

Herrington McBride

27th Annual Winter Retreat

The Holiday Gift to yourself or someone you love, to begin the New Year celebrating Recovery!

January 3 - 5, 2014

Friday Evening at 5:00 pm – Sunday 1:00 Afternoon

(Attendees must be recovering from their Addictions)

ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21ST.

Redemptorist Retreat Center

1800 Timber Trail Lane - Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

“Just Another Day in Paradise”

Keynote Speaker: **John Aschenbrenner**
(Railroaded by everyone at last year's Retreat!)

Long Term Alumni Board Member and Past President of
our Alumni Association, Former High School counselor and Present Residential Counselor
at Herrington Recovery Center



Cost is \$225.00 which includes all meals & 2 night's lodging.

A limited Number of scholarships, through “The Brian Kenevan Scholarship Fund” are available for those who require some financial assistance to total the cost of registration. Those requesting scholarships are asked to contribute what they honestly are able to, if possible, and the individual applying to our scholarship committee must do so in writing and send your requests c/o John Aschenbrenner – 505 S. Fourth Street, Watertown, Wisconsin 53094. Requests are confidential, and please include your reason and how long you have been on your recovery journey – including the amount you’re able to contribute. We set our rate to just cover costs.

Please Note: Anyone arriving under the influence of any mood-altering substance will be asked to leave immediately – no refund will be given. Refunds will be made only up to two weeks prior to the retreat, as we have to pre-pay at the retreat center.

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: () _____ Email: _____

Need a 1st floor room? Yes _____

Roommate? Yes _____ Roommate's Name: _____

Willing to share a room? Yes _____ No _____

Registration Fee: \$225.00

Donation to Brian Kenevan Scholarship Fund: _____

*Donations will help those needing scholarships

Total Amount of Check \$ _____

(Remember folks, we charge just enough to cover expenses)



The Herrington McBride Alumni Association
Winter Edition, 2013

The Herrington Recovery

Alumni Association Quarterly

From the Desk of our President

By: Rob McCreadie



As we come towards another holiday season, I can think of much to be thankful for, not the least of which is another year clean! I was recently speaking with a friend whom I began sponsoring nearly four years ago. In that time he has become a



close friend, someone for whom I am thankful. He suggested that we begin a project to spotlight some of the many miracles that have passed through the doors of Herrington Recovery Center. People who have found themselves at a crossroads resulting from consequences of their addiction and at some point surrendered and chose life over continued desperation, degradation and isolation. In doing so, the goal is to offer the only spiritual principle one addict can give another, hope. Hope for the newcomer in treatment, hope for the still suffering addict who hasn't found a new way to live or hope for a friend or family member who fears that the addicted person in their life may be hopeless. It's easy to focus on the pain, death and destruction associated with addiction and all too often the quieter miracles are overlooked. If you are one of the miracles or would like to recommend that we speak with someone who is, please feel free to contact me at clean@wi.rr.com and watch for our new *Hope Shot* column in upcoming issues of our newsletter.

There are several exciting events and new developments coming up in 2014. We have our 3rd Annual New Year's Eve Celebration with residents quickly approaching followed by the 27th Annual Herrington McBride Alumni Retreat from January 3rd - 5th, 2014. RAPs continue to go well, but we can always use fresh speakers who have at least one year of continuous recovery, are working a program and have a positive message to share with current residents in treatment.

As always, if you have any suggestions or concerns, please feel free to email me and if you have a question to which I don't know the answer, I will do my best to find one for you.

On behalf of the board and myself, I would like to wish all of our membership, family and friends a happy, healthy and safe holiday season and a prosperous New Year.

Taking Care of Ourselves During These Holy Days

By: John Aschenbrenner

The Holidays are among us, and for many of us, along with the hub-bub they can be difficult times. The illusions we have come to believe from childhood - of how peaceful and joyous we should be feeling, and the media promoting alcohol with the wonder of the holidays can afford us much less than what we would hope for. Many of us begin to focus on our regrets and the shame we thought we had given up so long ago. We need to be careful and we need to be careful for each other. When our 12-Step Meetings fall on holidays, we often think there will be nobody attending. My experience is there are more people in attendance – the perfect image of recovering people taking care of themselves. I've come to believe these Holy Days are the perfect time to focus on both our 3rd and 11th Steps – it's the perfect time to nurture our Spirituality.

