



Joan S. (GD), Marge J. (GD Family), Lyric D. (RHC Family), Felicia G. and Susan N. (McHenry) show off their ugly sweaters.

Enjoying the Holiday Spirit Without Spirits III

Rosecrance Alumni Workshop Series

Rosecrance alumni, their families and staff delighted in the third annual alumni workshop "Enjoying the Holiday Spirit without Spirits" held on December 6, 2015, at the Rosecrance Berry Campus. This workshop is designed to help those new in recovery experience holiday fun and give veteran alumni and family members a chance to share their knowledge of holiday living in recovery.

The event included a six-person panel discussion consisting of three alumni and three family members. Panelists shared strategies they use to help them enjoy the holiday season. They encouraged alumni and family members to continue to use the tools they'd been given in treatment and family programming at Rosecrance. Shivani K. (RGW/Marlowe) and Wyeth S. (Hillman/Greendale) both agreed that life is really waiting and that you just have to keep working your program and moving forward.

Families discussed how they have incorporated new traditions that help them look forward to the holidays. Skip T. (RHC) and his wife Kathy invite friends in recovery to their home during the holidays. Skip explained that spending time with someone during the holidays who may not have a family gives him and his family the opportunity

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Celebrate! Alumni Anniversaries

Mike J., RHC/Greendale, **6 month** anniversary on **12/5/15**, sobriety date - 6/5/15

Katie S., RHC/Greendale, **1 year** anniversary on **12/26/15**, sobriety date - 12/26/14

Felicia G., RMH, **1 year** anniversary on **12/28/15**, sobriety date - 12/28/14

Dana P., RHC/Greendale, **2 year** anniversary on **12/1/15**, sobriety date - 12/1/13

Lisa S., RHC, **2 year** anniversary on **12/2/15**, sobriety date - 12/2/13

Les T., RHC, **2 year** anniversary on **12/6/15**, sobriety date - 12/6/13

Wilma Y., RHC, **2 year** anniversary on **12/24/15**, sobriety date - 12/24/13

Mark G., RHC, **2 year** anniversary on **12/25/15**, sobriety date - 12/25/13

Shivani K., RGW/Marlowe, **4 year** anniversary on **12/26/15**, sobriety date - 12/26/11

Teresa M., RHC, **5 years** anniversary on **12/2/15**, sobriety date - 12/2/10

Kelly B., RHC, **5 year** anniversary on **12/11/15**, sobriety date - 12/11/10

Joe N., RGW, **5 1/2 year** anniversary on **12/22/15**, sobriety date - 6/22/10

@ Rosecrance would love to know your recovery anniversary date so we can celebrate your successes. **Contact Missy at mgarrison@rosecrance.org**

Enjoying the Holiday

(continued for cover)

to get “out of themselves.” It’s a win-win situation for everyone.

Wyeth S. will be going home for the first time this year after spending his last few holidays in the bubble of safety at Hillman House and Greendale Recovery Home. Wyeth stated that he plans to turn to his family and friends in recovery while away. Several 12-Step communities offer marathon meetings, where meetings are offered hourly throughout the day during the holiday season.

After the panel discussion, a delicious dinner of turkey with all the trimmings was enjoyed—followed by Recovery Jeopardy and a visit from Santa, who entertained even the oldest attendees. Cookie frosting was a hit and the ugly sweater contest was a riot. Prizes were determined based on audience applause.

Attendees stated that they are looking forward to the holiday event next year.



Joan S., Carina D. and Jeremy J. (Greendale) look on as Junior displays the winning decorated cookie!



Ryan B. and Felicia G. (McHenry) share time decorating cookies.



Panelists listen as Sanjeev K. (family member) discusses enjoying the holidays in recovery.



Good friends reunited (left to right) Mady J. (RGW/Marlowe), Katie S. (RHC/GD) and Amy K. (RGW/Marlowe).

