



# The View

Newsletter of the Ridgeview Alumni Association


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Smyrna, GA

## Ridgeview Alumni Association offers many opportunities to those in recovery

*Editor's Note: This holiday edition of The View focuses on the Ridgeview Alumni Association: its mission, its activities and the important role that it plays in the continued recovery of its members.*

 For hundreds of recovering alcoholics and addicts released from inpatient or outpatient treatment at Ridgeview Institute since 1988, the Ridgeview Alumni Association has been an avenue for mutual support in the continuing journey in sobriety, as well as an opportunity for service and "giving something back."

According to alumni advisor Sam Anders, the idea for an alumni association had been bandied about for a number years but did not come to fruition until 1988.

"Ridgeview has always offered an aftercare program for its patients upon their release, but several of us saw the need for an activity that would be both service oriented and social," explained Anders.

"After-care serves a great need, especially for those early in recovery, but we wanted something that the alumni could rally around and continue the friendships and mutual support that they had formed in treatment. And at the same time, we wanted something that would also involve service to the recovery community, especially at Ridgeview, but at-large as well."

From its humble beginnings in 1988 the Ridgeview Alumni Association has evolved into a well-known, much heralded group that sponsors



eleven AA meetings on the Ridgeview campus, publishes a quarterly newsletter, and stages numerous social gatherings.

According to Ridgeview Chief Operations Officer Jack Gronewald, the Ridgeview Alumni Association plays a vital role in the life and vitality of Ridgeview.

"From their many patient referrals to the meetings, socials and service projects that they sponsor, the Alumni Association is one of our most important resources," he said.

Anders said that the importance of the Alumni Association is also seen in the role that it plays in bringing those in recovery together.

"They work together, play together, and love together," Anders

*Continued from page 7*

## Ridgeview goes to 7-day programming

In response to the mandated shorter inpatient stays arising from managed care, Ridgeview Institute implemented seven-day programming in all inpatient programs, effective Oct. 5th, according to Katherine Evans, Ridgeview's program manager for adult addiction and psychiatric partial services.

"Because of managed care, the average stay in our inpatient units is only three to four days," explained Evans, "so for those patients who checked in on a Thursday night, for instance, they would only receive the benefit of our treatment programs on Friday. By the time our programming resumed on Monday many of them would be gone."

Evans said that case managers now work with patients seven days a week. Other activities such as groups and family therapy are also conducted every day.

"Managed care and all the changes that it has brought about in recent years have caused our indus-

*Continued page 5*

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# Upcoming Events

## Family Learning Series - Meetings - Socials

### OCTOBER

Thursday, 17th- Family Learning Series, 7:30-8:30 p.m., Conference Center, *How to Improve Communication in Your Family*, Sheila E. Buck, LPC

Thursday, 24th- Family Learning Series, 7:30-8:30 p.m., Conference Center, *What Parents Can and Can't Do to Prevent Teen Drug Abuse*, David Karol Gore, Ph.D.

Saturday, 26th- Halloween Dance, 8 p.m.-midnight, Conference Center, \$5 per person

### NOVEMBER

Friday, 1st- First Friday Speaker Meeting, 8 p.m., Conference Center

Thursday, 7th- Family Learning Series, 7:30-8:30 p.m., Conference Center, *The Golden Years-Taking Care of Our Bodies and Minds*, Michelle A. Sewell, M.D.

Thursday, 14th- Family Learning Series, 7:30-8:30 p.m., Conference Center, *Smoking Cessation for Individuals Recovering from Addiction*, Robert McKinnon, Prevention Specialist

Thursday, 21st- Family Learning Series, 7:30-8:30 p.m., Conference Center, *Seven Steps to Better Mental Health & Happiness*, Michael S. McGarry, Ph.D.

Sunday, 24th- Annual Gratitude Dinner and Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Conference Center

### DECEMBER

Thursday, 5th- Family Learning Series, 7:30-8:30 p.m., Conference Center, *Overcoming Overeating: A Non-Diet Alternative*, Serena C. Gui, Ph.D. and Roni S. Funk, LCSW

Friday, 6th- First Friday Speaker Meeting, 8 p.m., Conference Center

Thursday, 12th- Family Learning Series, 7:30-8:30 p.m., Conference Center, *Simple Ways to Improve Your Physical Health*, Michelle A. Sewell, M.D.

