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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

Serenity Lane's Alumni Newsletter

SUMMER 2013

Saving lives and helping put families back together since 1973


Breaking the Bonds

Personal Narrative: The Internal Struggle by Derek H.

The first time I drank alcohol I was twelve years old. It was my friend's thirteenth birthday and his older brother was kind enough to supply his little brother and the rest of the "Goonie Squad" with two 24-packs of Pabst Blue Ribbon. "This is my chance to solidify my devil-may-care identity," I thought to myself. Unsure of what lingered around the bend, I was bombarded with anxiety. The beer tasted like rancid cougar spray, but after noticing the euphoric effects of the first one, I drank five more. My anxiety gracefully floated away like a feather in the wind. The night progressed into the six of us standing in a backyard circle spewing our guts into a steaming heap of wasted time and money. The next morning, we woke up with immense hangovers, and watched the dogs feast on our regurgitations. Wildly entertained, we erupted with laughter. The chaos gave me a sense of liberation, obstructing my view from the revolting reality of the scenario, a prelude to the directing. Feeling as if I sought my newfound Templar seeking the pletely unaware of the of addiction preparing

Drinking started as my friends, a time for ting loose. I had just school for truancy, lost motivation due to

and I moved into an apartment with a friend. Our place soon became a hub for drinking, smoking, laughing and excitement. Every weekend we had fifteen or more people over, something I looked forward to all week like a little boy on Christmas Eve. We soon realized that it didn't need to be a weekend to party, so we incorporated Tuesdays and Thursdays into our shindig schedule. Before long it was an everyday extravaganza of drugs, alcohol and altered realities. I hadn't a care in the world and was content with working to fuel the fires of fiesta. Unbeknownst to me I would soon be fueling the fires of addiction. As time went on I realized my life had very little meaning, and I was well on my way to becoming a good for nothing burnout. My friends were pursuing their educations, traveling, exploring new interests, and partying when appropriate. I was floating around aimlessly in hyperspace watching my peers carve paths of their liking, and dreaming of a day when I could pioneer a path of my own. Despite my ambitions, I spent most of my time wallowing in self-pity over my lack of motivation, and painfully aware of my inability to regain it. Unsure of how to cope with this sickness I had fallen into, I turned to drugs and alcohol for ailment. I was addicted.



Feeling as if I had found my calling, I sought my newfound glory like a Knight's Templar seeking the Holy Grail.

tion my life was head-had found my calling, I glory like a Knight's Holy Grail. I was com-all-encompassing power to infiltrate my life.

something fun to do with merrymaking and cut-been kicked out of high most likely a result of excessive marijuana use,

... continued on page 4 and 5



Newsletter Team:

Shely Rahimi: Editor

Angie Delaplain: Graphic Designer

Mary Daniels: Director

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR & ALUMNI COORDINATOR

"Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending."

-Maria Robinson

We've all heard people say, "it's never too late." This expression is meant to encourage us to pursue our dreams no matter how far our paths have diverged from them. For those in recovery, an active addiction distorted their priorities, causing them to surrender their ambitions and pass up many opportunities. But no matter how much of your life was consumed by your disease in the past, it is never too late to reclaim your future.

My aunt is a gifted painter, but she never picked up a brush until a traumatic car accident left her paralyzed from the shoulders down. Through spirituality and positivity, she was determined to overcome her obstacles to live a full life. With only limited use of her hand, she started painting landscapes. Now, she has produced numerous, refined works of art and is a published author, and her words and images are an inspiration to everyone she encounters. Rather than allowing her challenges to limit her potential, it pushed her to achieve things she never dreamed possible.

It is NEVER too late to redefine your life. Consider revisiting your "bucket list." What experiences and accomplishments have you put on the backburner that you can move to the forefront of your agenda? Take inventory of all facets of your life, from your career to your personal relationships to your hobbies, and decide what parts need a facelift. These intentions could be creative, like starting a rock band; or recreational, like running a marathon; or adventurous, like taking a road trip across America; or even practical, like saving for retirement. It is common to feel overwhelmed by large endeavors, but if you create a plan of action, you can take small steps each day to ultimately reach your goal.

Sobriety has opened the door to vast possibilities, and with a strong foundation of recovery and the valuable tools you gained in treatment, you are ready to embark on an exciting, new chapter in your life.

Although it's never too late, there's also no time like the present!

You only have one life. Live it well.

Shely Rahimi, Alumni Coordinator



Happenings

Summer Activities....

Eugene:

Serenity Lane is celebrating 40 years with Alumni, Staff and Families this coming September with a 5K/3K run/walk prior to our annual barbeque.

It is time to register!

