honest pursuits.

She’s working to build her relationship with her 10-year-old daughter who lives about an hour away with her dad. “We talk 10 times a day and read the same book so that we can discuss it,” a practice Heatherly started while incarcerated so that they’d have something to bond over. “My goal is to get a car so I can see her whenever we want and be closer. I want to share in the responsibility for her upbringing.”

Most recently, Heatherly has started the process of applying for the **Connecting with Opportunities** grant through Workforce Solutions (operated by Goodwill), with hopes that she may be considered for the Peer Connector role and support individuals impacted by the opioid epidemic in the same way that she has been helped by workforce programs over the years.

In the meantime, she spends much of her free time volunteering – for the Portland Recovery Community Center, checking up with people by phone during the pandemic; for her church, putting together medical personnel care packages; for Amistad delivering hot meals to the homeless in Deering Oaks.

“It keeps you humble and connected,” she says. “I have so much gratitude. I couldn’t do this alone. So giving back is a huge part of my recovery and the path I want to be on.”



*Patricia McCarthy is a writer, editor and photographer from Cape Elizabeth.*

# Are you ready to re-enter the workforce?

A new grant with  
Maine Department of Labor –  
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## GOAL:

To create opportunities for individuals in recovery from substance use disorder impacted directly or indirectly, by the opioid crisis to receive the **support, training** and **guidance** they need to access and maintain sustainable employment.

## CRITERIA:

- Impacted by the opioid epidemic or would like to work in fields related to SUD treatment or recovery **AND**
- Workers who have been laid off **OR**
- Unemployed for more than 27 weeks

## CONTACT INFORMATION:

AROOSTOOK COUNTY  
ACTION PROGRAM  
77 Main Str., Presque Isle  
Erin Benson, Program Supervisor  
ebenson@acap-me.org / 768-3045

EASTERN MAINE DEVELOPMENT CORP  
40 Harlow St., Bangor  
Jon Farley, VP Economic  
& Workforce Development  
jfarley@emdc.org / 974-3219  
Susan Cerini, Director Workforce Services  
scerini@emdc.org / 561-4044

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS  
190 Lancaster St. Suite 200, Portland  
David Wurm, Senior Director  
David.Wurm@goodwillnne.org / 615-7845



# People in recovery and plants

*With proper care, they both flourish and grow*

by Niki Curtis

**A**t times, they get root-bound, a consequence of not having enough room to grow and change is necessary or they will wither and potentially die.

One really powerful thing that plants and people in recovery have in common is to share themselves to propagate new “life”.

People in and out of recovery appreciate the legacy of a popular Swedish Ivy plant fondly called the *Bill W plant*.

Bill Wilson, the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous,

a 12-step, spiritually based program of recovery, discovered that sharing his recovery with another alcoholic helped both of them to stay sober. And when that alcoholic shares their recovery with another and so forth until somewhere near 2 million members of Alcoholics Anonymous were estimated in 2016.

Bill W., as he was known in the anonymous program, passed away in Florida in 1971 and his wife Lois brought the plant that was in Bill’s hospital room back home with her. After many years, she gave the plant to the family cook

who then gave it to a friend who started to give away clippings to others in recovery.

A parallel tradition of “giving it away” began and over 40 years later, that tradition continues.

While researching this story, I was able to share with Manfred Zorn, a recipient of a Bill W. plant, that I had received one early on in my recovery but due to improper care, the plant died. When asked if I could get a clipping with a promise that I would give it better care, he happily agreed and said “and now it won’t happen again—we both know it—hug and love.”

This is the spirit of recovery that is expressed in every story found about the Bill W. plant.

Manfred received his first and only clipping in 1993 from a friend in recovery who has since passed.

Manfred says, “ I grew them ever since and have given away hundreds of them potted and fertilized. Then the rest is history - many of my friends or recipients gave away when they had clippings as well and I always have clippings to go, planted in clay pots.”

At one point in Manfred’s story, he was moving back to Portland and says, “when I came back, I

had one very meager piece of the plant, the rest died despite normal care - but it was enough to recover. As did I (I did not relapse but was very depressed.)”

