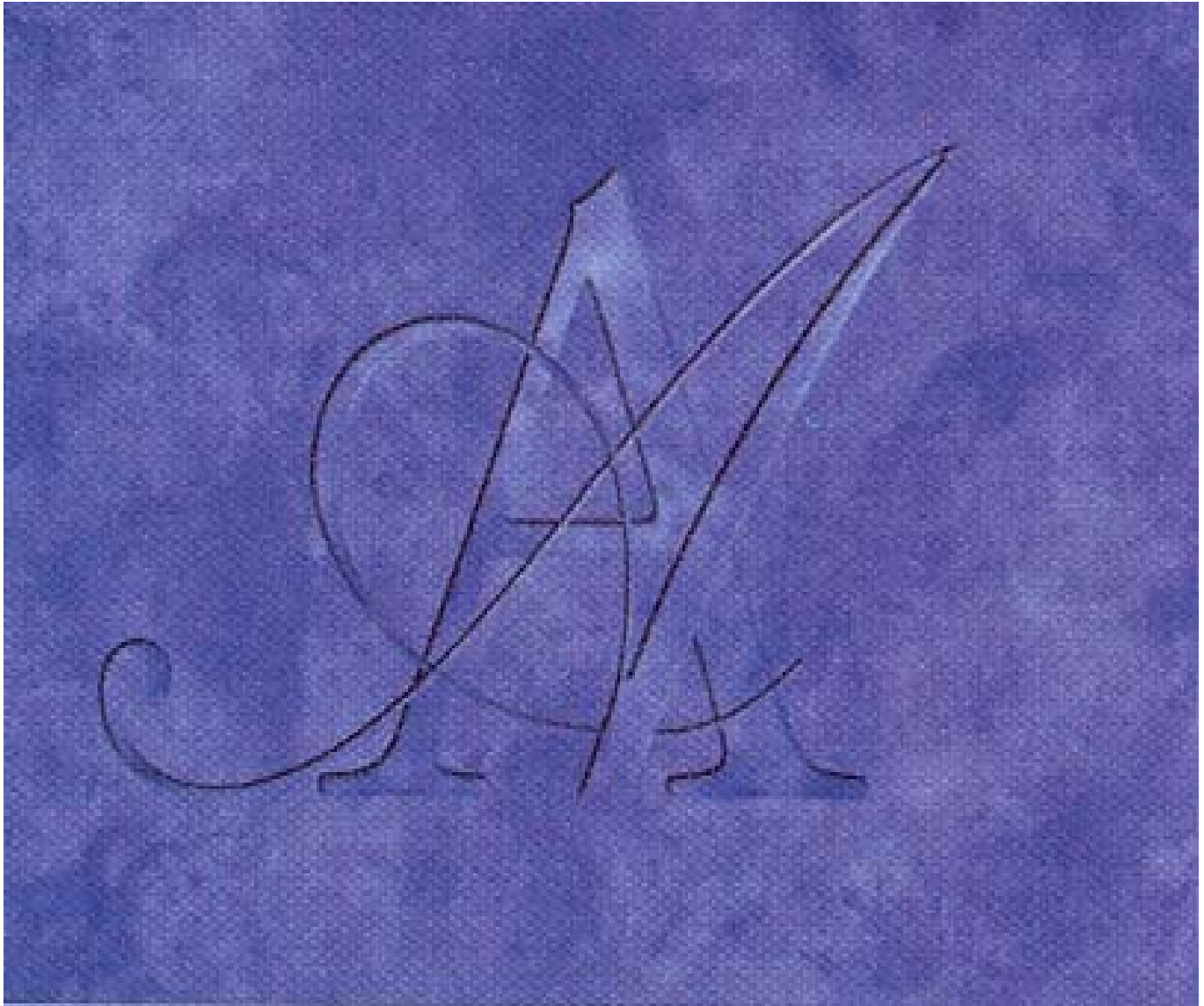


The View

Newsletter of the Ridgeview Alumni Association
Spring 2005

Volume XVII

Smyrna, GA



It Works – It Really Does

The Ridgeview Alumni Association
3995 South Cobb Drive – Smyrna, GA 30080

Spring Focus: It Works – It Really Does

Upcoming Events

Spring Fling Alumni Weekend June 3 – 5, 2005

Friday, June 3, 2005 – Speaker Meetings
8:00 pm – Sam Cole

Saturday, June 4, 2005 – Workshop
“POWER UP”

Your Life Partner Relationship
“Life Partners: How We Pick Them & How To Live With Them”
Wendy Palmer Patterson & Bob Patterson

Sunday, June 5, 2005
Recovering Professionals Group
9:00am – Noon

SPRING FLING
Noon to 6:00 pm
Picnic with alumni, families and staff.
Hot dogs, hamburgers, music, activities for kids, swimming, crafts, etc.
Poolside 12 Step meeting immediately following the activities.

