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**WIN  
\$200!**  
See page 5  
for details

### National Websites:

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)  
www.aa.org or  
www.alcoholicsanonymous.org

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)  
www.na.org

Cocaine Anonymous (CA)  
www.ca.org

### For Family & Friends:

Al-Anon & Alateen:  
www.OregonAl-Anon.org

Adult Children of  
Alcoholics (ACA)  
www.adultchildren.org

### Serenity Lane...

1-800-543-9905  
www.serenitylane.org

# Stepping Together

Spring 2009

## *Serenity Lane's Alumni Newsletter*

*We've been saving lives and helping put families back together since 1973*

## The Gift of Hope

### Endowment Fund Honors SL Founder, Dr. Thomas Kerns

The Kerns family has established an endowment to help needy patients continue their treatment for addiction and to honor the founder of Serenity Lane. The Thomas A. Kerns, M.D. Endowment allocates monetary support to deserving patients who have shown a strong personal commitment to their recovery, but lack the necessary financial backing to continue their treatment plan in our ExSL program. It is not uncommon for patients to make great strides during inpatient treatment only to deplete available funds after exhausting their own means, family contributions and/or insurance benefits.

Aware of the barriers encountered by patients with limited financial resources, the Kerns family is expanding the scope of treatment to a small segment of Serenity Lane's patients who need extended treatment beyond residential.

Dr. Kerns's wife Tops made the first contribution to the endowment, followed by each of their eight children. Thanks to generous donors such as LibertyBank, The Regence Group, and friends of the family, the endowment has continued to grow.

In 2008, the fund passed a threshold that enabled the interest to yield enough money to offer a partial grant to a deserving ExSL patient. Recently the Kerns family presented its first check to Serenity Lane – a gift of hope that directly impacted an ExSL patient who would otherwise not have been able to access the program.

As the oldest free-standing, not-for-profit treatment center for chemical dependency in Oregon, Serenity Lane has a long history of empowering individuals to break free of addiction by offering the tools necessary to achieve long-term recovery. Before the organization first opened its doors, its dynamic spirit was born from the vision of just one man, Dr. Thomas A. Kerns. He imagined a new fate for those plagued by the disease of addiction and devoted much of his career to making his dream a reality. Since Dr. Kerns breathed life into Serenity Lane in 1973, over 50,000 people have walked through the doors



*The Kerns extended family*

*continued on page 7*

# From your Editor



Dear Alumni,

For many of us, relationships are the primary source of joy and pain in our lives. Whether family, friends or romantic partnerships, our relationships continuously challenge us to take a critical look at ourselves and our behavior patterns. By evaluating the positive and negative aspects of our relationships and taking responsibility for our contributions to this balance, we have the ability to redefine the roles of our relationships, from a depressing force to an uplifting one.

As you navigate external conflicts in your life, the Serenity Prayer acts as a valuable guide. The people around you can inspire you to change for the better or for the worse, but inevitably it's up to you to decide the outcome. Although you cannot dictate the actions of others, you have the ability to control your reactions. Ideally, you and your partner will be able to join forces through a mutual spirit of compromise in an effort to meet each other's needs.

Nurturing your relationship with yourself is as essential as improving your relationships with others. If you are coping with the loss of a significant other, explore the interests and activities that bring you the most happiness and fulfillment. When you find yourself feeling lonely, remember that you are never truly alone. A support system awaits you at every AA or NA meeting, and this resource is a powerful tool during inevitable transitions and turmoil.

Cultivating healthier relationship dynamics is a gift you give to your loved ones and yourself.

Sincerely,  
Shely Rahimi

## Newsletter Committee:

*Shely Rahimi*  
*Angie Delaplain*  
*Mary Daniels*

# Outpatient Happenings

## Portland Announcement

The Portland office is looking for Recovery Support patients who are interested in helping with upcoming events. Please contact the Recovery Support Liaison, Elizabeth Call at 503-244-4500 ext. 8113.

A new SL outpatient clinic has opened in West Portland on 167th and Cornell, making treatment services more convenient for residents of Forest Grove, Hillsboro, Beaverton and Aloha.

## Spring Celebration

Due to inclement weather, the Portland alumni holiday party was postponed until March 4. The Friday evening event was a resounding success with approximately 130 attendees. With Subway sandwiches and sweet treats galore, the group played games and sang the Beatles song, "Here comes the sun" to welcome spring. The evening was topped off with a countdown and a huge circle of family, patients and staff to say the Serenity Prayer.

## What's Happening in Bend

Activities are ramping up in Bend where a dedicated group of former patients have breathed life into an alumni association. A steering committee was formed when eleven people met on March 6. The group brainstormed on ideas and possible activities that included partner counseling, a transitional sponsorship program and regular potluck dinners. Bowling and dancing classes are also being considered. If you live in the Bend area and want to get involved, contact Don Ziegler at 541-383-0844.