Early online registration is encouraged. Registration and Run/Walk Entry Fees: \$10 (Adult), \$25 (Family), Kids under 10 are Free. **Early registrants will receive a Run For Recovery T-shirt and other goodies through Monday, August 26th, 2013.** T-shirts will not be available for new registrants on race day.

Registration: Go to: EcclecticEdgeRacing.com, Click on 'Race Calendar' scroll to September 8th races and click on the **Serenity Lane Race for Recovery**. You can also find the registration link on Serenity Lane's Homepage under the "quick links." If you would like to be a volunteer at this event please contact: Angie at: adelaplain@serenitylane.org

Teams: Grab your team spirit and register with your family or co-workers. Minimum of 4, maximum of 10 registrants per team. Each team member must register separately.

Schedule:

Sunday, September 8,
Alton Baker Park, Eugene
Structure #2

9:00am-9:45am: Registration/Packet pick up

10am: 3K/5K run/walk

11:30am: Awards

Noon: Our Annual BBQ will begin immediately following the race and awards. **Boss Haws BBQ Express** will be catering our lunch and desserts will be furnished from our very own Serenity Lane kitchen. **The Amazing Spaghetti** will entertain children and music will be provided by **Shely Rahimi**. We will be randomly drawing prizes from 12:30pm until 2pm.



John & Joann Breeden

I want to thank you for the update on Serenity Lane's journey in assisting so many in their recovery from addiction. I was a patient at Serenity Lane. one year after its opening. My 39th sobriety birthday was celebrated on June 19 and my gratitude for Dr. Kerns and so many, especially Sam Graves, who was my tough and insightful counselor. After 9 weeks of treatment, I volunteered to work with Marianne Lilly, Director of Nursing, to train as a nurse's aide. While working as a volunteer aide, Sam Graves encouraged further training for me in the counseling field. During my training period, Sam, Cathy Siegmund and I believed in more family involvement during treatment, so we developed the first intensive family program at Serenity lane It was very successful, and so many families were able to begin to heal the deep wounds of the disease of alcohol and drug addiction.

I continued my work at Serenity Lane for over 20 years, volunteering my services. During this time of growth, I also wrote a couple of books to help families in recovery from the effects of chemical abuse. The first one was "Chemical Family," based on family roles in addictive families. The second book, "Love, Hope, and Recovery," is a personal journey of my family's recovery. My books have helped many people, and in turn they have shared so many stories of their own personal journey in recovery. I believe those wonderful people have helped me more than I have helped them. I am so grateful to all of those who have touched me, and made me stronger in my personal journey through recovery.

I am so grateful for Serenity Lane, Dr. Kerns and Lois O'Connor, and all of the special people who were a part of my recovery. My thanks and my love to all of them. None of those in recovery have made the journey alone. We need each other to succeed.

Many thanks to S.L. for guiding me in the right direction,

Joann Breeden





Breaking the Bonds, ... continued from page 1

Even after escaping the swift clutches of The Reaper, he continued to drink and use. I learned quickly that untreated alcoholism progressively gets worse, never better. I also learned that, although I never wanted to be an alcoholic, I was an alcoholic, whether I liked it or not. The disease runs rampant and thrives on both sides of my family. People with my kind of genetic background are eight times more likely to become alcoholics than someone whose family tree has no history of chemical dependency. My disease was spiraling out of control like an airliner with engine failure hopelessly plummeting from the sky into the unforgiving mountainside and certain death. I was drinking every day, often upon awakening just to ease the discomfort of a hangover. Sometimes I would vow never to drink again only to find myself lounging in the lawn chair by two pm with a beer in my hand. "How did it come to this?" I thought. "How did I become what I hate?"

I was running away from the pain of my past. I became less and less interested in being around other people, and more and more hell-bent on numbing my feelings of uselessness, worthlessness, and helplessness with drugs and alcohol. Pain and fear became on-going, like a thousand sinister, flying monkeys swarming over my head, constantly threatening to swoop down and mutilate my body and mind. Drinking was the most effective tool in my arsenal to alleviate the pressure. But there had to be another way to live, and I was determined to find it.

In the mirror I saw a young man bursting at the seams with potential but trapped behind an iron curtain of guilt, shame, and self-pity. I was so ashamed of what I had become I couldn't even look people in the eye. I was legally evicted from my home after thoughtlessly spending all my money on drugs and alcohol. Everything I aspired to be was unobtainable; I was too deep into my addiction to focus on anything other than how to feed it. The evidence was overwhelming. I had lost my freedom of choice. And I had a lingering intellectual inferiority complex due to my lack of a formal education, but I couldn't pursue an education while my mind was entertaining this unwanted tenant I call my ad-

diction. I had a constant sense of impending doom. I knew it would be close to impossible to obtain these things and live a happy and meaningful life if I was possessed by this insidious disease. Regardless, I continued to drink. I was like a giant squirrel hoarding a cheek-full of nuts, refusing to let them go as if his survival depended on it.