Upcoming Events

Lake Outing and Picnic – Summer 2005
Fall Retreat – September 2005

Contact any Alumni Steering Committee Member for more information or join us every Thursday at 5:45pm at Pro North on the Ridgeview Campus.

American Mania: Stress Management When More is not Enough – September 10, 2005 – 10am to 12 noon (Free)
Featuring Charlie Cummins, LPC, Presenter

This presentation will present past and present research on the effects of stress and its contribution to physical and emotional illness. The mind-body connection in treating stress will emphasize techniques for time management and increased Social Interest. The cultivation of Compassion and Mindfulness will also be presented in addition to specific practices for development. Varied approaches to Meditation including specific practices for stress management will be discussed and taught as tools to help people adjust and manage their lives in a manic America. **PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED:**

www.ridgeviewinstitute.com or call (770)434-4568, ext 3001. Family members are welcome to attend as well.

This presentation will be videotaped for Mr. Cummins marketing purposes. All attendees will be asked to sign a release upon admission to the seminar.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association has moved into the 21st Century. This issue along with archival copies are available on our website at www.ridgeviewalumni.com. The Newsletter will be in an Adobe PDF format; our website will link to download the FREE Adobe reader, allowing you to read and print the Newsletter at your leisure.

If you would like to be added to our E-mail notification list when a new Newsletter is placed on the site, E-mail us at steering@bellsouth.net or contact us thru the Web site, please put "newsletter" in the subject line.

Thank you to all those who submitted articles for this edition of the Newsletter; if we have learned anything in recovery it is that *We cannot keep what we have if we do not give it away!*

EDITORS:

Marcus B.

Jane B.

Dawn B.

Nancy S.

Spring Focus: It Works – It Really Does

"The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good."

Alcoholics Anonymous p.60

TOOL BOXES FROM GOD

Submitted by: Linda M.

I have always been a resourceful, creative and quite stubborn female! At the age of two I displayed this trait of having things "my way" when I refused to wear what my mother picked out for me. She said, "You had a mind of your own, even then," as if there was something wrong with that! Then she would tell me, "Don't say another word!" What did I do? I said "OKAY!", and back and forth we would go until she finally gave up! I don't know why I liked to aggravate her. Anyway, this was me - I wanted to do things MY WAY.

Growing up in an Irish Catholic NY suburb in the mid 1950's middle class America was ideal. Many neighbors, friends, family picnics, horseshoe games, music, food and much to drink. Shaffer beer for the men, Highballs (Rye & Ginger Ale), and Tom Collins for the ladies. Dad drank, he liked his beer, and he was a happy go lucky kind of guy, always worked, I have no memories of his voice being raised, and I don't believe he was a drunk, although we did/do have other family members who were/are. I remember riding in the car with my little brother coming from a party at my aunt's house, Dad was driving, we were singing old Mitch Miller songs and Mom was telling Dad "be careful, you had too many beers", or something like that. I thought she was a party pooper! I was around 8 or 9 years old, I thought we were having a great time!

Well in May of 1963 our family's little perfect world was changed forever. My dad had a massive heart attack at work; he was only 41 years young. I was 10 and my brother was 7 and Mom in her 30's. We went from the typical family to: "Oh, that poor family, I feel so sorry for them." People looked and acted towards us in a totally different way. Mom was left with 2 little Rat Bast__d's! (as I like to say to her now), and she did the best she could, with what she had! (as she likes to say). One of my best memories is of kissing my Dad goodnight and smelling the wonderful scent of beer! Family, neighbors and friends rallied round and helped out watching the 2 little "RB's" but eventually we had to go on and off we went back to school. Even there, things were different, kids used to look at me differently

and they could not imagine not having a daddy. I was different, people felt sorry for me. It was Catholic school for my brother and me, 12 years of it! God fearing faith memorized from books, I don't recall any spirituality or gratefulness taught, although I do remember feeling very "holy" when attending a High Mass in Latin and all that incense and stuff. Repent those sins in confession; say a million Hail Mary's and Our Fathers and God will keep you out of hell for talking back to your mom!