## Save the Dates:

**SL Portland Annual Alumni Picnic**  
**Saturday, August 15, 2009**

**SL Eugene Annual Alumni Picnic**  
**Sunday, August 16, 2009**

There will be more information available about both picnics in the next issue of "Stepping Together" as well as on the Alumni page of our website: [www.serenitylane.org](http://www.serenitylane.org)



# Public View of Addiction and recovery changing

by: Jerry Gjesvold, Manager of Employer Services

A few months ago, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, released the results of a major national poll. The survey looked at American attitudes towards alcoholism and drug addiction, recovery and treatment.

We can be very optimistic about the results. By a large margin, Americans are now aware of recovery as an option for someone with a drinking or drug problem. Most know someone in recovery personally, and most believe that it is possible for someone recovering from chemical dependency to become a productive member of his or her community.

This is real progress. We don't have to look back very far to the time when a drinking problem was seen as essentially hopeless and having one created a lifelong stigma. Even if a person hadn't had a drink for years, the knowledge that he or she was once an active alcoholic could, and often did, derail careers.

This misunderstanding lingers, but the survey shows us that it is slowly dying out. For example, while half of those older than 65 believe that a person in recovery can live a productive life, 70 percent of those 25-34 believe it is possible. That's a good sign.

It's also encouraging to see that Americans have a high level of confidence in the effectiveness of prevention and treatment programs. Almost two thirds believe that drug addiction is preventable and that treatment works.

Overall, the report is very good news for anyone interested in this major health issue – whether on a professional or personal level. It shows that as a society, our understanding of chemical dependency is growing clearer.

We have much more knowledge about the problem and what to do when someone we know is facing it.

It also shows that we understand better how widespread the problem really is. On the public policy level that should, over time, make us more inclined to allocate adequate resources to meeting the challenge. On the individual or household level, it should also reduce the shame that causes people to hide their problem and prevents them from seeking help. The more open we can all be about the realities of chemical dependency, the more successful we'll be at helping people find recovery.

As much progress as we are making, we still have ground to cover. I haven't done a scientific study, but I do work every day with businesses throughout the state. It sometimes seems that supervisors and business owners are slowly growing less accepting of people with chemical dependency problems.

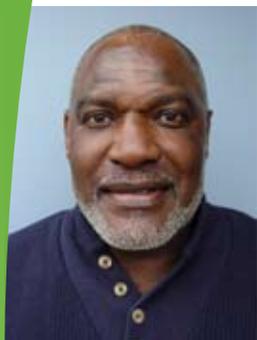
I don't think this is a question of awareness or a lack of compassion. Rather, it's the result of constant and increasingly intense financial pressure. Health insurance companies tend to under-fund treatment stays and then reject treatment altogether when the attempt – doomed from the beginning – fails.

Businesses are under equally high pressure to limit their liability insurance premiums, so they will tend to fire someone with a substance abuse problem – even those in stable recovery. Again, my information is anecdotal, but these might explain in part why layoffs sometimes seem to include a disproportionate number of people in recovery. The stigma remains.

Still, I think we can be optimistic about the direction we're heading as a society. Greater understanding will come in time. We've come such a long way already. Like other treatment professionals, I welcome every step forward in society's awareness of the nature of alcoholism and drug addiction. It will help us make better decisions. ■

Back issues of our alumni newsletter are available online. Go to : [www.serenitylane.org](http://www.serenitylane.org), click on the Alumni tab and you'll find pdf files of many past issues.

# Who's Driving your Car?



*“Who’s driving your car? Either the real you is driving it, or your addict is driving it, or some substitute self. Then you need to sit down and ask yourself, because one thing you’ll find out is that if your addict is driving your car, he’ll take you where you don’t want to go, he’ll keep you longer than you want to stay, he’ll make you spend more than you want to spend, and he’s gonna cause you to suffer.”*

Wise words indeed. They’re a direct transcript from a Serenity Lane TV commercial featuring Dwight Lee. Dwight first became aware that he was not the driver of his own car when he received a DUI and was sentenced to a diversion program. After attending the first mandatory meeting, he left the building and visited a neighboring liquor store. Knowing he could get away with a few more nights of drinking, he purchased a bottle of vodka and took it to a friend’s house. In his intoxicated state, he glanced out the window at a nearby residential treatment center. At that moment, he was struck by the realization that he was playing into the hands of his addiction, and without intensive treatment, it would ultimately destroy him. He immediately called his wife to inform her he was not coming home. He left his car keys with his friend and walked directly to the treatment facility. On December 15, 1993, Dwight was admitted to an inpatient program and has recently celebrated 15 years in recovery.

