

# A Walk in Courage, A Step in Faith, A Path to Recovery



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**Ellen Blathers**, Executive Director, accepts a grant check from the Green Bay Packers Foundation in Green Bay.



Place cards waiting for guests at last year's celebration

## Third Annual Celebration of Recovery

We hope you'll join us for the Third Annual Celebrating Serenity Inns, A Path to Recovery on Friday evening, April 26, 2013 at the Italian Community Center in the Third Ward.

Featured speaker will be Reverend Leondis Fuller whose message is entitled "I'm Still Standing." Rev. Fuller will talk about his own drug and alcohol addiction and the loss of three sons to gun violence in the central city of Milwaukee. He now works helping fathers just out of prison, those addicted to drugs and alcohol, and others subjected to the violence that claimed his sons' lives.

Rounding out the evening will be great menu choices from the Italian Community Center, the opportunity for fellowship with the staff, residents, graduates and other supporters and volunteers, a silent auction offering a wide variety of items you won't want to miss, music by Dwight Hamilton and his 2-person group, Senior Moments, and recognition of a graduate and a community partner.

Invitations will be sent in early March. If you do not receive one, please contact Lorraine Buehler at [lcbuehler@cs.com](mailto:lcbuehler@cs.com) with your contact information.

To donate a silent auction item, contact Debbie McGregor no later than April 12, 2013 at [mrs.debbie.mcgregor@gmail.com](mailto:mrs.debbie.mcgregor@gmail.com).



## Where Are They Now?

(The 12<sup>th</sup> in a series of interviews  
with Serenity Inn graduates)

By Lorraine Buehler

Where is Jason Dobson now? He is in a very good place, indeed. He is working toward a two-year Associates Degree in Human Services at MATC with plans to go on for a Bachelor's Degree and become a certified AODA counselor. On the two or three days a week he doesn't have classes, he works at Step Industries, is keeping up with child support payments for his two children, and earned a 3.5 GPA his first semester at MATC. Surprising even himself as a student, Jason recalls barely earning passing grades at Cudahy High School.

He started using drugs at age 16, just marijuana at first, graduating to cocaine on weekends and eventually to heroin, an addiction that went on for seventeen years. In that time, he went through treatment seven or eight times at Rogers Memorial Hospital and once as an outpatient at the Dewey Center, but thirty days was the longest time that he had ever remained clean. He admits now that he had come to accept that he was going to die from his addiction.

He reached his lowest point when he came out of detox with no insurance in October of 2011 and ended up at the Milwaukee Rescue Mission for a week. His stay at "the Mission" was the realization that his life had spiraled out of his control, coming after he was arrested for using drugs in his truck as a letter carrier and losing his job with the Post Office.



Jason Dobson

At the Rescue Mission he heard about Serenity Inns and came to the Inn for an assessment, thinking it had to be a nicer place to live. Even after being assessed and admitted to the program, Jason didn't believe he could quit using drugs. He entered thinking it was a place to stay for two or three months but did not believe he could live drug free.

Something changed, however, as he got into the program and spent time with the staff, all of whom had beat their addictions. If Ron, Rickey, and Ellen had changed their lives and remained drug and alcohol free for 15+ years, Jason came to accept that maybe he could as well.

He also saw hope in some of the Serenity Inn graduates like Gary and Rodney who stopped by, showing they were living clean and happy, and especially in his sponsor who has seven years clean and who has been an excellent role model with whom Jason talks every day.

In his sixteen months of sobriety since coming to Serenity Inn in November of 2011, Jason has rebuilt relationships with his children, ages 2 and 5, with his ex-wife, and with his parents, among many others. One indication of his success living clean and the trust he has earned is that the Executive Director now calls upon him to serve as reserve Innkeeper from time to time. (article continued on the next page)



Jason Dobson story (continued from page two)

**Jason's future looks more promising than ever, and he sums up the role Serenity Inn played in this. Unequivocally he says, "Serenity Inn saved my life."**

## **Quite an Ending and Beginning--2012-2013**

by Rick Deines

from his Blog, "The Heart of the Matter"

Posted January 1, 2013

We didn't plan it this way. Last night, the 31st of December, Dixie cooked a meal for fifteen people - the men and guests at Serenity Inn. SI is a residential recovery center for men addicted to drugs and alcohol. We have been involved since its inception roughly ten years ago.

We had missed our regular serving date in mid-December, so when a vacancy came up on New Year's Eve we took the date as a kind of make-up. What we didn't know until a few days ago is that one of the men, 'D', whom we have gotten to know a bit better than some others, was due to have his Rite of Passage, having completed the Inn's seven month program. So it was fortuitous that our being there at this time coincided with his rite; we were there with him, his wife and his boss, also a recovering addict (26 years clean).

It has long been evident to me that what so many books, surveys, and experiences tell us is needed in our society happens at Serenity Inn and did happen last night. And, of course, as addicts must do to recover, they face the truth of their living and dying. This always means digging deeply into some ugly stuff. These are not stories to get fifteen minutes of fame at the end of the nightly news or portrayed in superficial ways in some films. They differ in that for the recovering person the nightmare is never over. He or she always is living on the edge of one's failures in life and one's hopes and dreams.

Part of the meal (the Dinner Fellowship) of Serenity Inn involves each person at the table responding to a question prepared by one of the men. Each person, including the guests, takes a turn in introducing him/herself and sharing a response to the question. Invariably the question for the men is a question about how their recovery journey is going.

Rarely do the men dodge from either side of that two- edged sword of death and life, of despair and hope. They respond passionately but not without humor or a sense of the irony of life.

The group last night was roughly a fifty-fifty split of men nearing the end of their program and those just beginning. This fact revealed that some men saw and knew things through their journey at the Inn that they wanted to pass on to the others. The exchange was nothing less than profound.

Even though a talented staff has made this possible, it was evident in this group that mentors for the new men had emerged in the "old hands." The staff has grasped the lesson that "leaders don't create followers; they create other leaders."

(Rick Deines article continued on page four)

Rick Deines article (continued from page three)

The mentors' comments were incredibly touching because of their "spot on" insight and obvious compassion for the other men. Now tell me how often in your daily life you experience this kind of care? Reflecting on the wonder of the dinner with a staff member I said, "You never have to wonder if you could be spending your life in a better way."

The addictions counselor spoke a word to "D" as did many others. What the counselor said was, "After you leave here, nothing will have changed. The world will be the same. The only thing that is changed is that now you have the tools to deal with the world. And that can make all the difference."

Almost every value that we seek to discover in community is present in recovery programs that are rooted in a caring community. The deepest dimensions of that care are present in communities like Serenity Inns. Why can't our culture learn the lessons of recovery and join that journey together?

What a way to end one year and begin another. And that's "the heart of the matter."



**Mission Statement:** To provide structured housing and rehabilitative services in an environment of support and accountability that will give addicted men the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

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