Manfred came by today to drop off my clipping and shared the history of this one special offspring.

“When I was doing clippings, a very small piece was in the sink and I decided to give it a chance. I planted it and talked to it regularly, encouraging it to grow.” What he handed me was a plant 10 inches high and full of leaves and he then said, “ ..... it’s only 6-7 weeks old. I’ve never seen one of the clippings grow like this one and be so beautiful.”

The beauty of those words, the nurturing and love given that itty bit of a clipping and the growth that ensued draw a perfect parallel to the hope that others experience in recovery.

I can’t wait to invest into the legacy of Bill Ws plant, create my own clippings to share with others and continue passing along the hope.



*Niki Curtis of Portland is a woman in long-term recovery whose passion is helping and teaching others to love themselves.*

# This is my Bill W. plant.

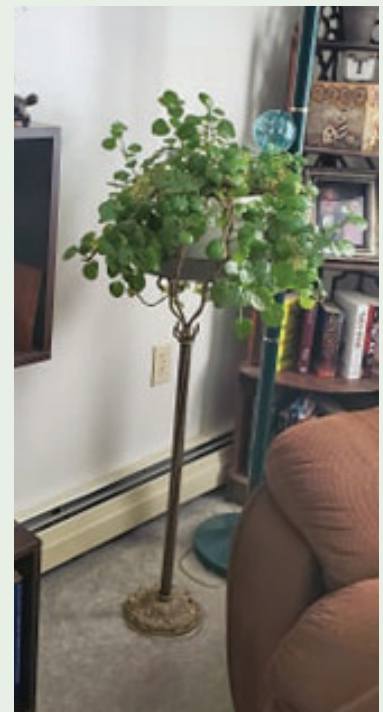
by Tania Margate

I was a client in the last group in Crossroads backcove halfway house for women before the program was discontinued. The program was slated for closure and so the plants were up for grabs. When I saw this one I had to have it. I didn’t know when I asked for it that it was a “Bill W” but after I found it, he was all the more enticing. “Billy” waited in the foyer for so many wandering souls like mine. He welcomed us through the front door to the beginning of a new way of life. Since then, he has parted with numerous clippings to various people in recovery. I hope they teach their new owners what I’ve learned from my “Billy.”

1. Recovery is beautiful
2. Even if all your leaves fall off there is still hope...cut off what is no longer useful (even if it’s to the dirt), get back to your roots, and be sure to get adequate food and water.
3. Too much food, water and sunshine can be just as detrimental as not enough.
4. Blemished leaves are a part of life.

So, that’s my buddy. He’s been with me for every move since leaving Crossroads 7 years ago.

I love this plant!



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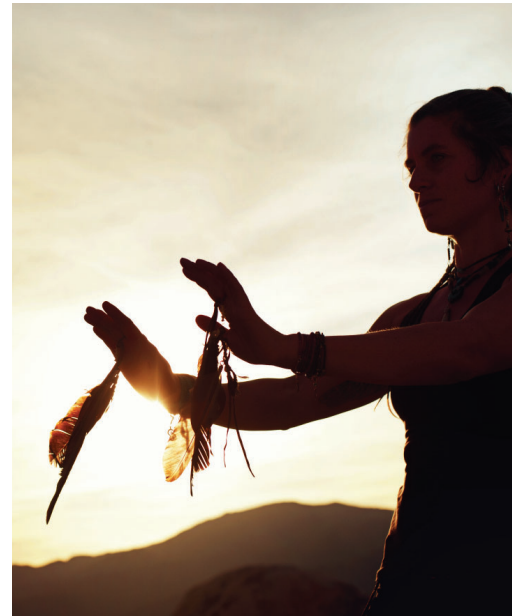


1321 Washington Ave Suite 310 Portland  
[www.weissmethodusa.com](http://www.weissmethodusa.com)

# There's no place like home

*Home is the essence of you*

by **Kimble Greene, PhD**



**R**ecently, I learned a hard yet familiar lesson – home is not the place in which I live nor the relationships in which I love. Home is deep within my core, it's feeling comfortable in my own skin, it's knowing who I am – attributes and faults, success and failures, strengths and weaknesses – and loving myself and my life through it all.

