

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



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Celebrating Serenity Inns, A Path to Recovery

Serenity Inns, Inc.

P. O. Box 26887
Milwaukee WI 53226-6887

Phone 414-873-5474

FAX 414-873-5484

Website:
www.serenityinns.org

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On April 1, 2011, Serenity Inns held its first significant fundraiser in the seven years since it opened its doors to the first resident in April of 2004. Held at the Italian Community Center, the event was attended by 151 supporters and included a Silent Auction, vocal music by Judy Ellwanger, a message from a Serenity Inn graduate, and a keynote address.

Tim McMurtry, incoming SI Board Chair, served as MC, with the keynote address delivered by Pr. Jerry North, Waupun Prisoner-turned Chaplain. His uplifting message suggested that seemingly hopeless situations and people can be turned around. As a self-proclaimed example of this, he shared his story of recovery and finding the Lord after being in prison three times for using drugs and stealing to support his addiction.



MC, Tim McMurtry



Pr. Jerry North, Keynote Speaker

Walter White, a Serenity resident from October 2005 to March 2006, talked about his time in the program, his 30 years of drug abuse, and his success living clean since graduating from Serenity Inn.

Rick Deines, outgoing Board Chair, was recognized for his long service to Serenity Inns as one of the original team with a dream about a facility in the Central City of Milwaukee to serve men in recovery. Rick and others made the initial trips to Samaritan Inns in Washington, D.C. which provided the model for Serenity Inns, Inc. Pastor Joe Ellwanger, another one of the original "dreamers," made the presentation. Bishop Jeff Barrow said the prayer before dinner, and Pr. Gary Erickson gave the Sending Prayer.

The net return for the evening, including the Silent Auction and other donations, was close to \$10,000. One of the most notable items in the Silent Auction was a room-size carpet made by one of the residents, Ben, and donated by his employer, Flooring Innovations.

Judged a success on every level, the dinner/silent auction will become an annual event. In fact, SAVE THE DATE for next year: April 27, 2012.



Continuing "Celebrating" from front page

Many thanks to the Planning Committee for making this first attempt a financial success as well as an inspirational evening:: Lorraine Bahr, Ellen Blathers, Lorraine Buehler, Joyce Ellwanger, Debbie McGregor, Mary Ann Smalley, and Minna Smith.

Celebrating Serenity Inns, A Path to Recovery Donors

April 1, 2011

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Where Are They Now

(The fifth in a series of interviews with former Serenity Inn residents)

by Lorraine Buehler

To meet Robert Love today is to meet a soft-spoken, smiling, well-dressed 60-year-old gentleman. If you had known the young Robert, you might not have predicted this result. Growing up in Chicago with a mother addicted to alcohol and a father to heroin, Robert gravitated to selling and eventually using drugs. Before coming to Serenity Inn, the drug dealing landed him in prison for years at a time, in all serving 22 years in prison in several states.

Robert arrived at Serenity Inn in 2009 after being released on December 28th from the Felmers Cheney Correctional Center in downtown Milwaukee. When his parole officer had no place for Robert to go, Pastor Joe Ellwanger stepped in. Acquainted with Robert from picking him up Sunday mornings for church, Pr. Joe and his wife Joyce took Robert into their home the first night, getting him an assessment at Serenity Inn the following day. Familiar with the Inn from hearing prayers for the men during services at Hephatha Lutheran Church, Robert passed the assessment and was promptly admitted.

In his first weeks at the Inn, Robert was quiet and thin, at times struggling with breathing issues as a result of many years of smoking. He recalls that he started smoking at age 13 and even before that was lighting cigarettes for his mother from the kitchen stove. During his approximately six months at the Inn, Robert worked on his addiction to nicotine as well as his addiction to cocaine. Since leaving Serenity Inn, he has given up cigarettes after smoking for 45 years.

Photo of Robert Love



Working through many of his issues in his first few months at the Inn, Robert found work at Step Industries, starting there an April 17, 2010—at first doing assembly work. He continues to work at Step, now in quality control, checking every product that goes out the door.

In all his years of addiction, of selling drugs and using cocaine, Robert had tried many rehab programs, one a 90-day program run by Genesis in Milwaukee which he left with two weeks remaining because he wanted to see his girlfriend. Another was a sixteen-week program in La Crosse, Wisconsin from which he graduated.

The obvious question is why did Serenity Inn's program work for Robert when others didn't? Robert says that he found people at Serenity Inn with whom he could relate (he mentions Ellen, the Executive Director), and he mentions seeing much of his earlier self in the younger residents. At first he recognized too much of himself, in fact, in Ron, the Addictions Counselor, and didn't open up for a long time. He found the journaling requirement very difficult because of the mask he used to wear, and the journal required that the writer be honest with himself. Ron and Rick, the innkeeper, asked for honesty also. Robert recalls that Ron and Rick *"make you take a good look at yourself."*

Robert's biggest regret as he looks back on his life is not being there for his four children. Grown now, each of them is doing well and living in other states, among them a nurse, a teacher, and a school administrator. He has made initial contacts thus far and hopes to renew relationships with them and other family members and especially to meet his grandchildren, realizing this may not be a smooth road.

Story continued last page

Robert Love story continued from page three-

Today you will find Robert working at Step Industries, ushering at Hephatha Lutheran Church, volunteering at the food pantry at Cross Lutheran Church, and, as of May 21, 2011, on probation as the weekend innkeeper at Serenity Inn. From resident to weekend innkeeper in 17 months! Robert acknowledges the full circle his life has taken in this scenario.

We wish Robert Love the very best in this new role and recognize that his life experiences have given him the tools needed to help other men who are in the place he once was.



May 1 Garden Party

Eight members of Mount Hope Lutheran Church in West Allis led by Mick Demeter worked in the yard with the Serenity Inn residents on May 1. They did a general cleanup of the yard and flower beds, planted a few things, and re-applied new stone to the walk.

A Big Thank You for Helping to Fill our Supply "Closets"

Cleaning and Paper Supplies:

Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church, Sussex
Cross Lutheran Church Women's Group
(as part of their observance of Women's History
(Month)

Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, Waukesha
Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Oconomowoc
Mt. Hope Lutheran Church, West Allis
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Wauwatosa

Tools, etc.:

Buzz Althoen, Memorial Lutheran Church, for rakes and shovels
Mount Hope Lutheran Church, West Allis, for pea gravel



Newsletter Staff

Editor: Lorraine Buehler, silorr@cs.com
Webmaster: David Hearn
Publisher: Susie Hansen

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Address: P. O. Box 26887
Milwaukee, WI 53226-6887
Phone: 414-873-5474
FAX: 414-873-5484
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