

Happenings Newsletter

Spring 2016

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Alumni Monthly Social Dates

April 6
May 4
June 1
July 6
August 3
September 7
October 5
November 2
December 7

All socials are the first Wed. of each month at 6 p.m. at the Bryan Independence Center, 1640 Lake Street in the lower level rec room



September 18, 2016
Mark your calendar to help celebrate the 45th Anniversary of the Bryan Independence Center

Message from Alumni President

Tom Norris

My name is Tom Norris and it is my honor to serve as the president of the Independence Center Alumni Association for 2016. As an alumnus of the Independence Center and a volunteer, I have seen firsthand the miracles that occur here as individuals begin their road to recovery. My own personal involvement with the Alumni Association has been an important part of my program of recovery and I am grateful for the opportunity to give back.

One of the goals I would like the Alumni Association to achieve this year is to increase the value of the Stay-Connected Scholar-

ship that we award each year. It is currently \$1,500 and is applied to the recipient's education as he or she works to become a licensed drug and alcohol counselor. This award will directly benefit people with addiction so it makes sense that an increase in the amount of the scholarship would be money well spent. Anything that can be done to make it easier for people to follow this career path is an important focus of the Alumni Association.

As I mentioned, my work with the Alumni Association has been of great benefit and I have witnessed firsthand that this is the case with others

in recovery. I would encourage alums to consider becoming involved with the Alumni Association. This can be done in a variety of ways and can involve as much or little time as you wish. Giving back to the work of the Independence Center benefits everyone and the rewards are heartwarming. Please feel free to attend an Alumni Association officer meeting which are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. We meet in the Volunteer/Alumni room at the Independence Center and sometimes there are cook-
ies.

ALUMNI MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

It's not too late to pay your annual membership dues of \$5. If you missed paying your annual dues at the chili feed, you can mail your payment to the ICAA at 1640 Lake Street, Lincoln NE 60502.

Bryan Independence Center Director's Message

by Jerome Barry

This is the year we celebrate the 45th Anniversary of the Bryan Independence Center; we will be making plans for Sunday, September 18th. The celebration will be held in the courtyard of our new facility on 16th and Lake streets. Anniversaries tend to give us the chance to reflect, so I plan to embellish this a bit and reflect on my journey in the field of substance use treatment over the last 36 years.

I started working in this field in 1980 at a location near 24th & Lake in north Omaha. My travels have taken me to programs called: Drew's Half Way House within Eastern Nebraska Human Services Agency, the NOVA Therapeutic Community, the Addiction's Recovery Center at Immanuel Medical Center, the Drug & Alcohol Treatment Unit at the VA Medical Center, the Alcohol & Drug Treatment Center at Saint Francis Medical Center, and finally to the Independence Center at Bryan Medical Center.

At the time of my start in the field, I recall alcohol and marijuana to be the primary drugs of abuse. Add prescription drugs to this list and it is very close to the same today. I recall clients trying to justify why marijuana was not problematic way back then. In those days, many people were receiving inpatient treatment at the various hospital-based programs that existed in Omaha, Lincoln, and throughout the country. Most of those programs were 30-day inpatient programs which were covered in large part by most everyone's health care benefits. Many of those programs offered "co-dependency programs" for the spouses of those seeking treatment. There was no such thing as "preauthorization" for care, there were no "managed care companies," and there was only the minimal beginnings of what we now refer to as "outpatient services." Programs like the Eppley Treatment Center at Methodist Hospital in Omaha and the Independence Center at

Lincoln General in Lincoln were the hallmark facilities offering the best of care in the region.

Almost every counselor working in addiction were also in recovery themselves. In those days, professionals either believed alcoholism was a disease or they believed that to be hogwash and that it truly was a response of our environmental upbringing. Seldom did you find a professional that held a blended broad perspective on what we now call "substance use disorders." Many programs were segregated between those who used alcohol and those who chose to use drugs. Also, most programs would not allow individuals into their doors if they had mental health issues and especially if they were taking a medication for those mental health issues.

We heard stories of AA meetings who would not allow primary drug users into their meetings, we heard stories of those who believed that all mental health issues were a result of the individual's use of alcohol or drugs; and we heard regularly that people "had not yet reached their bottom" if they came to treatment and then relapsed. Professionals in those days slept better at night knowing there was nothing they could do, they just had to wait until the person was ready to receive help. Most of these 30-day programs gave everyone pretty much the same services, no matter their unique and varied backgrounds. There was a belief that "the program" knew what was best and you just needed to take what was offered and not complain.