What's on My Mind

Tales of Triumph—The Lucky Penny Lisa S. (Evergreen/Rosecrance)

“Hi, my name is Lisa ... and I am an addict.” The very first time I said those words, I was filled with pain, shame and utter helplessness.

It was my first meeting at the closed group of Cedar Street in Rockford, Illinois. It was early in August. By the end of September, I would have relapsed, twice. The people were always loving and supportive. I decided to enter treatment and had another first day clean. The day was September 30, 1987.

I never forgot the day, and after 28 years clean, I never will. These years have been some of the best and worst of my life. I say “my” because without recovery, my life would not exist. If I had somehow managed to stay alive and using, I never would have lived. That woman would have been but a mere shadow of existence.

Today, I am working on my second Master’s degree while teaching at a four-year university in the state of Washington. I am in a creative writing program and working on a book about my life. I just met with the assistant director of the Veteran’s Center to begin my new volunteer project. I will be working with veterans who are in therapy by leading a creative writing workshop. Recently, I read from my work to the public. I am living!



Lisa S. (right) and Alumni Coordinator Melissa Garrison catch up during a visit in August 2015.

You wouldn’t recognize the young, desperate woman of 28 years ago. I will never forget her. She lives in me. Her name is Lisa ... she is a recovering addict. I love that girl. She is brave beyond all measure. She got me here ... one day at a time. She kept coming back ... and that message from a group of other brave people ... she kept that in her pocket ... the lucky penny of humble beginnings.

LIVING LIFE ON LIFE'S TERMS WITH 12 STEPS

SHIVANI K.



Step Twelve

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Can you believe 2015 has come and gone? Man, time really flies! Back in January we started out this column with Step One and here we are at Step 12.

Step 12 is the action step. This is the step in which you get to really live through the program, out in the world with the rest of society. There are two main parts of Step 12: you have had a spiritual awakening and now must practice these principles in all your affairs to maintain and continue to improve your recovery and in doing so you carry this message of hope and solution to other alcoholics. This is where you have the privilege of helping other alcoholics as they find their way into recovery. It is truly a gift that keeps on giving.

Just a few days ago a friend of mine told me of someone who was really struggling as an alcoholic. My friend knows I am in

recovery, so I told her if she felt comfortable she could throw my name out there as someone who may be able to help. Thankfully, she did and her friend reached out to me! I explained the program in a broad sense and suggested we go to a meeting the next morning. At the meeting the next day, I had an overwhelming sense of relief. Not only was I able to bring hope through this program of solution to someone who was in that hopeless state we have all known before, but also I was getting just as much hope in return. See, it is only through the promises and miracles of working this program that I am able to help myself by helping others.

It is important to note that while sometimes you may want to go to any lengths in order to help another alcoholic, you must always keep in mind that just as no human power could have saved you, you cannot save them. You can, however, introduce them to the program and show them that there is so much more to life after and without alcohol simply by living your own life as an example. To watch the hearts and minds of other men and women like yourself open up to a new world is simply a priceless gift.

I try to do as much as I can in an effort to spread the message inside and outside of the walls of AA. For example, I have been speaking at high schools throughout the Chicagoland area for the past three years, I often speak at Family Programming at the Rosecrance Griffin Williamson Campus and for Rosecrance in general, and this year I had a few new, awesome opportunities. I was one of the three alumni featured in a short film that was played at Rosecrance's annual banquet, I was able to be a part of the fight to open a sober living facility in the neighborhood of Lakeview in Chicago, and of course, I was asked to write this column every month for all of you! These are things I am so grateful to have the chance and honor to take part in. I hope you all have enjoyed reading my column as much as I have loved writing it. Have a wonderful, safe, and happy holiday and a happy new year!

RECOVERY FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're doing something.

So that's my wish for you, and all of us, and my wish for myself. Make new mistakes. Make glorious, amazing mistakes. Make mistakes nobody's ever made before. Don't freeze, don't stop, don't worry that it isn't good enough, or it isn't perfect, whatever it is: art, or love, or work or family or life. Whatever it is you're scared of doing ... do it.