In order to understand his disease, Dwight personified the conflict between his positive and negative self, giving his addict the name Lonnie. It was Lonnie who entered the diversion program to fulfill his legal obligations and get his license back. It was Dwight who started residential treatment to achieve spiritual healing and get his life back.

As a Recovery Support counselor at Serenity Lane, Dwight believes that the battle to maintain

sobriety intensifies after the first year of treatment when the patient’s physical and emotional equilibrium is being re-established. There is a notably higher success rate for those who complete Serenity Lane’s Recovery Support program. Typically 11 months in duration, Recovery Support is provided at no additional cost to individuals who have completed their Intensive Outpatient program. Patients can sign up for an additional year at a very nominal fee. ■



*Good humor is a tonic for mind and body. It is the best antidote for anxiety and depression. It is a business asset. It attracts and keeps friends. It lightens human burdens. It is the direct route to serenity and contentment.*

~ Greenville Kleisser

# The Big Book

*Don Ziegler, Serenity Lane's Outpatient Manager in Bend, was so moved by his patients' understanding of their disease, he wanted to share their insights with our alumni. This is one person's story....*

■ When I began to take on this battle of sobriety and recovery, Don handed me a black book. I've hit the hardest rock bottom in my life, I sit before this man breaking down revealing all of my long held secrets, and he hands me a book.

The book came with me on my battle, although in the beginning I had no idea yet what a profound effect this book would have on my recovery.

As I sat in the hospital's detox unit on New Year's Eve morning, I felt fear, loneliness and anger like never before; not to mention I was in more pain that I had ever felt in my life. I decided to take a look at this so called "big book." My hands were shaking, my arms and legs twitching and I was extremely nauseated, but I felt reading might at least take my mind off of that big, huge realization that I no longer had drugs to help me through life.

I believe now that the Lord above, the same one I had turned my back on years before, gave me the good sense to pick up that book and read it.

Surprisingly enough, the book really did give me that extra strength and encouragement that I so desperately needed now. Every word written was talking about me, but they constantly used words like "us" and "we." We were all in this together.

How awesome is it to know that I am not alone during this frightening and heartbreaking battle for my life?

"We are not responsible for our disease, but we are responsible for our recovery." That was huge for me. It took a huge burden off of my shoulders, relieved a little bit of the overwhelming shame, yet gave me back a little strength and pride.

"If you want what we have, then you have to take the steps." The book helped me to see that I cannot take on this battle alone. I needed help, and it was my responsibility to reach out.

How did this book know exactly what I needed to hear? How did they know I was in so much pain, that my life had become so unmanageable and that I too wanted this "new life" they spoke of? Apparently, I am not the first to go through this battle, nor will I be the last. ■



# WIN \$200!

**We're running a contest and you could win \$200 cash. All you have to do is tell us about your "aha" moment, the turning point in your life that pushed you into recovery. Was it a treatment experience, a relationship that was in crisis, was it a loss so huge it finally got your attention? We want to know what specific incident led you to finally accept that you have a disease and can't go it alone.**

**So here's your challenge....in 500 words or less, send us your story.**

**The winning entry will be published in the next *Stepping Together* newsletter (your anonymity is assured) and on the Serenity Lane website.**

**Your cash prize will be mailed to you. Be sure to send us your complete mailing address and your full name.**

**Submit your entry by May 30, 2009 to: SL Alumni Contest  
2133 Centennial Plaza  
Eugene, OR 97401  
or email to: [alumni@serenitylane.org](mailto:alumni@serenitylane.org)  
Designate CONTEST in your subject line**



**Be honest! No exaggerations.  
Just the plain truth.**

# A different view of one day at a time

by: Kathleen Smith, Director of Hospital Services at Serenity Lane

**T**he Red Queen, in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, in response to Alice's question, "Isn't that impossible?" replied, "Why, I sometimes believe seven impossible things before breakfast." Her remark reflects a peculiar epistemological (the science of thinking) phenomenon: acting upon that which cannot be.

We, as humans have the capability of remembering, and reflecting upon, the past while being totally incapable of changing it. We often revisit past experiences, particularly those painful moments within which we have chosen to cast our selves as victims, drawing that past victimization into the present; using mind altering substances which distort its actuality where it affects and infects current behavior. It is, however, within our power to choose to close the past. Psychological healing is no more difficult or unnatural than is physiological healing and follows the same cognitive and biological principles. We would not choose to break our arm or leg on the anniversary of an injury to remember or relive the pain.

Conversely, we cannot know the future; but we can make rational choices that will effect much of our destiny.

