

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



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## Where Are They Now?

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

by Lorraine Buehler

Llewellyn Lewis had an epiphany one July day in 2009. He realized that he was “getting too old” for the lifestyle he found himself living—mostly hustling money for drinks and doing odd jobs like painting, tiling floors and a variety of temp agency positions, always with the same goal, to get money to drink. Part of his epiphany was facing the fact that even those he loved and who loved him did not want to see him come around anymore, including his 5 siblings and their families who live in the area.

So—he checked into detox and after his 5 days there went directly to Serenity Inn for an assessment. Passing the assessment with the staff, he moved into the Inn on July 24, 2009.

Lee had tried other programs to help him with his alcohol addiction before coming to Serenity Inn, but found they were too short or too lenient for his needs. He realized he needed more than the 30 or 90 days of other recovery programs in Milwaukee and, what’s more, he needed the rules and the discipline at SI; he needed the house chores, the daily house schedule, and the studying and journaling required of all residents.

In fact, Lee extended the 7-month stay in the program by twice asking for a 30-day extension, graduating in April of 2010.

Working small assembly at Step Industries since December of 2009, Lee is proud of his ability to stay with a job and to budget his money, a skill he learned from Miss Ellen, and he’s saving to buy a car. And very soon, he will apply for his driver’s license, his first one.



Photo: Llewellyn Lewis after receiving the plaque at the September Cookout

Lee recounts the roles other staff members played in his recovery, Ron using psychology to help him through the tough times, Rick “telling it like it is” based on his own experience in recovery, and he appreciates that he also learned humility, another byproduct of his recovery.

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At age 56, Lee is thinking seriously about pursuing his GED and sums up the importance of sobriety in his life, "I wouldn't trade how things are going—not even for \$1,000,000. My sobriety is worth more than that to me."

### Thanks, Minna; Welcome, Mike!



Photo: Minna Smith at the September 10 Cookout at the Inn.

Many thanks to Minna Smith (Fox Point Lutheran Church) for the 2 ½ years she served as Volunteer Dinner Fellowship Coordinator. Minna worked with David Hearn to place the dinner fellowship calendar online, and she developed a database of dinner fellowship volunteers so that almost all reminders can now be sent via email. The database has also proved a vital link in sending notices to volunteers about ongoing needs for SI graduates as well as for the 4 "closet" needs at the Inn (paper products, office supplies, personal hygiene, cleaning supplies, & food items).

Minna's leadership in this position means that the new Volunteer Dinner Fellowship Coordinator, Mike Demeter of Mount Hope Lutheran Church in West Allis, has had a fairly easy transition into his new post.

Welcome Mike!



### Welcome to New Board Members

Bill Krugler joined the Board in September. Bill is a retired Managing Director of Mason Wells, a regular volunteer with the dinner fellowship, and works with the SI Board on long-term and strategic planning. He is also interested in helping to expand the job opportunities for SI residents.

JoAnn Weishan joined the Board in November. She is Director of Development for the Next Door Foundation and before that she held posts as the Project Director at the Argosy Foundation and as Director of Resource Development at the Children's Hospital Foundation.



## A Teen Thanks the Residents After Participating in Dinner Fellowship...

Residents of Serenity Inn,

I'm Breanna, and I recently visited Serenity Inn [August, 2011] with a few members of my youth group from Christ the King Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Minnesota. I volunteered to go to Serenity Inn because of my family's experience with addiction. My parents and all of my aunts and uncles have struggled with addiction. I felt like going would help me better understand the people behind the addictions and how it is possible for people to get help. You all definitely helped me understand that and so much more.

Your compassion and hospitality was truly a blessing to me and the others in my group. Visiting Serenity Inn was a turning point in our mission trip by being something that deeply affected all of us. All of your stories made a difference in our lives and will definitely be remembered. All of you made us feel so welcome and at home. I think that is one reason we were so amused and interested in your stories—we were comfortable enough to let everything go and really listen to you. Thank you for that.

Your stories gave me a lot of hope for my family. They made me believe that my family members can get help too and that they can better their lives by doing so. This hope gave me courage to start talking to my family about addiction and getting help which is one of the biggest gifts you could have given me.

I know that Serenity Inn is helping you. You're in a great place, and I know that all of you will achieve so much if you keep going in the direction you are headed. Thank you so much for everything you did for us, showed us, and told us. *God Bless.*



## Another First-time Volunteer to the Dinner Fellowship Shares Her Impression...

I just wanted to be in touch about our visit to Serenity Inn last night. We did go as a family, taking our sons who are 15 and 8. We were so impressed by the facility and all the residents and we will definitely go back. I so admire their courage but it was also wonderful the way they shared their advice with my teenager in a very caring way. After we got home I was feeling a little guilty, thinking perhaps I hadn't explained quite enough to my 8 year old beforehand and I had wondered throughout our dinner conversation what he was thinking. As we were getting ready to read before bed I asked him what he thought and asked him if he understood why those men we met were living there. He said, "Because they got sick and had to go to the hospital and now they are getting better." I agreed and then told him that they had tried something and then couldn't stop and now they were getting help. He said, "Yeah that's good because they were really nice."

My own dad went through treatment twice. He has since passed away but was sober for 10 years at the end of his life and participated in AA and a prison ministry as well in his later years. For the past few years I have felt God urging me to bring a meal but I talked myself out of it until now. I'm so glad we went.

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**Serenity Inns 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.

**Save the Date: Friday, April 27, 2012**

Join us for the second annual

Celebrating Serenity Inns, A Path to Recovery

at the Italian Community Center

(dinner, a silent auction, a keynote speaker,  
and more)

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