

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



Welcome

to the first issue of the newsletter for Serenity Inns

Serenity Inns Celebration



Friends of Serenity Inns,
Please join us for a
Celebration and Re-affirmation
With Serenity Inns:
A Ministry of Healing and Recovery
Sunday, March 21, 2010
2:30 p.m.
Hephatha Lutheran Church
1720 W. Locust Street



Last March, Serenity Inns held a Sunday afternoon service at Hephatha Lutheran Church to celebrate what everyone hoped was going to take Serenity Inns out of a financial crisis and into financial stability. Over the past year this hope has been realized with the emergence of a small core of advocates who were unwilling to see Serenity Inns fail! To celebrate this success, please come to the March Celebration to see the journey Serenity Inns has been on—especially where we are, and where we're going.

Please join us for joyous music, prayer, and testimony from Serenity Inns graduates and partners and to meet the staff, the new Serenity Inns Board and the core of volunteers who came forward to help get beyond last year's emergency. The newly elected bishop of the Greater Milwaukee Synod, Bishop Jeff Barrows, also will be there!

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The Year's Highlights--2009

Hope: Nine men addicted to drugs and alcohol one year ago are now clean, sober and living independently. They have hope again. Six more men are currently on that same path. The recovery of each person is always the highlight, the measuring stick for the Serenity Inns' mission. None of this happens, however, without a committed group of leaders and supporters. The other highlights of 2009 point to the actions that many have made during the year to sustain Serenity Inns.

Will the Inn Close? The SI Board of Directors' notice of the March 2009 meeting said the purpose of the meeting is to "decide whether Serenity Inns should continue or close." Salaries and bills due were \$35,000. A year (\$15,600) remained on the mortgage to Habitat for Humanity. It is not hard to imagine the anguish and paralysis which engulfed the board that day. Serenity Inns had functioned effectively for five years. Calling it quits would not be an admission of defeat, simply an acknowledgement that things come and go in life.

We are Community! However, by making the decision alone, others who are invested in Serenity Inns would be left out of the decision. Six men were in the program, dinner fellowship volunteers were planning to bring meals, most staff members were caught in the middle, and persons who initiated and supported Serenity Inn would be caught unaware.

Enter Joe Ellwanger and Mick Roschke with their commitment to have a Celebration to celebrate the past, communicate the present, and invite to an unpredictable future.

The whole Serenity Inn community, 100 strong, gathered at Hephatha Lutheran Church in March. Through song, witness, a shared table, and the reality of Serenity Inns' situation, it became clear that if the mission were to end, it would not disappear with only a whimper or quiet statement of gratitude. A new effort to move forward was born.

Serenity Inns Chooses Recovery. Celebration participants were invited to a follow-up meeting to tackle the basic issues and to explore directions. The **St. Matthew's Meeting** became a highlight of the year.(continued next page)

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The Year's Highlights--2009 (continued)

Staff members made decisions they felt were in the best interest of the mission. Executive Director Joy True chose retirement. Associate Director Ellen Blathers, Addictions Counselor Ron Maclin, fulltime Innkeeper Rick Gulley, and part-time Innkeeper Gene Harris chose to continue working with the men. Salaries became reduced to hourly wages, but concern for the men kept the staff focused and committed.

Dave Romoser's efforts to add new and differently skilled board members cannot be overestimated. Within months the board was transformed into a hands-on, accountable group. (see related article on "The Character of the SI Board of Directors")

A volunteer corps emerged that took direct responsibility for the office, the dinner fellowship, the care of the grounds, the program, and the finances, including bookkeeping and grant writing. Liz Kaiser, Chris Zirbes, Matt Los, and Carla Stensberg put financial data in order, while Pat Denning and Jan Camus worked on writing proposals.

Minna Smith has done an amazing job organizing the Dinner Fellowship, something that was once a paid staff responsibility. Minna along with Vera Curry, Deb McGregor, Lorraine Buehler, Joyce Ellwanger and others have established a "new" office at the Inn.

A Final Highlight--By year's end the \$35,000 debt was covered and a final payment to Habitat for Humanity made. This was possible because the budget was trimmed by eliminating one staff position, a wonderful response is providing needed in-kind items, and existing funders from individuals, congregations, and foundations responded in a timely and generous way. The strong backing of the Siebert Lutheran Foundation must be mentioned in this context. Their decision to continue funding at a significant level is no small part of why the challenges of 2009 were met.

Nine men whose lives were taken hostage by drugs and alcohol are now living independently. They are newly free to claim again the unique value of their own lives. 2009 in all of its turmoil and hard work has made this possible.

The faith of all involved is immeasurable. It is a gift.--rick deines

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Most Recent Graduates, Andy and Brandon

Brandon was referred to Serenity Inn last spring after treatment at Genesis, a detox center in Milwaukee for persons who are chemically addicted. Brandon said he had resisted help in the past but finally realized he needed to seek assistance in the recovery community.



Brandon completed the seven month program at Serenity Inn January 31st. He said this attempt at recovering worked because the program was highly structured. Before graduating he became employed and found an apartment that he currently shares with fellow SI graduate Andy. Brandon is grateful to the staff at Serenity as well as the many individuals and churches who encouraged him along the way. Anyone wanting to stay in touch with Brandon and his progress can email him at ffbudson@yahoo.com

Expanding Opportunities for People to Get the Help They Need to Recover-

NATIONAL HEALTH CARE REFORM

Members of Congress and the Obama administration are hard at work on proposals to reform the nation's healthcare system. Faces & Voices of Recovery belongs to the Coalition for Whole Health, a group of national addiction prevention, treatment and recovery and mental health organizations. We are working together to ensure that health care reform proposals include full and equitable health responses to addiction and recovery. Despite months of hearings and committee votes, there are still many hurdles to go through before Congress finalizes its health reform bill.