Recognizing the two difficulties of a bagged past and an uncertain future, the ancient Greeks espoused a philosophy, long before the philosophers Kierkegaard and Camus, which was/is called Existentialism. By this they meant: the past is gone and should be irretrievable (ie: I was abused; it is not now happening;



it is time to grow beyond this). The future is beyond our ability to forecast with any accuracy. The present, the now, is the only clay for the potter's wheel of our minds and our choices. The Greek philosophers did not deny or dismiss the past; they acknowledged it without emotional focus. Neither did they disregard their futures; they anticipated it without anxiety.

Alcoholics Anonymous teaches this existentialism: One day, one hour, one minute at a time.



# Kerns Endowment... continued from page 1

seeking refuge from the damaging effects of chemical dependency and emerged from treatment with a promising and vibrant future.

From his personal and professional experiences, Dr. Kerns witnessed the overwhelming consequences of substance abuse. At a very young age, he endured the untimely death of his father as a result of a drunk driving collision. Although he was unable to prevent the tragic outcome of his father's alcoholism, he has since saved the lives of numerous fathers, mothers, daughters and sons.

When addiction was only beginning to find a place in medical discourse, Dr. Kerns investigated programs across the nation, searching for a superior treatment model. He endorsed a program that merged his medical knowledge with the fundamental principles of AA and established Serenity Lane's first program in Eugene. With the help of a small but devoted following and the support of an entire community, Dr. Kerns formed the beginnings of an organization that has become one of the most effective addiction

treatment facilities in the nation.

On June 25, 2005, Dr. Kerns passed away at age 86. About six months after his death, his wife Tops was motivated to carry on the legacy of her husband by continuing to advance Serenity Lane's mission of saving lives and helping put families back together. With thought and prayer, Tops recalled her husband's conviction to ease the burden for patients who could not afford the full cost of the recommended treatment to secure stable recovery.

Tops consulted her eight children and with the support of their spouses, they enthusiastically agreed to join her in creating the endowment, a fund of the Oregon Community Foundation (OCF). The Oregon Community Foundation is a statewide nonprofit organization that administers over 1,300 permanent charitable funds accumulated through gifts and bequests from individuals, families and businesses throughout the state. The mission of the foundation is to improve life in Oregon and promote effective philanthropy.

What began as the dream of a single man has expanded to fill a void in thousands of lives, and the dedication and altruism of the Kerns family is helping to keep that torch ablaze. ■

## Address Changes/Deletions

Help us keep our mailing list current: clip and send this form to:

Serenity Lane Alumni Office  
2133 Centennial Plaza  
Eugene, OR. 97401

or email us at: [alumni@serenitylane.org](mailto:alumni@serenitylane.org)

We're going all digital soon. We encourage you to send us your email address, so you don't miss out on future issues.

Change  Add  Delete

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

■ Donations to the Kerns Endowment can be made directly to:

The Oregon Community Foundation –  
Thomas A. Kerns M.D. Endowment.  
440 E Broadway, Ste 160, Eugene, OR 97401  
Attention: Jennifer Durand  
or call: (541) 431-7099

Website: [www.oregoncf.org](http://www.oregoncf.org)  
Email: [info@oregoncf.org](mailto:info@oregoncf.org)

To learn more about the endowment visit:  
[www.takernsendowment.org](http://www.takernsendowment.org)

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REQUESTED**

**DATED MATERIAL**

**Inside:**

- **Kerns Foundation**
- **Public View**
- **The Red Queen**
- **The BIG Book**
- **WIN \$200 cash!**
- **Who's Driving your Car?**

## 15 ways to tell them you care

Everyone loves a surprise gift, such as flowers or new clothes, but there are lots of ways to show your appreciation that won't spread your budget too thin. Here are a few free or inexpensive ways to show how much you care:

1. Leave a note in their lunch sack, briefcase, pocket, or on their pillow.
2. Do one of their chores when you have time, just because.
3. Make their favorite dinner or dessert.
4. Wash their car.
5. Make a handmade gift (knit a scarf, paint a frame to put your favorite photo in.)
6. Let them sleep in while you take care of the morning rush.
7. Make a mix CD of their favorite music.
8. Really listen. Make eye contact and respond to what they're saying.
9. Fill up the gas tank.
10. Make a slide show of their favorite photos set to their favorite songs.
11. Give him/her a spontaneous massage.
12. Find time to compliment how they look or something they've done every day.
13. Let him/her choose the movie, select the restaurant or even just control the remote.
14. Leave a note on the bathroom mirror in lipstick or dry erase marker
15. Don't forget to say I love you every day, whether it's in person, in a handwritten note, by phone, text or e-mail.

Create a lifelong habit that will always be appreciated, and you just might be delighted to see how quickly your family repays the favors!