

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



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Help us Celebrate the 10th Anniversary of Serenity Inns, Inc. April 4, 2014

The doors of Serenity Inn officially opened to welcome residents on April 12, 2004, and the Event Committee is busy planning an evening to celebrate this milestone. Please join us on Friday, April 4, 2014 at the Italian Community Center. Enjoy dinner, fellowship, and recognition of the visionaries who opened the Inn as well as brief messages from Judge Carl Ashley, the first Drug Court Judge in Milwaukee County, and graduates of the Serenity Inn program with music supplied by David Nunley, Minister of Music at All Peoples Church.

Invitations will be mailed in mid February. If you would like to receive an invitation, contact Lorraine Buehler, lcbuehler@cs.com.



Event Committee met at the inn-

Left to right: Peter & Debra Johnson, Minna Smith, Ellen Blathers, Dixie Deines, Lorraine Buehler, Lyn South, Jean Leslie Missing: Joyce Ellwanger, Lorraine Bahr



Where Are They Now?

(The 15th in a series of interviews with Serenity Inn Graduates)

By Lorraine Buehler

Clarence McGowan's final words in our interview focused on miracles. He said, "Miracles have happened for me" because of Serenity Inn.

Clarence's route to his miracle occurred as a result of a pancreatitis attack and being admitted to Columbia St. Mary's Hospital in June, 2012. An AODA counselor there knew about Serenity Inn and referred Clarence after he had gone through detox for his alcohol addiction.

In fact, Clarence knew about Serenity Inn himself because of an earlier stay for a brief 3 days when his drinking had also been out of control. June 9, 2012 was different, however. He found himself at the "end of his rope" and arrived at the Inn with \$.50 to his name and no insurance. He had lost a manager level position in a Fortune 500 Company, a \$400,000 home, his marriage of 12 years and a relationship with his 4 daughters. This time, he "surrendered" and asked God for help.

He knew that this attempt at recovery was live or die because of his pancreatitis, and he had no second thoughts. He made up his mind to work the program and stay the entire 7 months. In fact, when he left the Inn on March 9, 2013, he had asked for 2 extensions and stayed for 9 months.

The first couple of months were tough, he recalls. The staff was testing him because he had walked away once before.

Sober, he had to face the pain and the realization that what he had done with his life was no one else's fault but his own.

Recalling the way the program and the staff helped him, he singles out Ron's counseling that taught him how to handle the kind of pressures found "out there." Ron helped Clarence learn discipline and get back the feelings of humility and gratitude he needed in order to work through his issues.

The innkeeper Rickey was tough, but Clarence recalls fondly how Rickey spoke from the heart and always advised, "Don't walk out that door before you're ready." To Clarence, the contrast with so many other AODA programs is remarkable, programs in which a person in recovery must leave whenever his insurance runs out rather than when he is "ready."



Clarence relates how Miss Ellen, the mother figure, taught him how to manage his money and how to keep his room neat. He chuckles telling how he keeps his apartment spotless today, never leaving in the morning without making his bed and washing his dishes!

"These people saved my life," Clarence sums up--also recalling how everyone treated him and other residents with respect, impressed that no one ever resorted to belittling treatment.

The "miracles" for which Clarence is so grateful today include a good job as an Assistant Service Manager at an auto dealership where his boss knew his background and hired him anyway, a girlfriend who, likewise, knows his past and wants to be with him, and a recovered relationship with his ex-wife with whom he talks daily and with his 4 daughters whose respect he has again earned.

As of Dec. 5, 2013 he has 18 months of sobriety with help from the 12-step program and the help he received at Serenity Inn. He knows that most important of all was his own resolve to do what was necessary to get his life back. To Clarence, this spells **MIRACLE**.



A Message from the Executive Director, *Ellen Blathers*

Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." Luke 21:3-4.

I don't consider myself a Bible scholar or great pastor, but this is the season of love, giving and hope and I believe this scripture reflects the heart of a giver.

During the holiday season, some people race to the stores for the best Black Friday deals and now it is Brown Thursday. They step on people's toes, knock them down, run them over in the mall parking lot and trade their souls to buy our children the 'it toy' of the year. Sadly, some people see anything but love, hope and giving. They don't see it during Christmas or throughout the year. They seem too focused on themselves.

As the Executive Director, I see Christmas all year long. It is a blessing to see people giving to Serenity Inns in all areas. Nothing they give or do is too small. I feel like a kid in a candy store every time someone gives to Serenity Inns and the men. There are so many examples of giving that I can talk about because for me every one is priceless. Recently, we needed a new washer, and a family with children gave their allowance and savings to help buy the machine. My eyes water every time I see the machine. Another example is the woman who purchased new winter coats for all of the men to keep them warm while they walk to the bus stop to attend community- based meetings.

As touching as this holiday time is, it does not compare to the giving I see on Rites of Passage (graduation) Day when the combination of hard work, reflection, growth and the resident's time in the program is completed. This is the day we give the men the opportunity to invite their families in to share their special moment: A moment that took years to achieve in 7 or more months.

I get to hear a mother say she has her son back or a sister talk about how much she needs her brother, and I see a teary-eyed father who had given up hope embrace his son. Most of all, I get to look in a child's eyes and see that endless supportive love for a father and see a wife struggling with reservations work through the past destruction of the disease in order for the new healing to begin. And best of all is seeing a man learning to love himself again, full of hope and ready to give life another chance. This is the spirit of Christmas.

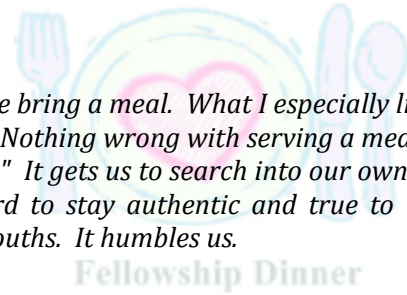
The staff of Serenity inns is blessed because we see that kind of giving every day. Your support during this holiday season and throughout the year helps men get off the side of the road and back on the journey of life. With a grateful heart and on behalf of the staff and men, ***I say Thank You, God Bless, and Merry Christmas.***

What happens at Dinner Fellowship?

One of the unique features of Serenity Inn is the Dinner Fellowship Program. Volunteers bring dinner 365 nights a year and sit down to dine with the residents.

A volunteer, Debra J., shares her impression of the program:

We always enjoy our time sharing dinner with the men when we bring a meal. What I especially like is the fact that we are not SERVING a meal, but rather sharing a meal. Nothing wrong with serving a meal, of course, but this is far more intimate. We always love the "table talk." It gets us to search into our own souls to share authentic comments with men who are trying so hard to stay authentic and true to themselves. We always marvel at the wisdom that comes from their mouths. It humbles us.



Fellowship Dinner

To become part of the Dinner Fellowship calendar, contact Mike Demeter
(mgdemeter@wi.rr.com, 414-327-4086)

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.

Our Thanks to...

Congregation, Corporation, & Foundations Funders (through Dec. 1)

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