Luckily, there was a voice inside me saying, "I need help." When the torment surpassed the threshold I became desperate enough to swallow my pride and check myself into a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center. I said, "What the hell! I'll give it a shot. Anything is better than this." Displaying this sliver of humility and seeking professional help turned out to be a life changing decision.

The treatment center was like nothing I had experienced. I was thrilled to be with like-minded individuals. Waking up and eating breakfast first thing in the morning was a revolutionary idea to me. I was introduced to a balanced schedule of exercise, proper nutrition, and adequate sleep. The counselors educated me on the disease of alcoholism, convincing me that it was in fact a disease, and not a lack of will power. I formed a close bond with the other patients at the treatment center, and we became committed to helping one another succeed. One patient named Steve made a lasting impression on me. He was a Native American man with love in his eyes and scars on his heart. Remorse emanated through his voice as he confessed to us how he stole from his family and fellow tribe members to appease his voracious appetite for mind alteration. I wondered how a kind and compassionate person could lower themselves to such a grim level of selfishness. I then realized the importance of being around people who had experienced the horrors of addiction, and understood our condition. Although the details of our experiences differed, our vitalities had shattered into smoldering shrapnel, leaving each of us unable to manage our own lives. It was the first time in years that I didn't feel completely and utterly alone. Under these conditions I managed to detox safely, clear my head, and acquire the much needed hope required for living a fulfilling life without drugs and alcohol. "Living sober is not going to be

ing the Bonds



Epicurious | by Gerald Hirigoyen & Lisa Weiss

easy at first,” my counselor informed me. I left with a healthy fear of falling back into the cold damp hole that I crawled from. Sick and tired of subsisting in the self-seeking realm of addiction, I set out on a path of self-betterment and inner-stillness.

No longer am I running around frantically foraging counter-tops for flat, half-empty beers to swig for breakfast. The force that was driving my life into chaos and destruction has been balanced out with its counterpart; the force that wants me to walk slowly with a joyous disposition, happy and free to help others wherever possible. I used to believe I was the center of the universe, resenting anyone that came in between me and my instinctual needs. My counselor wisely proclaimed that “harboring resentment is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.” Letting resentments glide away requires a shift of perspective. I am not the center of the universe but an equal part of an enormous configuration of pieces. When I humbly accept this, the power of love finds no resistance as it enters my heart, allowing me to identify my part in a quarrel, make amends if I need to, and let it go. The strength of both love and destruction are much greater than I am, and my life will be taken over by one of them whether I like it or not. They both live in me like hungry wolves fighting for dominance. Who will reign supreme? Whichever one I feed. The Wolf of Love thrives when I slow my mind through meditation. With a clear head and a sense of mindfulness, he encourages me to saunter through life and simply enjoy myself. But I need to be aware and use discernment in who I decide to feed. The Wolf of Destruction will never surrender; he is still present in my life. He makes me second guess whether I am really an alcoholic or not. After all I have been through, his voice still tells me I can drink again, and for a split second, I believe him. He is like a double agent feeding me false information, wanting nothing more than to watch me set out on a warpath, marauding, burning and pillaging villages along the way, only to end up passed out drunk, drowning in a half inch of water. He’s there, I have accepted that. The beauty is that I have the power of choice today.

Editor’s Note: We thought this was an excellent piece of writing and wish to thank Derek H. for allowing us to include it in this edition of *Stepping Together*.

If the idea of tomatoes and watermelon together sounds odd to you, this dish will be a revelation. There is a saying that what grows together goes together. If you think of tomatoes as a fruit, which they are botanically, this combination makes more sense. Seasonality, however, is the key. This is definitely a summer salad. when tomatoes, watermelon, and cucumbers are at their peak of flavor. Avocados are included to lend a nice contrast of flavor and texture. Toss this salad together before serving.

3 or 4 small to medium heirloom tomatoes, in assorted colors, cored and cut into 3/4-inch chunks

1 small English or regular Cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut into 3/4-inch cubes

1 cup 3/4-inch-cubed yellow or red seedless watermelon flesh

1 Hass Avocado, halved, pitted, peeled, and cut into 3/4-inch cubes

1 tablespoon chopped mixed fresh herbs, in any combination: basil, tarragon, chives, and cilantro

1/4 teaspoon coriander seed

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons aged balsamic vinegar

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preparation

In a bowl, combine the tomatoes, cucumber, watermelon, avocado, and herbs. In a spice grinder, grind the coriander seeds to a fine powder. Add the ground coriander to the tomato mixture and toss gently.