If interested in more information go to the website for Serenity Inns www.serenityinns.org and click on Links, then click on Faces & Voices of Recovery

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Donating is as easy as 1...2...3

- 1 •By Check - Please mail your tax-deductable contribution payable to Serenity Inns, Inc. in any amount you are able to the Milwaukee address located on the back cover.
- 2 •Electronic Transfer - If this is an option you would like to use, please print and complete the form on the website, attach your voided check and return it to Serenity Inns at the address on the last page.
- 3 •"Pathways to Recovery" Circle of Friends on the web at <http://www.serenityinns.org/>



VOLUNTEER GARDENERS NEEDED

Serenity Inns' gardens are sleeping now, but spring will awaken them soon!

Volunteers can expect....

- Spring and Fall cleanups--we will clean, rake, trim, and mulch.
- Monthly sessions during the summer month to deadhead, weed, and add more mulch.
- Other tasks of beautification as needed.



Please consider lending a hand.

Contact Dixie Deines (drdeines@sbcglobal.net or 414-962-8272) for tasks and coordination.

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Who Wants To Be On The Board

(Introducing the Members)

A board meeting? Again? You mean a “bored” meeting. It's clearly not as exciting as a Packer's game - maybe not as alluring as a latte at Alterra or Stone Creek. Yet, a well functioning board is a necessity for Serenity Inns' mission. The “plus” is that our board is an interesting, engaging, and productive group of people. And we're just getting started!

This current board has a wide-range of talent, diversity, commitment and, most critically, involvement in the hands-on mission. Serenity has always had some good leaders. From 2002-2006, the early board (actually the Mission Group) was the founding team. It spent endless hours thinking through and working on establishing the Inn. Loyalty of a few characterized the board from 2006-2009. All made important contributions.

2010's board is a new partner with fresh challenges and multiple resources and possibilities.

Who are these new partners?

The carry over members include Chris Zirbes, Joe Ellwanger (Sec'y), Bill Martens, Tim McMurtry. (Vice-President) and Rick Deines (President.) The new recruits are Dick Kinney, Michelle Barnes, Ken Harris, Ralph McClure, and Glenn Miller.

This is a good balance of cultural, family, and professional backgrounds. Gender diversity is still a challenge--at least one more female, please! These special gifts are being put to good use in strengthening Serenity Inns.

From the earliest days, Tim, Joe and Bill have worked through the ups and downs of Serenity. Tim is an account executive with Mueller Communications and a youth pastor. His earlier position with Alderman Willie Hines and now his church work and prominence in the community keep our public witness alive. Tim is the first of our Aftercare Mentors. Joe, a Lutheran pastor and organizer for WISDOM, meets with funders, connects us across the city with other AODA efforts, and walks with both staff and the men. He regularly serves at Dinner Fellowship. Bill, a physician, makes sure donors know Serenity Inns' needs and spreads the word through his many community contacts. Chris has been a steady partner, is a Vice-President of Commercial Banking for Town Bank, and is SI Treasurer.

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Who Wants To Be On The Board (Introducing the Members) continued

Among the new partners, Michelle is Assistant Vice-President at the M and I Community Development Corporation. She represented the board at the most recent "Graduation" of Andy and Brandon. She is a regular Dinner Fellowship participant. She and Ken (a Milwaukee policeman who recently received a PhD from Concordia University and has a consulting business) worked with Ellen on matters of the finances of the residents.

Dick is Managing Principal for Legacy Wealth Management. He is assisting SI in exploring the possibility of housing for recovering persons beyond the 7-month Transitional Living Program. He also brings ideas for fundraising to the Board. Dick serves at Dinner Fellowship.

Ralph has a long history of involvement with Social Services in Wisconsin with a career as a Child Psychologist. Ralph is working on collaboration opportunities for Serenity Inns with other AODA providers. He represents SI at the Milwaukee Addiction Treatment Initiative (MATI).

Glenn is Vice-President for College Relations at Carthage College in Kenosha. He brings his experience of many years as a Lutheran pastor, plus much needed professional expertise in fundraising.

Rick is a founding member of the Serenity Inn Mission Group. He accepted the position of board president in March 2009. He serves regularly at Dinner Fellowship and works with the staff.



Are you interested? The board would like to add two more members, thereby being able to rotate 3 members each year. During 2009 the board met monthly, but anticipates meeting 4-6 times a year in the near future. There is a high expectation that board members be active in the development work of SI and make appropriate personal commitments. Please contact Dave Romoser <wdromoser@aol.com> and indicate your willingness to be part of the Board of Directors.--rgd

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We hope you have enjoyed the first issue of this newsletter.

Your comments, questions and concerns are important to us. Please email silorr@cs.com with any feedback or to respond to an article or offer ideas for future articles.

**Any photos in this newsletter have been printed with permission.

MATI

WANTED: Your Recovery Story Milwaukee Addiction Treatment Initiative (MATI)

is collecting stories of recovery from people across Wisconsin to learn how today's addiction treatment system worked or didn't work from your experience as a family member or friend getting help for a loved one, the barriers to getting treatment that you overcame and what long-term recovery means to you and your family. If you are interested in telling your story or would like more information, contact Jason Brame, MATI communications coordinator, at (414) 475-6253, ext. 303 or email jasonb@communityadvocates.net.

Reminders

The next Making Parity Real symposium will be held Friday, March 5th in Wausau. For more information, visit www.MakingParityReal

Daylight Savings time begins March 14th remember to "Spring ahead"

and turn your clock ahead one hour.

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