Personally I find the holidays to be the most difficult time of year for me. I don't think about drinking or using, but there is, after the years I have in Recovery, a pervasive and subtle apprehension – perhaps an unconscious memory of feeling so exhausted by the time the holiday's end, all I wanted was to pack it away and push it back in the corner of the closet and slam the door. I try to focus on my Spirituality and Family. I try turning the focus from what I think I need to the deep and unmet needs of the myriad of less fortunate people that surround all of us. And then there is the holiday gift I give myself and suggest it might be good for you or the perfect gift for a friend or family member in Recovery. For the past 16 years I've been attending the Winter Retreat – always occurring the first weekend after the New Year Holiday. This issue of *The Herrington Recovery* announces it, and the registration form is on the back cover – It's the perfect way to set your focus on continuing Recovery for the New Year.

This Year I have my first Grandchild - a Grandson, Zachary John. Along with everyone who is dear to me, I'm going to be holding him close. If I hadn't gotten into Recovery when I did, I would never have lived to see his smile.

I Was Only Going to Stay a Week.

I figured my wife deserved a break from me. At least here she knew I would be safe. There was no reason to stay any longer than that. I was a hopeless alcoholic and there was nothing that could stop me from drinking. I had tried everything I could think of.

It was so hard to believe that I couldn't stop, or at least control it. Alcohol had been my best friend for 20 years. It helped me make friends. It made me comfortable when I wasn't. No matter the situation good, bad or indifferent, alcohol made it better.

I grew up a pretty shy, quiet, insecure kid who always wanted to be more than I felt I was. I was immediately hooked the first time I drank. I was 15 and at my first high school party with people I didn't know that well. After a few drinks it was like we all had been the best of friends forever. I loved it.

The next 20 years the party continued. During that time I did a lot of things I regretted, hurt some people and apologized for a lot. That was OK to me though, I considered them just the unfortunate side effects of the fast paced and exciting lifestyle I was living. Occasionally I made a mistake, apologized and moved on. I never suffered any consequences that made me think I might be drinking too much.

Up to that point, to use a phrase I like, "I hadn't crossed the line" yet. By that I mean I didn't NEED to drink. I wanted to, and looked, for every opportunity to drink...but I didn't need to. Whenever I did drink, I always drank way too much. But I was only drinking 3 - 4 nights a week, and had to apologize occasionally. That was perfectly normal in my world.

A stressful, work-related issue arose in my life and I dealt with it how I knew best to deal with stressful, uncomfortable things, I drank. The problem was I was stressed all the time, so I started drinking all the time. Very quickly, within a few months, I needed alcohol to feel normal and function.

For about 4 years I drank almost every day. Surprisingly I still didn't suffer any consequences. Sure, my marriage was starting to deteriorate, my job was suffering and I drove drunk all the time. But in my mind, things were still OK, I just needed to do a little better job managing my drinking. I tried every day to manage it better with the same results.

The last year before I came to Herrington everything fell apart. My wife filed for divorce, I was about to lose the job I had for 15 years, 4 trips to detox, IOP, counselors and a DUI. Despite all this I could not stop for even a day. I had crossed the line and there was no going back. I needed to drink.

When I came to Herrington I didn't know anything about recovery or AA. It had been suggested that I go to AA by a number of people but I never went. Deep inside, I was scared. Plus there was no way AA would work. I was a pretty smart guy and I had tried everything I could think of. What I knew about AA was you go to some meetings, get some sort of sponsor (whatever that was), and do some step things. And that would stop me from drinking. You must be kidding me.

After about a week or so of meetings, my thinking started to change. Listening to the people who had been sober for awhile, I realized that at some point every one of them was exactly where I was: lost, scared and hopeless. Yet here they were, coming to a meeting, because they wanted to. And they were laughing. And they seemed happy. I didn't understand it, but I wanted what they had and decided I was going to go all in and give this AA, recovery thing everything I had.

It wasn't easy. The hardest part was talking about and sharing what was going on inside of me. I didn't want anyone to know what I had done, much less how I felt and what was going on inside my head. My planned week turned into 58 days. I didn't do anything perfect, but I did everything the best I could, and I started to believe in the program. I was starting to feel a little better about myself. I started to have hope, which is one of the best feelings I have ever had.

For the last five plus years, I have had my ups and downs with the program and my personal life, but by taking it one day at a time, I have remained sober. If you boil my program down, there are two things I need to do every day. Number one is, "Do the next right thing". While this is not my first inclination a lot of times, I try my best to apply that to everything in my life. The second thing is practicing acceptance. I have discovered things can be OK if they don't turn out the way I want.

