



From the Desk of the Executive Director, Ellen Blathers...

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December is a very interesting time for me. Christmas and New Years are approaching. It is an exciting and stressful time as well. It is the end of the year, and like every day for me, it is reflection time. I like to sit down and look at how well we (staff) did/ do in providing men with residential treatment services. I ask myself questions like what can the staff do to improve services and how can I be better as an individual and leader? Recently, I was asked how do I reconcile myself with the successes and failures? In other words, how do I live with dismissing a guy, a guy relapsing or a guy deciding to leave before the "magic" happens. 1 Corinthians 3:6-8 states, *I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. The one who plants and the one who waters works together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. For we are both God workers...*

I understand that each day a man chooses recovery is a day planting a seed of hope, beauty, empowerment, and freedom. Why these four, you ask. We see men come into this program everyday hopeless. The men get to see hope in action in the staff members, the board of directors, the dinner fellowship volunteers and their peers. Beauty is an odd word when you talk about addictions. Yet, their surroundings at the Inn are beautiful, and it is like seeing the sunrise for the first time as these men reconnect with God and reintroduce themselves to their spiritual being. Serenity Inns empowers the men by giving them some tools to learn how to live in recovery. Lastly, but certainly not least, is freedom. Some of the men believe that they can never be free of alcohol and drugs. We teach them to be free. Freedom is scary, but it is well worth all the work they do to get free.

I believe that each day a man is free from alcohol or drugs is a blessing whether a man is in recovery one day or two years. Sure, I would like to see every man that comes through the doors of Serenity Inns and stays 7 months stay in recovery for the rest of his life. Like everybody else, I am saddened when a man relapses, leaves early or violates the rules and has to be dismissed from the program. It is those days that I meditate on 1 Corinthians 3:6-8. I get to plant seeds of hope, offer insight into the beauty of a life in recovery. I will continue to be saddened when a man relapses, but I am not without hope. It is never too late to choose recovery. Once you are a part of Serenity Inns, you are a member of the family forever. As we scurry around celebrating the holidays and ignoring the family member who is struggling to stay in recovery, remind him of Serenity Inns. The family of Serenity Inns is always willing to pick a man up off the side of the road.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



(The 19th in a series of Interviews with Alumni)

by Lorraine Buehler

Currently working as an electrician and as a part-time innkeeper at Serenity Inn, Dwayne Early at age 51 is in a good place. And, to give back for the good things that have happened to him in the last couple of years, he recently joined the Board of MICAH (Milwaukee Inner City Churches Allied for Hope).

When Dwayne arrived at Serenity Inn he was not in a good place. His arrival came after 30+ years of drug addiction and a three-year prison term. His prison release came on Aug. 22, 2012, and Dwayne had the best of intentions to stay on the right track. But instead his addiction took over: he bought heroin and accidentally overdosed just a day later.

Found in an alley on 12th and Chambers—by whom he does not know-- Dwayne was taken to Columbia St. Mary's Hospital. Full of shame and guilt, he called Pastor Mary Martha Kannass from the hospital. Pr. Mary Martha had agreed to baptize Dwayne at Hephatha Lutheran Church that Sunday, and she reassured him that **"though a righteous man falls seven times, he will get up"** (Proverbs 24:16).

Pr. Mary Martha also told him that he had to tell his parole officer that he had overdosed—not what Dwayne wanted to hear--and reminded him that things were now in God's hands.

His parole officer placed Dwayne at the Cheney Center (Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility) for 30 days where Pr. Mary Martha visited him as did Pr. Joe Ellwanger. Released on Sept. 30, Dwayne was taken to Serenity Inn – at the suggestion of his PO who had toured the Inn during Dwayne's 30-day detention.

At the Inn, Dwayne found himself in treatment for the first time, and he credits SI with giving him the "solution to addiction." He learned it's not the drugs that are the problem but rather the addict's thoughts and emotions. He learned to stop blaming everyone else and to take responsibility for his addiction.

Dwayne's path to addiction began with alcohol at age 15 and moved to marijuana, cocaine, and then to heroin as he looked for an escape from himself. But since that overdose on August 23, 2012, he has not used--after living in his addiction for 36 years. He credits his sobriety to a contract with God. He has kept his promise to God in not using and to his belief, **"If I don't use, He will not forsake me."**

Dwayne feels good to be back at the Inn as an innkeeper, and he knows that being with the residents helps to keep him in his recovery. He sees himself in each one of the residents and values his opportunity to talk with the guys about their meetings or anything they need to talk about.



Dwayne Early

He knows that if he hadn't found Serenity Inn, he would be back in prison or dying in his addiction. Reflecting about his accidental overdose in 2012—his second overdose—he says, **“Every day looks different now. It’s a day I shouldn’t have seen. God gave me this day.”**

Remembering David McCarthy

David took his life on Sept. 9th, 2014 at the age of 32 after going through Serenity Inn’s program and earning his Rite of Passage on August 8. It was his third stay at the Inn but the first time he had completed the program after years of addiction to prescription drugs.

His death was totally unexpected by all who knew him, and his mother Diane Bachtell wants to remind others how suicide hurts those who are left behind.

Looking for an answer, his mother wonders if David was put here on earth for a reason-- to teach us something: not to give up, to take the meds you are prescribed, to think about what suicide does to those you leave behind

David suffered from depression but was reluctant to see a doctor or a therapist or to take medication for his depression, saying he didn't like the weight gain that came with the meds.

His mother and his friends remember his good sense of humor and his ability to be the life of the party.

David attended Catholic elementary schools in Milwaukee and Marquette High School and earned a technology degree from Froedtert Hospital. With a new job as a Radiology Technician when he left Serenity Inn in August, David had everything to live for—at least to an outsider.

But clearly, David was not successful in keeping his demons at bay.

Memories of David:

~from John A.: *Dave and I arrived at SI at the exact same time. He was doing and feeling better than I because I was still going through withdrawal. Dave immediately went out of his way to help me. Not only did he make up my whole bed because I was struggling to even stand up, but he showed me the ropes throughout the entire house and program. He was such a blessing to me and a key component in my recovery. Dave became a great friend, and his personality will **never** be replaced.*

~from David M.: *David was a very witty guy—always wanted to make a person smile and laugh—always kept his housemates on their toes, but knew when to be serious about things. Will miss him.*

~from Lionel Clay, Addictions Counselor: *David was a person that you just had to like. There was something about him that seemed like he had a spell on you. I know that I am going to miss him and will never forget him.*

~from Ellen Blathers, Executive Director *David M was fearless, funny and complex. He could laugh and cry at the same time. Dave left a lasting impression on Serenity Inns and will be missed by many people.*



David at his Rite of Passage

Save the Date: Thursday, April 23, 2015

Watch your mailbox in early March for your invitation to the 5th Annual Celebration of Recovery Dinner and Silent Auction. The Italian Community Center in the Third Ward is again the location, and the Thursday evening date need not interfere with your weekend plans. The Honorable Martin Joseph Donald, the first Drug Court Judge in Milwaukee County, will speak as will an alumnus and a resident of Serenity Inns. We hope you will be there to help us Celebrate Recovery!

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