Thursday, 19th- Family Learning Series, 7:30-8:30 p.m., Conference Center, *Myths and Truths About Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder*, Scott L. Andersen, LCSW and Andy Andersen

Saturday, 21st- Mac Frampton Concert, 8 p.m., Conference, free

Tuesday, 31st- Annual New Year's Eve Dance, 8 p.m. - 1 a.m., Conference Center

## And now, a few words from The Big Book . . .

1) *Amends:*

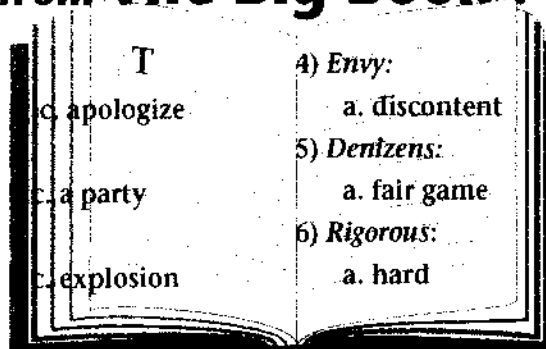
- a. reparation
- b. be sorry

2) *Malady:*

- a. a disease
- b. confusion

3) *Oblivion:*

- a. small pieces
- b. forgotten



4) *Envy:*

- a. discontent

5) *Denizens:*

- a. fair game

6) *Rigorous:*

- a. hard

- b. calm

- b. fabrics

- b. severe

- c. angry

- c. residents

- c. consistent

ANSWERS ARE ON PAGE 5

### New support group formed

Step-by-Step, a Christ-centered 12 Step Recovery Support Group, meets on Friday evenings, 8 p.m., at Ridgeview Institute in the Professional Building North auditorium.

For more information, call 770-923-5037 or 770-443-9213.

# Holiday Happenings

## HALLOWEEN DANCE

*Saturday, October 26th - 8 p.m. to midnight - Conference Center*

Costumes are encouraged, but not required for the Third Annual Halloween Dance. Prizes will be awarded for the best costume in adult and child categories. Yes, children are welcome. Lots of great food and wicked decorations. Alumnus Dave M. will serve as DJ and will spin the best dance songs of the '60's, '70's, '80's and '90's. *Admission is \$5.*



## GRATITUDE & EATIN' MEETING

*Sunday, November 24th - 5:30 p.m. - Conference Center*

A tradition since 1989, the annual Gratitude & Eatin' Meeting attracts alumni, patients, staff and families to this sumptuous Thanksgiving buffet. The Ridgeview cafeteria supplies the turkey, ham, and stuffing, while the alumni are asked to bring a seasonal side dish or dessert. Following the feast will be the annual 12-Step Gratitude Meeting at approximately 7 p.m. All are invited to attend and share, and grateful people stay and help clean up afterwards. *No admission charge.*



## CHRISTMAS CONCERT WITH MAC FRAMPTON

*Saturday, December 21 - 8 p.m. - Conference Center*

Alumni, patients, staff and their families attend this annual event that originated as a Christmas party on Cottage B at Ridgeview in 1989 when alumni brought desserts and snacks, talked with patients, and led a Christmas carol sing-along. In 1991 re-to play the untuned, beat up piano on talented musician. A new tradition agreed to give a benefit concert at secured. Chuck S. rented a concert Conference Center. *Admission is free.*



renowned concert pianist Mac Frampton agreed the cottage, and all were spellbound by this began a year later when Mac generously Christmastime if a decent piano could be grand, and the party was moved to the but closed to the public.

## NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY AND DANCE

*Tuesday, December 31 - 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. - Conference Center*

This annual event has gained a widespread reputation as the best sober celebration anywhere in or around Metro Atlanta on New Year's Eve. Glittering, lavish decorations and a delicious, generous buffet are complemented with music by DJ Dave. Started as a catered party given for alumni by Ridgeview, the alumni got involved in the production, and it has evolved to its present magnitude. It's a grand finale and elegant adieu to another year in recovery. This will be the sixth New Year's Eve Dance at Ridgeview. *Admission is \$5.*



# Alumni Focus: Stories and Comments

*In this issue of The View, we are focusing on the alumni themselves and their feelings about their participation in the Ridgeview Alumni Association and how important it is to their continued sobriety.*

## I came lonely and broken

I came to the group as a lonely, broken person, having no idea how to live my life or to deal with people. The way that I had run my life to that point landed me in a mental institution. My prospect on the rest of my life was not too bright. No drinking and no drugging! There was just no way to do this and have a fun and enjoyable life. There was no concept of service for myself or others. How could helping others help me? Having been told that I should join the Alumni Association, I showed up at my first meeting. What a madhouse! There was no way that this group of people could do anything for me. Most of the meeting was spent cross-talking and laughing. Amazingly, they did seem to get things done. One of the things being planned was a weekend retreat to the lake. I was asked to come, me a fresh in-recovery-addict.