My closest feeling to God was when my Mom told me that the men in my Dad's office had called a priest to administer the Last Rites to Dad, assuming he was Catholic because of my Communion picture that was in his wallet. Mom said I told her, "Don't worry Mom, Daddy is in heaven now, and God will take care of him." ***So you see I was using the tools given to me by God through my faith—this was my first TOOL BOX from GOD.***

Life went on and the exciting teen years hit and I forgot all about my Tool Box from God. I went to church and did my religion homework, but my faith was replaced by the music of the 60's, friends, boys and the telephone! I believe my first real drink was when I was 12 or 13 years old. I had these big pink fluffy slippers on and came flying down the stairs (literally) most likely the phone was ringing! I must have looked comical with the huge pink curlers in my hair, feet up in the air and I just laid there, couldn't catch my breath! Mom got hysterical and said the magic words, "Calm down you are alright—HERE HAVE THIS—it was either Blackberry Brandy or Rock & Rye! I don't remember the taste but I sure did remember those words and the band-aid that it would become to calm me down for many years to come. Now, I am not blaming my mother for my alcoholism—although it was as good as any for an excuse! She also became a trigger for me in my later heavy drinking years as well as the death of my Dad and even better excuse—it was poor little ole me!

Mom got remarried when I was 15 to a wonderful man that became our father. They went on their honeymoon and I had a sleepover party with my friends—what did we do?—we drank, someone got sick—someone passed out, someone was crying, "My friend is dead" it was hysterical. We still laugh and talk about it to this day—we even have pictures! My girlfriends and I used to steal liquor from our parents and pour it in shampoo bottles and meet on the corner and mix it all together, drink and sing songs of the 60's - it was a blast!

Got married at 19 (my big ambition), gave birth to my son at 22—life and love were not what I expected, I was very unhappy. Occasionally my husband and I would drink at a party but few and far between. Went for counseling on a Catholic Marriage Encounter weekend

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and there we found out this was not going to work. Called Mom and she suggested I go visit this psychiatrist - so off I went. This 'so called' doctor told me in no uncertain terms that—"You made your bed lady, now lie in it and who do you think you are someone special?" he also said something else that I am too embarrassed to write. This was in 1975. He gave me a prescription for Valium and told me to take it. I did, for maybe 2 days then one morning I was feeding my son breakfast and looked at his sweet face in the highchair and said to myself—we are not going to live like this forever! I WILL NOT MAKE THIS BED ANYMORE—and certainly NOT LIE IN IT! I flushed them down the toilet! I was so mature at 23, what happened? Keep reading and I will tell you.

My son and I moved back with Mom and my stepfather, worked two jobs, started dating to make up for the years that I was a good Catholic girl. Got divorced after many arguments and grief. Drank with friends, especially after my waitressing job, met the love of my life an older man, who was married and had a child at the time. This affair was stormy, romantic and tumultuous. More complications, much grief and much, much, much more drinking. I was 27 and started drinking in the a.m. I lost all my morals and self confidence—I even was named the notorious Linda _____ in his divorce papers! We lived together and drank, loved and fought. Married in 1986 – I tried to quit drinking by myself, by reading self-help books, even counseling, I was not honest with any of the counselors I spoke with. I think I quit drinking for a day or two but someone or something made me drink—I had a plethora of excuses that possessed me to take that drink and try to escape the hell I had created for myself. I hated myself and my son hated me too. Even the picture he drew of me with a drink in my hand and a cigarette in my mouth with the caption, "I am Linda and I am an Alcoholic did not motivate me to stop! I was pathetic!

My husband and I moved to Georgia in 1994. My son stayed in NY with Mom. I took my troubles with me and of course they only got worse. Now I had even more excuses to feel sorry for myself. My family and friends were up north and I was here in Georgia with no one except my brother and his girlfriend, who had there own problems. I thought the best thing about Georgia was that I could buy wine in the grocery store! And it came in 5 gallon boxes with this cute little spout, and I didn't have to put bottles in the trash, I could just stomp on the boxes and hide them with the regular garbage! Plus I didn't have to be a regular at a liquor store I could buy it along with my groceries—how wonderful! I would drink in the mornings especially on Saturday, hide a glass in the laundry closet, hide one in my dresser draw—my husband would go out and do errands early

and by the time he got back, say mid-morning I was either passed out in bed or rip roaring drunk! Great Life—Great Wife. I used to drink and dial, write notes that I could not read back, call in sick at work to just stay home and drink—the whole nine yards of alcoholism.

