

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



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So Many Reasons to Celebrate!



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Serenity Inns 5th Celebration of Recovery Dinner and Fundraiser

More than 325—that's the number of men--former alcohol and drug addicts—who have been given the tools to find new paths in life at Serenity Inns since its founding 11 years ago. The first resident was admitted on April 12, 2004, and each year has brought new success stories like those you will hear about at our Anniversary Celebration.

Please join us in marking the 5th Celebration of Recovery fundraiser on Thursday, April 23, 2015 at the Italian Community Center. The evening will begin with fellowship at 5:30 p.m. followed by dinner and will include a silent auction, a brief message from Judge Martin Joseph Donald about his time as the first Drug Court Judge in Milwaukee County, and messages from a graduate and a resident as well as recognition of a valuable community partner. It promises to be a great celebration!

Please see page 4 to learn how you can help make the 2015 celebration a success!



Pr. Joe Ellwanger (Board Member) and Tim McMurtry (Board President) at last year's

Serenity Inns Celebration of Recovery Dinner and Fundraiser



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

(The 20th in a series of Interviews with Alumni)

by Lorraine Buehler

It started with marijuana in the early 1980s when he was a student at North Division High School and led to a loss of interest in all things classroom-related. When a neighbor came back from the military a couple of years later and introduced Ken Tillman to crack cocaine, serious addiction issues began, resulting in a 25-year addiction to the drug.

Ken found Serenity Inns in December of 2013, coming directly from Genesis Detox. Before that, he was on probation for domestic violence, was bingeing on cocaine, and had thoughts of suicide.

Ken has many regrets about his past, especially about not getting his high school diploma, not earning a high school graduation party like his brother and sister had, and, most of all, disappointing his family, most notably his parents who gave him everything. He did earn his GED in 2002 through an Internet program sponsored by the University of Cincinnati when he was working in that city.

Now reconciled with his parents (they are his “best friends”), he has come to understand that his parents were hard on him growing up because—as his father told him—“We expected more from you.”

Reflecting on his time at Serenity Inns, Ken says of Miss Ellen (Executive Director), “She’s a soldier, a commander, a general who has your best interests, does not baby you, tells you the truth, [and you learn] you have to follow the rules.”

Ken Tillman at his “Rite of Passage” —>



Of Lionel (Addiction Counselor) Ken says he was someone you could always talk to, who might crack a joke but was serious in his efforts to help.

In the beginning, Ken thought that Dinner Fellowship at the Inn was crazy. He wondered why volunteers brought dinner every night. And then he saw that people cared for him and the other residents, and he began caring in return.

One of the dinner fellowship volunteers, in fact, talked to Ken about a job and then hired him while he was still at the Inn for a job at Andrew Chevrolet. Ken has been there for almost a year now and has gotten 2 raises. His job includes a wide variety of duties: picking up cars and customers, taking out the trash, buffing cars and doing detail work. Ken says, “I have found a place I belong.”

In his recovery, Ken is rebuilding his relationship with his wife and children, especially his 22-year-old son living here in Milwaukee of whom he is very proud. Like so many fathers in this position, Ken is working to make up for not being there as his son grew up. Equally proud of his 12-year-old daughter living in Ohio, Ken looks forward to the week she will spend with him here in May.

Upbeat with a ready smile, Ken is a Serenity Inn success story who looks back at himself as “another Ken back then.” He stays connected to Serenity Inn, checking in with Miss Ellen a couple of times a week and looking for an opportunity to give back in recognition of all the good that has come from his time as a resident.

From the Desk of the Executive Director, Ellen Blathers...



It's that time of year again. Serenity Inns is hosting its annual fundraising event on April 23rd at the Italian Community Center. It is a time to celebrate the men for their journey of recovery and raise awareness about alcohol and drug abuse. It is also a time to recognize the value of donor support. I get to see men shine and take pride in the progress they have made in their lives. The alumni share with men in the program the challenges of living in recovery. These men enjoy a great sense of self-worth because they belong to the Serenity Inns family. They are loved and empowered unconditionally. These men have a lifetime membership whether they were in the program 30 days or 13 months. Furthermore, the men get to reconnect with the dinner fellowship volunteers who left a lasting impression on the men.

The annual event is a wonderful occasion to highlight the real faces of addiction. During this time, I am happy on the one hand and sad on the other hand. It is an awesome time of fellowship, a time of endless hope and joy. Before the event each year, I go on a journey to find and contact our graduates. It is great to hear their voices and know that they are well. It is also devastating to find that some have relapsed or are struggling to stay clean.

Sadly, a part of recovery is the reality of relapse and the hardship of addictions. Addictions to alcohol and drugs are claiming the lives of people young and old. It continues to destroy families, communities and the church village. The Centers for Disease Control call prescription opioid an epidemic. In the past 10 years the number of people using heroin has climbed to 265,000 a year with 17, 000 opioid-related deaths per year. In Milwaukee County, the medical examiner reported 119 heroin related-deaths which is a 72% increase over 2013. The heroin- related deaths are greater than the homicide rate in Milwaukee Country for 2014. These statistics signal a real danger and a desperate need to take action.

For the past 11 years, Serenity Inns has been offering treatment services to men throughout southeastern Wisconsin. In these years of service, we have provided residential treatment for more than 325 men. The need is overwhelming and while some other agencies are closing, Serenity Inns is still providing treatment services to men. The success that Serenity Inns has with men is due to the deliberate effort of people who care about them, people who are committed to second chances, and people who offer an endless supply of love and hope. This annual event is a melting pot of people sharing the journey of recovery and celebrating together. ***Be sure to join us on April 23rd.***



Ellen Blathers

Serenity Inns 5th Celebration of Recovery Dinner and Fundraiser

Here is how you can help make it a success!

- **Attend the dinner on Thursday, April 23rd and help to underwrite it!** The cost is only \$65 per person or \$1000 for a corporate table (setting for 8 and special recognition as a sponsor).

- **Buy dinner for a resident or a graduate—just \$65!**

- **Donate an item for the Silent Auction.**



We welcome theme baskets and gift cards from area businesses you frequent. Many are happy to donate a card or an item or service as a community contribution and a marketing opportunity.

Also popular: unique experiences such as a plane ride or tickets to a sporting event, especially a Brewers game. And don't overlook that "treasure" you were gifted but haven't used. If you have a special talent, consider making an item for the auction—jewelry, table runner, afghan, or quilt.

To offer an auction item or to sign up for a sponsor table, please contact Lorraine Buehler by April 1. To attend, contact Lorraine by April 16. (414-964-8933, lcbuehler@cs.com)



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