

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



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## A Message from the Executive Director, Ellen Blathers

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In April, Serenity Inns held their annual event. It is a time to celebrate the triumphs, praise the shining stars and bring together a community of people who value the mission of the organization. I believe that it is an awesome time for the men to see how many people are cheering them on to success. Plus, they get to utilize their socialization skills. A highlight of the evening is the conversation during dinner. You hear so many people talking at the same time in harmony. There is something uniquely wonderful about people sitting down together for dinner. While “people watching,” I was reminded of the number of times that men shared with me that eating dinner with the family was not a part of their childhoods. As the chatter in the Italian Community Center got louder, I reflected on dinners with my family. Some of my best memories are from doing dinner with my family.

For many of the men, the dinner was a great experience. Several of the guys talked about how special they felt sitting at the table with such nice people. The time the men spend doing dinner fellowship at the Inn is also a wonderful experience.



Robert, a resident/graduate at the April Event

I would like to issue a challenge. **Send me an email telling me about your dinner with a resident or graduate at the April Celebration of Recovery—or from your dinner fellowship experience with the men at the Inn.** I would love to post some of your comments on the website and in the newsletter. I am trying to start a campaign on the benefits of eating dinner together. God tells us in his word that it is good for people to fellowship. The value of fellowship is therapeutic for the men.

Send your comments to Ellen Blathers at [siellen@att.net](mailto:siellen@att.net)

### SAVE THE DATE

Join us at the annual Cookout/Picnic on Saturday, Sept. 12 at the Inn, 2825 W. Brown St. from 3-6. This is the residents’ opportunity to cook the burgers as a thank you to Serenity Inn volunteers.



## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

(The 21st in a series of Interviews with Alumni)

by Lorraine Buehler



Rodney at last September's Cookout

In recovery now, Rodney Nelson remembers his mother telling him as he grew up, “It’s easy to get in trouble but hard to get out of it.”

Years of addiction have confirmed the truth of her words to Rodney. He started drinking on Senior Ditch Day in high school. The year was 1984, and by 1993 he was using other drugs; by 2000 he went to prison for five years for selling them.

In prison and after his release, he stayed clean for his family, but he realizes now that doing it for them rather than for himself was not the answer.

By the time he arrived at Serenity Inns in August of 2014, he had hit rock bottom. His father had just passed away from cancer, and since Rodney knew him as a man who was against any kind of addiction, he started to feel the guilt of his father dying with him still using drugs. He was the black sheep of the family. After the funeral in Illinois, Rodney told his Heavenly Father, “I am done.”

He returned to Milwaukee and after detox at Genesis Detox came to Serenity Inn upon the recommendation of a counselor there.

His first time in recovery for himself, Rodney found the help he sought, “Serenity Inn helped me find out who I was—helped me understand I wasn’t responsible for my addiction but I am responsible for my recovery.” He never knew that addiction is a disease, and he had come to believe he was too old to get clean.

He is grateful to have learned the tools of patience and compassion in one-on-one counseling with Lionel and in doing writing assigned as part of the programming. The staff at Serenity Inns ‘loved me until I learned to love myself,’ Rodney said.

He is grateful for the “mother wit” of Miss Ellen who helped him to stop acting on impulse. Her advice: “Stop letting people rent space in your head!” Witnessing her dedication to all she does, he also credits her with helping him with his work ethic.

From the volunteers who bring dinner every night and listen to the residents’ stories he found models of compassion and love. He appreciates that the volunteers also learn what addicts and alcoholics go through and in some cases better understand what a loved one may be dealing with.

...Continued next page

Rodney Nelson interview, continued....

He's learned that recovery is a process, that when an individual is chemically dependent, he doesn't think clearly. Looking back, he knows he acted almost insanely at times.

Since January 2, Rodney has had a steady job that he enjoys. In the near future, he hopes to get additional training to do tool and die or similar work that is less physically demanding as he nears the age of 50.

He has rebuilt relationships with his family, especially with his 3 teenage children in Milwaukee and with their mother and also with his siblings and his mother in Illinois, and he is taking care of traffic tickets in Illinois so that he can get back his driver's license.

It has not been easy, but Rodney is well on his way to getting out of the trouble his addiction brought into his life.

## **5<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebration of Recovery**

**April 23, 2015**

Judge Donald  
at the podium



The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebration of Recovery at the Italian Community Center on Thursday, April 23 was the biggest and the best yet. Two hundred friends of Serenity Inns enjoyed dinner, fellowship, a silent auction, music, and a message from the Honorable Martin Joseph Donald about his role as the first drug court judge in Milwaukee County.

The evening's highlights were the heartfelt messages from a resident and graduates. Bernell spoke about the "family" he has found at Serenity Inns after years of heroin addiction. Clarence told the audience that he would be dead if Serenity Inns had not been there when he needed it. Josh received the Alumnus of the Year Award for the example he sets "living in recovery and serving as a partner to the Serenity Inn Community" and spoke candidly about his struggles since graduating from Serenity Inn. Brian Davis of Andrew Chevrolet received the Community Partner Award in recognition of his belief in Second Chances, Sponsors and Silent Auction donors, underwriters, and bidders helped to make the evening a *financial* success as well. After expenses, the evening earned over \$20,000 to further the programming of Serenity Inns.

Thanks to all who supported the Celebration by attending or with their donations.

*Please see a list of Underwriters, Table Sponsors, and Donors next page*

Next year's Celebration will be on a Thursday evening again, April 21, at the Italian Community Center.

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