Make your mistakes, next year and forever.

— Neil Gaiman

Rosecrance Alumni Referrals

When someone asks you for help in seeking services for substance abuse, listen, share your experience and direct the person to hope. Anyone seeking help can call Rosecrance 24 hours a day, seven days a week at **815-391-1000** or **888-928-5278** to speak with someone confidentially.





Alumni and family members enjoy bowling, snacking and networking at the Bowling Event in April 2015.

A Look Back at 2015 Alumni Program: Life IS Waiting!

This has been another great year for the Rosecrance Alumni Program as we continue to move forward. The alumni members have been busy participating in alumni and community events.

Our alumni and their families have had the chance to reach out and make new friends and help others while having fun. They enjoyed events like the workshop “Emotional Relapse and Recovery” with David Lee in January, the 2nd annual Alumni Picnic in June, the first annual “Alumni Reunion” with Carver Brown in November, and ending the year with the third annual workshop series “Enjoying the Holiday Spirit without Spirits III” on December 6, 2015.

The spring found members attending speaker meetings and movie nights, going bowling, roller skating and to baseball games. Alumni and family game nights were introduced and found to be great fun for our Rockford and Crystal Lake alumni. Marathon meetings continued with the youth at Rosecrance Griffin Williamson campus—bringing alumni food for thought on how far they’ve come on this journey. Both alumni and family members have given freely of their time, speaking at the Rosecrance Harrison and Griffin Williamson Campuses for the Family Programs, as well as on the units. For the third year, alumni members took an active part in the “Recovery Rally on the Rock” and speaking at the “Rosecrance Recovery Walk” this past September for Recovery Month.

Being involved in the alumni program promotes long-term recovery and enhances healthy family relationships. Alumni member involvement touches not only other alumni and their families, but our clients and community members who may not have the opportunity to see what living a life in recovery looks like. Rosecrance alumni are walking, talking miracles and their mission is to demonstrate that life is indeed waiting if you are open to moving forward and stepping out of your comfort zone.

I want to thank each and every alumni, family member, alumni friend, staff and community member who participated this last year to make the Rosecrance Alumni Program a success. The foundation for this program has been laid and now it’s time to move forward and walk shoulder-to-shoulder to ensure that our new alumni receive the message that yes, “Life is Waiting.” —*Melissa Garrison, Rosecrance alumni coordinator*

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Alumni Cafe Support Groups

Rosecrance alumni are welcome to attend alumni café support groups to receive encouragement and share what’s happening in their lives.

Find an alumni café that is convenient for you to attend. We encourage you to come 30 minutes early to network with others.

Rosecrance Naperville Alumni Café Support Group meets every 2nd Monday from 7 to 8 p.m., in room 212 at the Community Christian Church (Yellow Box Church), 1635 Emerson Lane, Naperville, IL.

Rosecrance Rockford Alumni Café Support Group meets every 2nd Thursday of the month and every 3rd Monday of the month at the Harrison Campus, 3815 Harrison Ave, Rockford, IL. Alumni meet from 6 to 7 p.m.

Rosecrance Lincoln Park Alumni Café Support Group meets every 3rd Thursday of the month from 7 to 8 p.m. at the Rosecrance Lincoln Park office, 2835 N. Sheffield Ave., Suite 209 (ring buzzer), Chicago, IL.

Rosecrance Crystal Lake Alumni Café Support Group meets every 4th Tuesday of the month from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Rosecrance Crystal Lake office, 422 Tracy Court, Crystal Lake, IL.

Stay Connected!

For more information on alumni events or to get involved, contact Alumni Coordinator Missy Garrison at 815-387-2537 or mgarrison@rosecrance.org.

You can also find all of the alumni events at rosecrance.org by clicking on the Alumni tab. Follow Rosecrance on Facebook and Twitter.