

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



Volume 4, Issue 2, June 1, 2013

Serenity Inns, Inc.

P. O. Box 26887
Milwaukee WI 53226-6887

Phone 414-873-5474

FAX 414-873-5484

Website:
www.serenityinns.org

Ellen Blathers
Executive Director

Board of Directors

President
Tim McMurtry

Treasurer
Carla Stensberg

Secretary
Lorraine Buehler

Advisor to Directors
W. David Romoser

Directors:

Joe Ellwanger

Bill Martens

Ralph McClure

Rick Deines

William Krugler

JoAnn Weishan

Rev. Dwain Berry

Tom Danuser

Aaron Pressie

Celebrating Serenity Inns: A Path to Recovery, April 26

Our third annual FUNdraiser at the Italian Community Center was a success on so many levels, but most of all because of the extent to which it highlighted the Serenity Inn graduates. Beyond the opportunity for so many friends and supporters of Serenity Inn to mix with each other and with the grads and current residents, the highlight of the evening was hearing from graduate, Jason Dobson. His story of heavy addiction and losing everything because of it and then his comeback to finding sobriety, re-establishing relationships with his family, and working while taking and excelling in college courses is an inspirational tale and elicited a standing ovation.

Rev. Leondis Fuller's touching message, "*I'm Still Standing*," focused on the death of his 3 sons by gun violence in Milwaukee, and G. Dwight Hamilton and Jan Starks added their vocal and instrumental music to the evening.

Innkeeper Rickey Gulley called Rodney Hardy to the dais to be recognized as Mentor of the Year for the way he continues to help those who are in or have gone through the program, and Ron Maclin (Substance Abuse Counselor) gave the Community Partner recognition to the Friendship Club as a Community Partner, accepted by graduate Walter White. Finally, Executive Director Ellen Blathers presented Jason Dobson with the Alumnus of the Year award.

The Silent Auction and a 50/50 raffle were both well received by the 156 guests, the food was excellent, and Tim McMurtry, Board President as MC, kept the program moving along. We thank our sponsor, MFCS—Engineered Plastics Company, for their support as well as Thrivent Financial for Matching Funds.

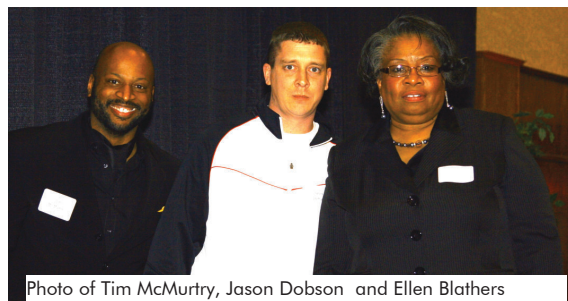


Photo of Tim McMurtry, Jason Dobson and Ellen Blathers



The date for the 2014 event is Friday evening, April 4th. Mark your calendars so that you can join us!



Where Are They Now?

(The 13th in a series of Interviews with Serenity Inn graduates)

By Lorraine Buehler

Andy Konieczka joins others interviewed in this series because he's in a "good place" at present. After years of addiction, Andy is celebrating 2 ½ years of clean time, he has a good job as a warehouse manager, is in a committed relationship and enjoying the birth of a son in mid April. He has rebuilt relationships with his family, specifically his mother, grandmother and aunts as well as his five-year-old son.

Andy's road to addiction started early, at age 15, with marijuana and with prescription drugs like vicodin and moved to other drugs, and finally to heroin, his drug of choice. Before finding Serenity Inn, Andy tried many treatment facilities in Milwaukee and in Waukesha County, and, in fact, he relapsed after his first time at Serenity Inn. Still young, Andy left Serenity Inn the first time in Jan. of 2010, ultimately landing in the Dodge House of Correction for selling drugs, and then prison boot camp in Jackson.

Back at Serenity Inn in December of 2010, Andy's resolve to face recovery was stronger than ever. Three months later, in March of 2011 after a minor altercation with the innkeeper, Andy was asked to leave the program. Andy recalls riding the bus south toward downtown that day and thinking how easy it would be to travel to the South Side where he could buy drugs, but instead he stopped downtown at the AlAnon Club to attend a meeting. Afterward, he called a friend who gave him a place to stay for a few nights until he found a place at the Salvation Army for 30 days and then a spot at Winter Star, a transitional living facility for 2 months. About this time he met his significant other, found work, and has been on a steady course ever since.

Looking back, Andy credits the SI innkeeper with the tough love move of asking him to leave that March day in 2011, giving Andy the opportunity to grow--something the two of them have talked about a number of times since that day.

Andy is also grateful to Ron, the addiction counselor, for his tough methods which helped prepare him for the people he's met "out there," and he credits Miss Ellen with her lessons on how to prioritize, to set goals, and to manage spirituality.