Having nothing better to do, I went to the lake with these people. I spent most of my time by myself isolating. During the time that I did let myself open up to others many things did happen. I was accepted in conversation, boat rides, meals, and games. On one evening we held a campfire AA meeting. The meeting was on gratitude. As I sat there and listened to people talk about the gratitude that they had in their lives, I could relate to only one aspect of gratitude: I wasn't dead. But was still not sure if this AA stuff of no drinking and drugging was for me.

After the lake weekend was over I came to the realization that I had spent almost an entire weekend with a big group of people who were not stoned or drunk. And they had fun! Incredible! I even enjoyed myself and surroundings when I allowed myself to be open with them.

Attending the Alumni Steering Committee meetings became a normal thing for me, as well as were some of the other meetings and activities sponsored on the Ridgeview campus. During this transition period, I began making friends among the alumni. I learned from them that they could face the problems of life head on without all the anxiety, chaos and turmoil that went along with drinking and drugging.

Early on, I didn't get involved in too many service projects. I was just trying to get what I needed to stay alive.

But I soon volunteered to go to a homeless shelter with some fellow alums and serve dinner. Since I had been out of work for several months with nothing else to do, I decided to take part. After all, it might be good to get to know these places because I might end up there if my situation didn't change soon. It was an amazing experience! Seeing people who had no home or belongings, serving them dinner and getting a very heartfelt "thank you" helped change the way I thought and felt. I felt more alive than I had in months. I felt happy and content. My problems, which had seemed so overwhelming and traumatic, now didn't seem nearly as hopeless. All this just from helping someone else?

With this new attitude I started chairing meetings on the cottages for the next year. During this time I had many ups and downs, but I was never down and out. Everything that needed to happen for me seemed to happen at the right time. I continued to grow through the program and with my contacts among the Alumni. Life seemed to throw curve balls at me at times, but I made it through with a lot of love and support from others. I had become loved by those in the Alumni and respected by those in the "normal world." This was amazing!

During the next year I joined the entertainment sub-committee and was involved in many functions. All of the activities involved me in acting in service with the recovery community. We strived to give our fellow recovering addicts and alcoholics a safe place to go and have fun. While doing this my life continued to move forward and my life kept getting better and happier. I had some of the hardest lessons during this period, but every one of them added to my life. Some of the lessons were hard and hurtful, but some were also fun and wonderful. All contributed to who I am today. Much of what was hard was made easier by my association with the Ridgeview alumni. We shared happiness among ourselves and others.

So today, my program of recovery is multi-faceted: my AA/NA programs, aftercare at Ridgeview, and my involvement with the Alumni Association. But it all began to come together when I allowed some very special people to love me. It was then that I began to love myself and others.

*Love and service,  
Paul S. Liistro, Jr.*

***"After the lake weekend was over I came to the realization that I had spent almost an entire weekend with a big group of people who were not stoned or drunk. And they had fun! Incredible! I even enjoyed myself and surroundings when I allowed myself to be open with them."***

# Alumni Focus: What Other Alumni say

For about two months, I've been chairing the Monday night DRA meeting on Cottage C that the Alumni Association sponsors. This particular meeting has become my favorite meeting. The benefits I've received from it are amazing. Most of the people attending the meeting are newcomers, so it helps me stay in the basics with my own recovery. I have really begun to feel that I am helping people by chairing this meeting. From week to week I get to see how the process of recovery is saving lives. God has really been doing some wonderful work on Monday nights on Cottage C.

Steve Hrisak

There are many tools for staying clean and sober and living a happy life both internally as well as externally. A big factor in my sobriety is the Ridgeview Alumni Association and after-care program.