When I came into the program, I hated every part of my life, especially myself. Today I have the same wife, job, dog, and house that I had back then. Today I love my life and am grateful every day. The only thing that has changed is me.

Today, I 100 percent believe, if I continue to work my program, continue to grow, go to my meetings, talk openly and honestly with my sponsor, take things one day at a time, I will be OK. And that to me is a miracle that started when I walked into the doors of Herrington.

-Jeff R.



For the Weekly Calendar:

AA Meetings - Rogers Hospital - Oconomowoc

Monday - 7:00 Evening

Wednesday - 7:00 Evening

Thursday - 7:00 Evening

Saturday - 7:04 Morning (Nobody makes it by 7:00!)

Sunday - 8:30 Morning

Rogers Hospital - West Allis

Sunday - 6:00 Evening

Wednesday - 7:30 Evening (NA Meeting)

Saturday - 9:00 Morning

Al-Anon Meeting-Rogers Hospital Oconomowoc

Tuesday - 7:00 Evening

Alumni interested in doing Tuesday Evening RAPs with current Herrington Residents or if you're interested in having Pizza with Residents every first Tuesday of March & September, contact Rob at: clean@wi.rr.com for information on how to proceed.



TRIVIAL PURSUIT



Johnny the German again challenges Johnny the Greek to TRIVIAL PURSUIT after The Greek defaulted, and then again, lost the last two challenges.



Playoff Night
January 4th
Saturday at 8:00 PM
During the Retreat!

Herrington McBride

Herrington McBride Board Members

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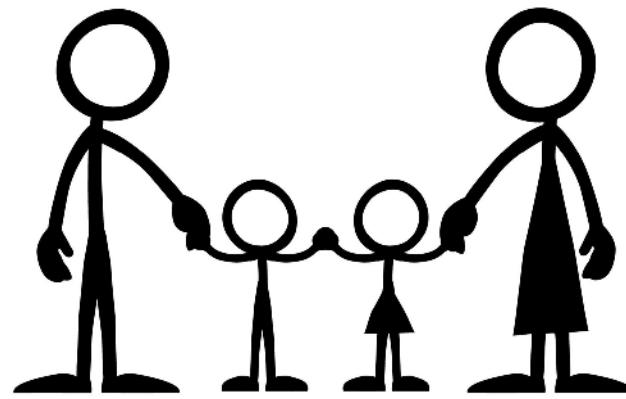
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Family Recovery

As I drove to my first family day I felt that familiar knot in my stomach tighten up. I was angry and hurt but I was only going to show my anger. I couldn't cry there because I was afraid that if I started I wouldn't stop.

I had been told by the family counselor, "if for no other reason, go for yourself". I didn't even know what this meant but I went and today I am grateful I did.

It was at family day that I reached my bottom. I didn't like the person I was. I was miserable. I left early that day after telling my husband that I didn't think I could stay married anymore and I meant it.

We had a baby boy and though I still loved my husband very much, I wasn't willing to take our son on the roller coaster ride of addiction. I put pressure on myself to make this decision soon; do I stay or go?

Out of complete desperation I went to Al-Anon. I wanted someone to tell me what to do. It didn't happen that night – nobody was giving advice. This was very foreign to me since where I come from people love to tell you what to do. What I did get was a gift of suggestion that changed my life; "if you're not in danger (which I wasn't) give yourself 6 months in the program before you make any life altering decisions". This had never occurred to me. I don't have to react to crisis with more crises!

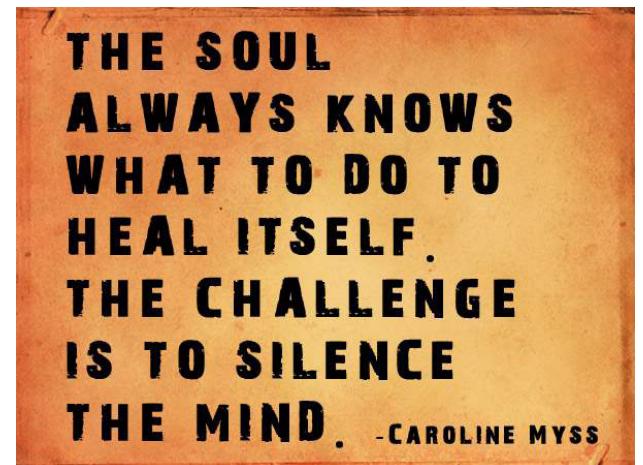
I had no idea what a sponsor was or why I needed one. But I asked a woman to sponsor me that first night because I was willing to do anything to feel better. It took a lot of effort to go to meetings at first but I started to learn a lot about myself.