That's not always easy – being at home inside yourself or loving all of who you are. It is essential however, if your goal is thriving instead of simply surviving, moving forward rather than staying stuck, growing, expanding, evolving, and living your life stretched to every corner of opportunity and experience possible.

Home is also recognizing the power deep within your core, the wisdom and capability present in you since birth. For those familiar with the movie/book *The Wizard of Oz*, the scope of the story focuses on the lead character, Dorothy and her fantastical journey through the land of Oz to find her way back 'home'.

At the end, the wizard reveals to Dorothy she has had the power within her the entire

time to return home and all her searching out in the world for the way home has been misguided. You know better than anyone who you are at your core and that 'home' is the essence of you.

The good news is whatever your circumstances, inner and outer, you have the ability to change those with your beliefs. What you believe deep within your core, about yourself and the world, drives your experience of yourself and the world.

Modify your beliefs about the nature of home, along with all other things, and you reconstruct your self and your world. This concept of the power and influence of your beliefs is based in modern research and science, such as Epigenetics. Who you are and who you continue to become is directed by what you choose to believe. There is no place like home because it's created by you and can be recreated as often as you choose. Home is where your heart is and there's no place like it in the world.

Here are some practices to find your way 'home':

***What does 'home' represent for you? Is this your belief or one***

***that was given to you?*** Write down your beliefs about home then rewrite the ones you'd like to change.

***Is how you show up in the world an authentic representation of who you really are, of you who want to be?*** You are your most powerful when you're 'home' within yourself.

Take an inventory of your primary beliefs, about yourself and the world, and make sure they are perspectives that resonate with you. If not, change them!

By replacing the outdated scientific theories that our bodies and our lives are driven by our genes and DNA, modern science has returned the power to create the self and life you desire to you by establishing beliefs as the driving force for creating and recreating your world.

Go for it!



*Kimble Greene PhD, Founder and Chief Catalyst at Catalyst Enterprises Worldwide, LLC is an author, master coach, and developer of The Monarch*

*Method™ for personal transformation.*  
[www.drkimblegreene.com](http://www.drkimblegreene.com)



# Growing recovery strong communities in Maine

## *Getting through these times together*

by **Leslie Clark**

**R**ecovery community centers are formed by people in recovery, for people in recovery. We build community by sharing our stories and listening to the stories of others. When we are in community, we are home. We are with our people.

Just a few months ago, when we could no longer gather in person, volunteers and staff from recovery community centers throughout Maine ramped up virtual support providing meetings and reaching out by telephone to thousands of people. Maine's recovery community centers were dedicated to providing support so that no one had to go through this time alone.

Fortunately, the telephone is a familiar tool for many people in recovery. Ever since Bill Wilson received a telephone call in 1934 from his old friend, Ebby, a call that would change his life and

ultimately the lives of millions of others, the phone has been a lifeline for people in recovery. We are continually encouraged to just “pick up the phone.” Today’s technology allows us to see, as well as hear each other. From our homes, we’ve met each other’s pets, waved at young children running past, and had peeks into one another’s kitchens, living rooms, and gardens.

But, what about people new to recovery, whose phone lists were nonexistent or who didn’t even have a phone? What about people experiencing homelessness? Without the basics of housing, food, and safety how can one begin to address addiction and find a new ways of living?

All recovery community centers in Maine offer free peer recovery coaching. Recovery coaches are not therapists, counselors, clinicians, clergy or 12 step sponsors. They

complete a nationally certified program and value all pathways of recovery. Recovery coaches remove barriers and help with identifying and obtaining community-based services and resources, including housing and technology. Recovery coaches help people identify their own unique pathways for a joyful life.

We stay well by giving away what has been given to us. Visit [www.portlandrecovery.org](http://www.portlandrecovery.org) to find out more about upcoming trainings for recovery coaching and to connect with a recovery community center near you.