Reading the Big Book, going to meetings, working The Steps, and talking with my sponsor give me the knowledge and understanding of recovery I need to grow internally.

My participation in the alumni activities puts me where I need to be in external growth of putting into action the giving that is needed to keep my sobriety. I have found out that the more I give, the more I get in strength and hope for a clean and happy life.

One of the many functions of the Alumni is the Buddy Social where alumni go to Cottage B and share with new patients the effects of what drugs and alcohol has had on our lives and where we are now. Many of these people have taken the First Step without even knowing it. Their realization of the powerlessness they have with their addiction opens the door to recovery.

The hope and courage I feel seeing these people go through treatment and grow reminds me of where I came

from and where I'm at now. I'm very thankful for the Alumni Association and for all that it does for others and for me.

Jamie

The Alumni Association has given me a home base. It's given me people to grow with, to respect, and to share with. I'm even marrying a fellow alumnus.

Mary Jean

I frankly don't know where I would be without the Alumni Association. Through my participation in its many activities I have been able to stay close to the many dear friends that I made in treatment, and it has also enabled me to make many more new friends during the past four years. We laugh together, play together, cry together, and share together. It's a major foundation of my continued recovery in so many different ways... the comraderie, the service to others, and the constant opportunities when working with those new in recovery to remind myself of what I used to be like, where I was, and where I am now. AA meetings, after care, and alumni activities and participation—it's a combination that my disease has yet to be able to defeat.

Dan Minish

## ANSWERS TO BIG BOOK . . . from page 2

- 11 a. Reparation or payment made as satisfaction for insult or injury; pages 8-59-69-76-84
- 21 a. A disease, disorder or ailment; pages 23-64-92-138-139
- 31 b. The state or condition of being completely forgotten; pages 6-19-151
- 41 a. A feeling of discontent and resentment; page 145
- 51 c. An inhabitant or resident; page 151
- 61 b. Acting with rigidity and severe

## Ridgeview programming

Continued from page 1

try to take different approaches in its treatment programs. This particular change at Ridgeview is something that we have been working on for the past three or four months," Evans said.

"Basically, we don't want to shortchange the individual who checks in late in the week. They deserve the same attention as those who come in early in the week. Now weekends are just like any other treatment day," she said.

## The View

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for the  
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Published by the  
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Steering Committee

## Membership in the Ridgeview Alumni Association

Membership in the Ridgeview Alumni Association is open to any individual who has gone through treatment at Ridgeview Institute. A steering committee, which is comprised of all active alumni, meets each Thursday from 5:45 to 6:15 p.m. in Rooms 3-4 of the Ridgeview Conference Center.

The Steering Committee is comprised of three subcommittees: Meetings and Patient Relations, Entertainment, and Newsletter. The subcommittees meet the second Thursday of each month.

When newcomers attend their first Steering Committee meeting we tell them about the sub-committees and ask them to plug into the one of their choice and become actively involved, explained alumni advisor Sam Anders.

Although the subcommittee members form the planning leadership of that group when it comes to putting on events and activities all the alumni get involved as far as manpower and implementation, he explained.

## Annual Alumni Association activities

The following are annual activities and events sponsored by the Ridgeview Alumni Association on the Ridgeview campus for alumni, patients, staff and their friends and family.

**Spring Fling-** a day-long activity including swimming, softball, tennis, kids games, live music, food, and much more; usually held in May, free

**Halloween Dance-** a costume dance held the Saturday prior to Halloween, includes food and prizes, \$5 admission.

**Gratitude Dinner and Meeting-** a dinner held on the Sunday prior to Thanksgiving, Ridgeview provides meats and attendees bring seasonal covered dishes, dinner is followed by annual Gratitude Meeting, free.

**Mac Frampton Concert-** a special concert by nationally renowned pianist Mac Frampton, usually held in December, free.

**New Year's Eve Dance-** a lavishly decorated dance each year featuring music and food, has become the place to be on New Year's Eve for the Atlanta recovery community, \$5 admission.

**Other Dances-** periodic dances featuring a DJ and light refreshments

**Steering Committee Retreats-** held in the fall, winter, spring and summer each year at a retreat center on Lake Allatoona, a weekend of swimming, boating, skiing, and fellowship for members of the Steering Committee and their families.

**First Friday Speaker Meeting-** held first Friday of each month in the Ridgeview Conference Center, features recovery speakers primarily from Metro Atlanta and in-state.

