

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



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The Staff Reflects on 2017: What has it meant to work at SI this year?

Lionel Clay (Substance Abuse Counselor) *It has meant a lot. I enjoy doing the work of recovery, helping the men we serve try and get a piece of their life back to normalcy. I know what that feeling is, when you have finally surrendered, when your life has become unmanageable. I know that feeling when you can see that light at the end of the tunnel and can now face another day. Every day I try and instill some dignity in the men that I serve, and I love every minute that I've worked at Serenity inns. I wouldn't trade any of those minutes to be doing something different. Serenity Inns is why I get up every morning for this is my ministry.*

Jason Dobson (Substance Abuse Counselor) *The highest aspiration of the heart is to help another individual. It's been a blessing to work for an organization that has held true to its mission while expanding its vision to continue to provide services to those in need.*

Dwayne Early (Part-time Innkeeper): *Serenity Inn was the beginning of Recovery for my life. Now five years later, I keep what I have by giving it away. I personally understand each step, each challenge, and each phase the men walk through. My Recovery, my job and my life are greater for Serenity Inn.*

Lee Lewis (Part-time Innkeeper) *It has meant a lot to me doing the wonderful work that we do at Serenity inns. I love seeing the growth in the guys that we work with, knowing that I had a part in it. I love watching the men reach their Rite of Passage and then move on to Alumni House to better their lives.*



Left to right, back:
James Nichols, Lee Lewis,
Jason Dobson,
Dwayne Early, Lionel Clay,

Front: Ellen Blathers



The Staff Reflects on 2017: What has it meant to work at SI this year?

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Charles Linyard (Part-time Innkeeper) *Working at Serenity Inn this year means hope to me because of seeing the guys as they come in; they come not knowing what's going on or who they can trust, and there's no telling what they have been through. Within a few weeks to see how they are interacting with each other and staff and then able to start sharing their inner most struggles and hurdles with us is awesome.*



James Nichols (Part-time Innkeeper and Alumni House Manager) *This past year being a part of Serenity Inns and the changes has been a beautiful journey for my personal life as well as the men we serve. I look forward to working hard and seeing the men also working hard as we all practice living this new way of life.*

Ellen Blathers, Executive Director: *I remember the excitement of new beginnings in the air in 2004 when the doors of Serenity Inns opened and the first man moved in. I remember a community of volunteers, donors, and staff celebrating the triumph of a lot of hard work, a dream that birthed hope into the life of broken men. With that same excitement, Serenity Inns has navigated through the challenges and misconceptions of addiction and recovery for the past thirteen years. 2017 has exhibited that same excitement. God breathed into the Serenity Inns Community a new hope, faith, and vision for the future of those bound by alcohol and drugs. It is a joy to watch the men learn to live again, to share the renewed hope with volunteers during dinner, to repair broken relationships, to proudly display their checkbooks, and see the light in their eyes as they put their key in the door at Alumni House. The bonus for me is the growth of the staff, Dwayne getting married, Jason getting ready to graduate from Cardinal Stritch University, James excited about homework as he gets closer to his goal of an Associate Degree, Charles getting mentored by Lionel to get his substance abuse counselor license and Lee still offering insights to the men about choosing wisely. **2017 has been a blessing, and I am so grateful that God allows me to serve this organization.***

Business Times Nonprofit Excellence Awards



Congratulations to Executive Director Ellen Blathers for her well-deserved nomination for **Nonprofit Executive of the Year** by the **Business Times**. On stage before several hundred guests at a breakfast meeting at the Italian Community Center on Thursday, Nov. 2, Ellen was recognized as first runner-up. Being nominated is a wonderful honor, and Ellen has always been a WINNER to all who know her in the Serenity Inns family!

Where Are They Now? Jason Seney

The 25th in a series of interviews with Serenity Inn Graduates
by Lorraine Buehler



Jason Seney started smoking, drinking, skipping school and getting caught at age 12--in general, following his older brother into the world of gang banging. After trying heroin at age 15, he was sent to Ethan Allan School for Boys in 2000 for stealing cars.

Three jail terms as an adult did not change Jason's behavior. He returned each time to the same south side neighborhood and peer group. Losing his mother to alcoholism in 2006 and his brother to street crime in 2008, he started to inject heroin. The result was 10 overdoses in 6 years!

In August 2016, Jason's parole officer gave him a break when she found a place for him at Serenity Inn.

But at this point, Jason hadn't really bought into recovery. In his 3 months at Serenity Inn, he didn't work on anything. He admits he didn't even know the first step in the 12-step recovery program and in November was asked to leave because of a broken rule. Back on the streets, Jason eventually went back to friends in the neighborhood and started using again. But this time, he said it was different.

After 6 weeks using again, he felt defeated and tired, ultimately deciding he didn't want to live this way any more; after going through detox, he was incredibly fortunate to be accepted back at Serenity Inn.



Jason Seney

This time everything was different: he paid attention to the program. This time he started sharing honestly in meetings and quit trying to rush through groups. "*Something clicked this time, something said, keep on doing what you're doing.*"

Having not been clean for more than 5 months since the age of 12, Jason today is looking forward to his year-clean anniversary on January 6, 2018. For the first time in his life, he sees a future. He has a job doing electrical work secured through SI innkeeper Dwayne Early. He sees potential in this job; for the first time, he has a job that can lead to a career. He has an apartment of his own at Alumni House where he plans to stay for at least a year.

His guiding principle now is to do "*all the right things for the right reasons.*"

Jason's view of his future is staying clean, going to meetings, staying with his sponsor, continuing to do electrical work and ultimately an apprenticeship, going to night school, getting his driver's license back, and, above all, staying busy and out of trouble.

After wasting 19 of his 32 years, Jason says, "***Life is so much better on this side.***"

Watch your mailbox in early March
for your invitation to the **8th Annual Celebration
of Recovery Dinner and Silent Auction**
and please join us on **Thursday, April 19th, 2018**
at the Italian Community Center
in Milwaukee's Third Ward.



Thank You!

We recognize donors who made gifts of \$500 or more to support the
Serenity Inns Mission between January 1st and Nov. 11th 2017

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