*Leslie M. Clark, MSW serves as executive director of Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC). Leslie speaks openly as a person in long-term recovery to help reduce stigma and advocate for resources and effective public policy.*

# RECOVERY PROGRAMS

*We are fortunate to live during a time when there are many options for finding and sustaining lasting recovery from addiction. We are all individuals and while there are many aspects of our personal journeys that may be similar to those of others, we are each called to discover for ourselves what works and what doesn't work for us. Our mission is to provide you with options and shine a light on different approaches that people use to maintain lasting recovery without endorsing specific approaches or programs. We ultimately leave it up to you, the reader, to decide what works best for you - we believe what works for you is what's best for you.*

## **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)**

207-774-4335/800-737-6237  
[www.cso.aomaine.org](http://www.cso.aomaine.org)

## **Al-Anon /Alateen**

[www.al-anon.org](http://www.al-anon.org)  
207-284-1844 / 800-498-1844

## **Adult Children of Alcoholics**

(ACOA or ACA)  
A 12-step, 12-tradition program for men and women who grew up in dysfunctional homes  
207-322-6284  
[www.adultchildren.org](http://www.adultchildren.org)

## **Cocaine Anonymous (CA)**

617-539-6090 / 800-347-8998  
(meeting info only)  
[www.ca.org](http://www.ca.org)

## **Codependents Anonymous - CoDA**

602-277-7991 / 888-444-2359  
[www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org)

## **Debtors Anonymous (DA)**

Debtors Anonymous offers hope for people whose use of unsecured debt causes problems and suffering. 800-421-2383 / 800-974-0062  
<https://debtorsanonymous.org/>

## **Drug Addicts Anonymous (DAA)**

A fellowship of men and women who have recovered from addiction and are committed to helping those who still suffer, based on the 12 steps  
970-761-5189  
[www.daausa.org](http://www.daausa.org)

## **The Family Restored**

The Family Restored is an interactive and educational support group for families coping with a loved one's addiction. Family members have the opportunity to ask questions, discuss their concerns, and build community with other families in a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

## **Gambler's Anonymous (GA)**

718-352-1671 / 888-830-2271  
<http://newenglandga.com>

## **Heroin Anonymous (HA)**

A fellowship of heroin addicts who help each other practice complete abstinence from drugs and alcohol  
347-858-3601  
[www.heroinanonymous.org](http://www.heroinanonymous.org)

## **H.O.P.E. Group**

A safe place where people come together to find wellness by sharing their stories and listening with an open heart and mind to others  
727-420-2964 (Liz)  
[www.hopehealing.org](http://www.hopehealing.org)

## **Marijuana Anonymous (MA)**

A fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope to recover from marijuana addiction  
609-529-6332 / 800-766-6779  
[www.marijuana-anonymous.org](http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org)

## **Narcotics Anonymous (NA)**

A support program for people in recovery from drug addiction based on the 12 steps of AA  
[www.namaine.org](http://www.namaine.org)  
818-773-9999/  
800-974-0062

## **Overeaters Anonymous (OA)**

A fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating  
Dial 211 for meeting info.  
<http://oamaine.org>

## **Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA)**

A program of recovery for people addicted to sex and love, based on the 12 steps of AA  
207-323-5143 / 800-204-2803  
[www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org)

## **SMART Recovery**

Mutual-support meetings that are free and open to anyone seeking science-based, self-empowered addiction recovery  
440-951-5337  
[www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)

## **Wellbriety Movement**

(White Bison)  
A sustainable grassroots movement that provides culturally based healing for indigenous people  
207-992-0411 / 877-871-1495  
<https://wellbriety.com>



# PROVIDING SUPPORT WHEN IT'S NEEDED MOST

RALI is proud to support community partners that are providing essential recovery services during these difficult times.

Amidst the new challenges presented by COVID-19, **we continue to rally together to find solutions to the opioid crisis.**

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Join us and learn more at **[rali-me.org](https://rali-me.org)**.