Here is the best part—one day at work in 1999 my brother called me to tell me he was going into rehab—I did not know what to say or do—I felt sorry for him — of course I knew he had a problem—and I also knew I had one too! What would happen—I was so sad, he was my little brother and I was supposed to be more mature! Well...phone calls flew across the line to NY, Mom was frantic, I was even more drunk if you can imagine that... My brother was in Ridgeview and I think I sent cards etc. can't really remember...it's all a blur—but I do remember that he was coming home for a visit on Valentine's Day weekend, I sent a goody basket and he called me—this was the first time I spoke with him since he went to rehab — naturally I was ossified and do not recall the conversation. A couple of days later he asked if I would go the Family Workshop at Ridgeview to learn about *his* disease and also for support. I said yes, although I was very apprehensive and I think I knew my days of drinking were numbered. So, when the day came I was naturally hung over met him and drove up to Ridgeview. This is where I learned of the disease of alcoholism, about it being genetic and that it was a physical craving and a mental obsession. I was surrounded by people I did not know—but at the same time I knew them very well. I hated myself and I would look into the mirror and say to myself—Linda you are a mess! These people helped my brother—he is one of them—and so am I. I was no longer different and there was a solution—this is what I had been searching for all my life—to have a common bond with people who were just like me. I went home that first day after the workshop and had 2 glasses of wine. The 2nd day I went home and had one glass of wine. I met a wonderful woman who is my soul sister, (you know who you are "sweet thing") who was also there to help her brother, she inspired me and gave me courage. The third day I admitted I was an alcoholic too, at the podium at Ridgeview after my brother gave me a chip for participating in the family workshop. I went home and threw out every bit of alcohol that was in my house. Thank you Ridgeview for having the Family Workshop—since we know that this disease is genetically linked—not only does the workshops work for the benefit of the patient but can create miracles and save the lives of their loved ones—by the knowledge of the disease alone—you have saved my brother's life and mine!

I went to 90 meetings in 90 days—made the program of Alcoholics Anonymous the top priority of my life, my husband started going to ala-non and together

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we had a program— it saved my marriage - I had direction—I was not alone—I had a spiritual program and a God of my understanding—A higher power— a **NEW TOOLBOX FROM GOD!** In it is the tools of the program, don't drink, go to meetings, have a sponsor, work the steps, action, and all those wonderful corny sayings—Easy Does It! One Day At A Time. The best thing for me is the serenity prayer, *God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.* **Courage to change** is my favorite—what a concept—so simple—so profound! By working the steps, I was able to change the course of my marriage, I was able to forgive myself and others and that is a miracle. God has been good—His will not mine has really been a life changing event for me—since I've been sober these 6 years now—God has blessed me in many ways, I have a loving sober brother, a son who loves and respects me, a mother and stepfather who are grateful, a home, a beautiful serenity garden thanks to my husband, a dog named Faith and many friends in and out of the program and so much more.

God has also tested me and given me strength and the courage to accept his will. I had to accept the fact that my mom had breast cancer 2 years ago and I was able to spend 2 weeks with her and help her through it sober, to form a bond with her and respect her for being so strong. I had to accept the fact that my husband was diagnosed last year with lung cancer and take each day with him for the 10 months God gave him and to let him go back with God six months ago and meet up with my Dad so they could watch over me together. I had to accept the fact that my company downsized and let me go three months ago. Now, don't you think these things are the perfect excuse for me to drink? They would have been—not now and hopefully not ever for me again. I do not know what God has in store for me in the future. I just try to take it one day at a time. I am sad, and mad, scared and anxious at times, but it's only moments, I have gratitude and faith in the God of my understanding now. This wonderful program of AA has certainly worked for me; as long as I work it together we can overcome all of our worst fears.

What will happen over this next year in my life? I don't know... all I know is that I never read the ending of a book—that would ruin it for me—I take one chapter at a time — so I try to look at my life like that, I am not the author, I am the character who can only change the things I can— I am not alone—God has many more chapters for me to appear in and I always carry my **TOOL BOX FROM GOD.**

IT WORKS!