As you can tell, much has changed and yet much has not changed.



Stay Connected Scholarship Winner

by Tom Norris



The Alumni Association was proud to present the Stay-Connected Scholarship to Jeremy M. at the 2016 chili feed. Jeremy currently works at the Independence Center as a mental health tech and is in the process of becoming a licensed drug and alcohol counselor. Jeremy's care and compassion for those beginning recovery is evident every day and the Alumni Association is happy to be able to play a small part in furthering his education. Best of luck Jeremy!

Testimonial submitted by Phil H.

I began my journey toward recovery with the Independence Center in the fall of 2011. I was 48 years old, with 30+ years of alcoholic drinking and drug abuse under my belt. I was desperate to leave my addiction behind. Alas, I was not done yet. My third and most recent residential treatment started in the spring of 2014. Then 51, I knew I had to try once again, but frankly, I doubted that I could ever get sober. Lots of people don't, and I suspected I was among them – the "constitutionally incapable" we hear about when How It Works is read at the beginning of AA meetings. "Those who do not recover" that was me, I feared. I was only back because I was desperate and the Independence Center was familiar. I didn't know where else to turn.

As I write this, I'm about 22 months sober – a circumstance that hasn't occurred since my early teens. I attribute this to the starting block called the Independence Center. Let me repeat that: the Independence Center was a starting block. We don't "graduate" as recovered alcoholics and drug addicts, we transition into a life of progressive recovery.

Successful addiction treatment is a little like successful parenting. The ultimate goal of a good treatment facility should be to make itself a pleasant adjunct to the client's future, not an ongoing necessity. I have often reflected on what changed the most recent time I attended residential treatment, and I believe the most significant change was that I really became willing to learn how to live in the Lincoln recov-

ery community, and the Independence Center facilitated my efforts. One of the mental health technicians introduced me to the man who would become my sponsor. A counselor gave me an assignment to attend a meeting with him. This man became an important mentor to me. In post-residential outpatient treatment, I often discussed the relationships I was developing in the recovery community. Counselors, techs, and alumni all helped me to find my feet in the world beyond treatment. When a rock hits a piece of glass, it spider webs outward. That's what recovery has been like for me. I met a few people through the Independence Center who introduced me to other people, who introduced me to still other people. The spider web of recovery.

Today, I am privileged and delighted to work as an alumni volunteer. Every time I interact with clients, I experience a deep sense of personal fulfillment, a sense of purpose in my life. I can't save anybody, but I can be a friend to someone new in recovery. I came here wanting to exorcise demons, I wasn't looking for personal growth. Amazing!

In one of his sermons, the late Unitarian minister Forrest Church laid out a prescription for life by which I try to live today. It reflects a life in recovery beyond just the cessation of drugs and alcohol, a life of serenity, service and self-acceptance, which the beautiful people at the Independence Center helped me find. Want what you have, do what you can, be who you are. Good luck!

**BRYAN INDEPENDENCE CENTER
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

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We're on the web at
www.icaalincn.org

Chili Feed Recap

by John Baldus

Great chili, great crowd, and great weather. What more could you ask for on a late winter's evening?! The Center for People in Need filled around 400 hungry and sober people attending the 2016 Independence Center Alumni Chili Feed, a mainstay of the Lincoln based recovery community. The event this year did not disappoint, attracting another large crowd.

The Independence Center's own Tim Luedtke did a marvelous job serving as master of ceremonies, and was literally heads above everyone despite not having a stage to stand on this year.

One of the highlights this year was the Caren Hunt award being presented to Otto Schultz. The formal presentation was enhanced with Jerome Barry, Kelly Madigan and Duke Engle, long time staff members and coworkers of Otto's, sharing their memories of working with him over the years. Plenty of anecdotes and lots of laughter.

The 2016 raffle prizes included a large screen television, Visa & Russ's Market gift cards, an Alex Gordon signed KC Royals baseball, and other assorted donated items.

Kudos and a debt of gratitude goes out to the many sponsors, Independence Center and Bryan Health staff, and the volunteers who made the 2016 Chili Feed another huge success.

A large, stylized graphic that says "THANK YOU" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The text is arched over a thick, blue, wavy line that curves under the letters.