I came to my marriage with my own baggage. I had been affected by the disease of alcoholism my whole life and, as a result, became very good at obsessing over other people, avoiding conflict and worrying. This was what was making me so unhappy. I had no idea how hard I had been to live with.

Al-Anon has given me a spiritual awareness that allowed me to stay out of my husband's way and focus on myself. I no longer take other peoples' moods or actions personal. Most days I can see when something is none of my business. I know now that the only thing I have control over is my attitude. I have learned to 'accept life on life's terms' and because of this I no longer live with a knot in my stomach. All of my relationships have improved because I am getting better.

I came to Al-anon because my marriage was falling apart. I wanted to know if I should stay or go. I did get my answer but not the way I expected it. I had to work the Steps with my sponsor, go to meetings and do service work. Only then did it become very clear to me that staying married was the best decision for me and my family.

Today Al-anon is not something I do, its part of who I am. It saved my life and my family and that is why I keep coming back. -Toni G.



Step Nine and the Promises

Drinking and promiscuity were the hallmarks of my first years in high school. Like the song said, I was looking for love in all the wrong places. My freshman year I attended an all-girl denominational school which was totally against my wishes. While the first year my behavior was tolerable by year two I wanted out. The nuns' gage of outrageous and unacceptable was quite low and so by sneaking out at night during a retreat and sharing the lurid details of my waywardness with my classmates I was called out. After being interviewed and honest to a fault my parents were called in and I was asked to leave. It was one of the happiest days of my life. I was grounded for the summer but I always looked at being grounded as optional. My parents looked the other way because it took too much energy to try to keep track of me.

Attending my small, hometown public school for the first time in my life was such a freeing adventure. I felt grown up and on my own. I didn't have a boyfriend. I was a member of a clique of boys my age. I had sex often and mostly with older boys. As a minor, birth control pills were not available to me in the mid-1960s. I used the rhythm method for birth control and it worked for awhile.

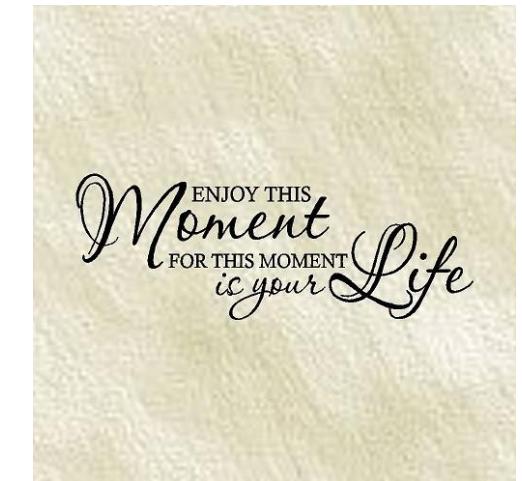
Fear gripped me when I realized I was pregnant and I knew everything would change. My father told me what I already knew, that if I chose to keep the child I would be uneducated, stuck in that depressing town, living in a rat hole apartment and working at the paper mill for the rest of my life. He said that if I went to a large city during the pregnancy and gave the child up for adoption he would set me up in college. My fight was gone, I left with a whimper. I had a healthy baby boy and I gave him up.

My father did set me up in college and I quickly wasted the opportunity. I drank, did drugs, skipped classes and hung around with like-minded people. During the following seventeen years I binge drank, slept with numerous men, married twice and threw away many more opportunities. I never considered having another child because I carried around guilt and shame and I knew that I didn't deserve to have another when I had given up the first.

Coming into AA and recovery, the birth and adoption of my son became an open wound. As an attempt at healing and amends I wrote a letter to my son and sent it to his file at the adoption agency. Over the next years I sent several letters to his file in an attempt to heal myself and in the unlikely chance that he would check his file that he would know that I thought of him and cared.

After seventeen years in sobriety a miracle happened and I was reunited with my son. I won't explain all of the details but I will say with certainty that God led us back to each other. My son was thirty-five years old and miraculously welcomed me with open arms. I also was blessed with a loving daughter-in-law and four grandchildren. We have been reunited for ten years now and I have become an integral part of all of their lives.

Today I have twenty-seven years of continuous sobriety and I continue to work the steps and go to meetings. I am living proof that the promises do come true and that they are placed in the Big Book after Step 9 for a reason. -Kay M



If you have made mistakes...there is always another chance for you...you may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing we call 'Failure' is not the falling down but the staying down. – Mary Pickford