**Major Speakers Meeting-** held once each year, features an AA speaker of national renown, also often includes a well-known Al-Anon speaker

**Sober Softball-** held on Sunday afternoons beginning at 1 p.m. during spring, summer and early fall, open to alumni and persons in the outpatient program and their families and friends.

**Flag Football-** a new Sunday afternoon activity starting this fall

**Newsletter-** published quarterly, includes news from Ridgeview and alumni activities, personal stories, recovery topics, etc.

## Weekly alumni sponsored meetings at Ridgeview

The Ridgeview Alumni Association sponsors 10 meetings on the Ridgeview campus each week. Alumni serve as chairpeople of the meetings, as well as serve as or arrange for speakers. The following is a list of the weekly meetings:

### Sunday

Cottage D 11 a.m. 12 Step  
Cottage B 8 p.m. Speaker

### Monday

Cottage C 8 p.m. Double Winners

### Wednesday

Cottage B 6:30 p.m. Beginners Meeting

### Thursday

Cottage B 8 p.m. Buddy Social  
Cottage C 8 p.m. Step Meeting DD

### Friday

Conf. Ctr. 8 p.m. Speaker\*  
Conf. Ctr. 6:30 p.m. Double Winners

### Saturday

Conf. Ctr. 6:30 p.m. 12 Step  
Conf. Ctr. 8 p.m. Relationships in Recovery\*\*

\* first Friday of each month

\*\* for couples and singles, relationship issues



## A Christmas Day letter to Jennifer

(and all those like her)

Dear Jennifer,

In this year marked by change, frightening sensations and circumstances, three things have kept me going-

Through all the outward fear, inward change and ravages of disease there has been- **Faith** faith that God was in me, with me and holding my hand. That He would not allow even an infinitesimal amount more to come upon me than I could take. Some days I doubted- yet never truly disbelieved. Each time I asked for power to perhaps gain the false promises of men, I was given weakness that I might feel the need of His divine presence and guidance.

There has been- **Hope** Hope in the future. In a better and brighter tomorrow. Hope that once again God, by His Holy Spirit, would come once more renew His vision in me--for truly without vision, the people perish. And at times I felt the gates of hell perilously close, there was always a glimmer of light at the end of that very long, very dark tunnel. In the end as I asked for strength that I might achieve, I was again made weak that I might humbly learn to obey.

There has been- **Love** Love that has been shared in countless ways through countless people. Love in the form of support- material, spiritual, physical, emotional. Love of family and love of friends- most of all, God's accepting, redeeming, all encompassing love as evidenced by His grace. As I searched and selfishly asked for all things that I might enjoy life, I was somehow given life that I might enjoy all things.

So my precious friend, on this special day in which we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child, I cannot give you a material gift, but just as the Magi brought Jesus three gifts, I share my three gifts of: **Faith, Hope, and Love.**


I pray that I can impart to you the desire to have the **Faith** to believe that His hand is gently caressing your life and that as long as you are willing to forgive yourself as He has and as long as you have learned from your mistakes and are willing to take your own life into your own hands and kiss it and go on from there, then He will show you and give you the serenity, the courage, and the wisdom you so richly deserve.

The **Hope** that tomorrow will be better than today- as today was better than yesterday. That next year will be better than this year- and the one following better than all the rest- always remembering to walk in His path, doing His will one precious day at a time.

The **Love**- unconditional acceptance of who you are and where you are- unhindered by chains of the past- forgetting what lies behind and enjoying the precious present. To offer a hand to hold, a smile to cheer, and a word to encourage those poor souls who are less fortunate.

I pray that you will accept my gifts in the Spirit and with the love in which they are wrapped. I truly do, thank God upon every remembrance of you. Today, I am among all men- because of your friendship- most richly blessed!

With His Love and All of Mine,  
Randy



## Ridgeview Alumni

*Continued from page 1*

said. "Eight years ago when we started this thing we saw a need to help insure that the bond formed among the patients in the cottages could continue to flourish outside of treatment. I think that original goal has been accomplished many times over."

More than one active Ridgeview alumnus has said that the Alumni Association and its many activities have played a major role in their continued program of recovery. The comments and stories of several Ridgeview alumni are included on pages 4-5 where they share what participation in the Alumni Association means to them.



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