In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and salt and pepper to taste. Pour over the tomato mixture and toss to coat evenly. Taste and adjust the seasoning before serving.



Doug Smith, ExSL Counselor

Do The Right Thing



by: *Kristyn Elton*

ExSL, which stands for Extended Serenity Lane, is a therapeutic community-styled residential treatment program. Those who choose this intense level of treatment are at particular risk of relapse, or have had trouble maintaining their sobriety. It is a one-of-a kind treatment model in the Pacific Northwest, and attracts many patients from other states.

This modified therapeutic community offers a way for those in the program to learn to embrace their own accountability. ExSL provides a penetrating, strong, and powerful program to target personal responsibility, self-worth, and the myriad of other issues common among alcoholics and addicts.

Patients in this program live together, four to a fully furnished apartment that is adjoined to the main campus. Those living together in each apartment have shared duties such as cooking for each other, cleaning up, etc. In other words, they share the work and responsibility, and learn the value of being dependable. They go to off-site meetings together, and are responsible for managing their own time outside of group, lecture time, and other programming. Developing a relationship with a sponsor during their stay in ExSL is expected and critical to success.

ExSL patients are learning how to do all of these everyday things in a completely new way. As one patient put it, “they are learning to save their own lives.” They are in the process of examining every facet of their lives; methodically taking inventory of their existing core issues, making changes, learning to do the right thing, and holding each other accountable along the way.

There is a familial atmosphere in the ExSL program that is difficult to describe. They work together in a way

that doesn’t allow anyone to hide behind their defense mechanisms or normal crutches. Each person explores the deepest, darkest nooks of themselves, and makes a real effort to restore and renew them. They stand in total support of one another, as each person holds up the mirror up to their own face, and really confronts the addict within them.

Have the courage to say no. Have the courage to face the truth. Do the right thing because it is right. These are the magic keys to living your life with integrity.

~W. Clement Stone, Think And Grow Rich

Address Changes/Deletions

Help us keep our mailing list current.
Send changes or deletions to:

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or email to: alumni@serenitylane.org
or call Shely at **503-244-4500 ext 8103**

No Longer Alone



Georgia Bronson, Women's Program Counselor



by Kristyn Elton

One of our women's residential groups is led by Georgia Bronson (pictured above). When I visited one of her group sessions in May, the bond among the women in the group was instantly tangible. They walked into group in small clusters, talking about the lecture they had just come from. I learned that the women in the group came from different backgrounds, were of varying ages, and some even lived in different states. Some of them were nearing the end of their residential treatment, and some were at the beginning of their second day. Nonetheless, they had a distinct connection.

There's something special about a group of women going through the throes of addiction recovery treatment together. When I asked them what this special x-factor was, they had a flood of answers. What it all boiled down to was trust – one of the most important components of a group. Even with varying backgrounds, this trust leads to a magical openness where the healing takes place. This women's group offers an undeniable security and openness that might be more difficult for some to find in a mixed gender group. By being in this group together, the women found that they had many life experiences in common. While some of their experiences had previously created feelings of isolation and "apart from," the group created a new experience of feeling "a part of" and inclusion.

The women shared with me that they felt no judgment in their group. It is the ultimate "come as you are" environment. Guided by Georgia, they help each other to feel secure enough to discard their masks and begin the healing process. Soon, they find they are no longer bound by their fears, but instead have become proactive in dealing with them head-on. It's the beginning of a positive journey of self-discovery while always remembering it is "one day at a time."

Thankfully, Georgia's group, like all the groups at Serenity Lane, offers our patients a genuine safe place the moment they walk in the door.



Wish List...

Picnic tables for residential courtyard
Residential scholarships
ExSL scholarships
Sponsored salon services
 (manicures, pedicures, massages)
DVD's
Antennae for community room
Covered, non-smoking seating in courtyard
Sponsored activities for women
Pottery wheel and supplies
Replacements of well-loved books
Art supplies
Board games
Can openers
Coffee makers
Cheese slicers
Kitchen knives
Cutting boards
Nintendo Wii
New televisions
Barbecue
Lamps
Lamp shades
Recovery-related videos
Recovery-related books
New dishwasher

We would appreciate any donation to our wish list you are able to give.

To reach Kristyn in our Development Department, call her directly at:

541-284-8606 or email: kelton@serenitylane.org

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You can't stop the waves,
but you can learn to surf!