Recalling the dinner fellowship, Andy was shy at first in sharing his story until one night he realized that people around the table were really listening. It was "awesome," when he realized his story could help someone else. He and the residents especially liked it when adolescents and teens came to dinner.

Andy credits his time at SI with teaching him the importance of 12-Step meetings. They remain an important component in his recovery, and he describes becoming a sponsor himself as an "amazing" experience. His advice to others in recovery is the "give back" component. For him this meant becoming Activity Chair at his 12-Step Club, helping newcomers to experience "fun in recovery."

Having just turned 27 in May, Andy has been in and out of recovery many times in his young life, but 2 ½ years clean time is a path he vows to follow into the future!



Andy Konieczka

Parole Officer Recommends Serenity Inn



Pictured is Heather Seals of Wisconsin Probation and Parole at the April 26th Celebration of Recovery. With her are two of the clients she recommended to Serenity Inn, Rodney Hardy (left) who "graduated" from the 7-month program in February, 2011 and Romall R. who is a resident at present.

Agent Seals is very impressed with Serenity Inn. She says, "Finding quality AODA programming can be difficult. I found out about the Inn by accident, when I volunteered to accompany another agent there on a home visit.

I had never heard of Serenity [Inn] so I agreed to go along. A few things really stuck out to me: how nice the facilities were, how quiet it was inside, and also how Ron took the time to explain the program and gave me a tour. I thought it was really something special.

I've since referred two men to the program and have seen such impressive change in both. I could not be more proud of Rodney. I cannot imagine he would be where he is today without the involvement of Serenity, in combination with his hard work. My job is often a challenging one, and the true "successes" are few and far between. Being able to witness and be a part of someone's change is why I do this job."



Thanks to our Major Sponsor of the April 26th Celebration,

MFCS-Engineered Plastics Company,

& Thrivent Financial for Matching Funds.



Thanks also to the following for their donations, many of them designated to cover the cost of dinners for graduates, residents, and/or family members.

Fred & Kay Austermann

Gary Erickson

Julie Murray

Jim & Lorraine Bahr

Scott & Judith Fiducci

Marc & Donna Olsen

Dan Berg

Richard & Barbara Frank

Jerry & Sandra Osborne

Robert & Ellen Bertram

Jim & Middy Froemming

Larry & Suzanne Rather

Jerome & Bernice Brandl

Dale & Joy Harshberger

David & Gael Romoser

Bill & Lorraine Buehler

Hugh & Celeste Holly

Bruce & Lyn South

Mark & Terri Chelmowski

Ron & Barb Jones

Dr. Gerald Sullivan

Tom & Sonia Danuser

Kurt & Liz Kaiser

Greg & Ann Van Dunk

Tony Deines

Bill & Christie Krugler

Bill & Deb Weis

Mike & Lorraine Demeter

Bary & Amber Morgan

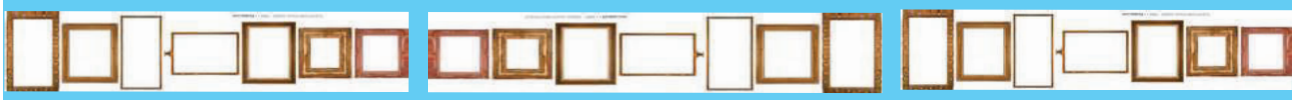
Todd Zinkgraf

Pat Denning



New at the Inn, WALL OF FAME

Check it out the next time you're there—prominently displayed in the first floor hallway. See the photos of a dozen graduates of the program, with more to follow. Thanks to an enthusiastic supporter of Serenity Inns for the idea, the energy and the financing to make this happen.



Dinner Fellowship Response

"First timers" to the dinner fellowship often come away from the experience with a similar response. The response of this family from Fox Point Lutheran Church is another example:

Well, we just arrived home from Serenity Inn. Where do I begin? Were we moved? Absolutely! Were we grateful for the opportunity to spend time with these amazing people--undoubtedly. When we left we were all sad to know that we might not see them all again no matter when we were able to go back and are looking forward to sending them some videos of our favorite movies, dropping off some of their favorite desserts, and staying in touch any way we can. They told us how grateful they were for our hospitality when really truly, it was all four of us who were grateful for their courage, their honesty, their advice, their strength and humor, and their true appreciation and in the short time we had together, their friendship.

Thanks so much...

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.

Newsletter Staff

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

Check our website for past issues

Serenity Inns
Address: P. O. Box 26887
Milwaukee, WI 53226-6887
Phone: 414-873-5474
FAX: 414-873-5484
E-Mail: serenityinns@gmail.com
Website: www.serenityinns.org