Submitted by: Carrie L.

I only knew a few things about AA before I came into the program. I knew that I did not want to go to AA. I also knew that if I went to AA that I would have to stop drinking. Over the past few years of my drinking, I knew that I drank differently from most people. I would often tell people that I was not an alcoholic because I did not go to the meetings. I was court ordered to go to AA in 1999. I never went and no one asked me about it. I was court ordered again in 2001. I went to one meeting. I drank before the meeting so that I would be able to talk with people. I did not talk much in during that meeting. As I was leaving, an older gentleman gave me a pamphlet entitled, "Do you think you're different?" I went home and looked through the table of contents. It had stories from blacks, gays, elderly people, atheists, Native Americans, teenagers, members of the clergy, Jewish people, movie stars, agnostics, low bottom and high bottom drunks. I had no idea what an agnostic, a low bottom or a high bottom drunk was but, I knew that I was different. I put the pamphlet in a box (it was not seen again until I had been sober for about a year.). I had made a decision that AA was not for me.

I finally found what I hope to be my bottom on March 4, 2003. After a long night of celebrating March 3, 2003 (yep, a made up holiday 03/03/03; it will not happen again for 1000 years), I woke up and realized that I was not going to grow out of my drinking behavior. That was the first day that I had been late to work due to drinking. I went to work and told my boss that I wanted to go to rehab. I had decided on rehab because I thought that it would be like a Jenny Craig program. I really thought that they would teach me how to drink moderately. Once I got to Ridgeview, I was in for a big surprise. Once I got into Cottage C (detox), I was taken to an AA meeting. I proceeded to tell you people that you would drink if you had my problems too. I let you know that I was different and that this was not going to work for me. Someone told me to shut up and listen. And that is what I did. I listened until I believed in the process. I eventually got a sponsor, a Higher Power and I worked the steps. Today, I am amazed at the quality of life that I have. I am amazed to have a quality of life. I am free. I can do what ever I choose to do because today I have a choice. I don't know how it works or why it works. But, it works it really does.

IT WORKS – IT REALLY DOES

Submitted by: Sean Cleary

"It works. It really does." Well, what does?
Alcoholics Anonymous? The fact that I can stay away

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from a drink one day at a time? Yeah, but there's so much more! What works is a design for living which is totally different from the way I was used to operating when I first crawled through the doors of AA. The principles I have been taught in this program are slowly and a lot of times reluctantly being incorporated into my life. That is what works, a new way to live! I am finally becoming comfortable in my own skin.

When I discovered alcohol at the ripe old age of 23, it immediately became my solution to living life. Happiness came in a bottle. It worked for a long time. Whenever I was miserable, I would just pour a drink. The problem was that I was miserable wherever I went. The ease and comfort that immediately follows a drink was exactly what I was searching for. I thought I was cheating at life because I could always drink to make my troubles go away. The normal person had to deal with their problems like, well, a normal person. They seemed to be able to handle things better than me; that's why I needed an edge, so I could stay even with you.

Eventually, I crossed that invisible line we hear about so often. I had to have a drink every day, every minute. I couldn't go 30 feet from the house without my Quik Trip mug filled with somethin'-somethin'. My freedom to live a normal life was gone. Alcohol controlled all my decisions. My parents didn't bring me up to live this way. What happened to my values? What had I become? How was it all going to end?

Out of desperation, I came into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous looking for help. You told me you had a solution but I didn't believe you. I was different and you people just didn't understand someone like me. Maybe if I just sat in at a few meetings, I would understand the gist of this thing and then be able to do it on my own without having to bother anyone. Somehow, I knew that line of thinking was wrong. If I did things your way (since you were already sober) instead of my way, I might have a chance.

How could I possibly have hoped to stop drinking if I didn't change? The answer was that I couldn't. However, in order for me to change, I had to become willing and that required me to be in a lot of pain. Pain is a wonderful motivator. The desperation to change my life was so great that I was even willing to "do those stupid steps".

Fast forward about 100 years or so. The program of Alcoholics Anonymous has transformed me into a new person. My story is an example of the dead coming back to life. Today I can look someone in the eye and be honest. All the fears that controlled my life have started to melt away. I have a peace and serenity inside that comes from being free and sober. The freedom I have today because I am not chained to alcohol anymore, keeps me so very grateful.

That is what works – the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Not just some of it but all of it. And I don't know which piece of the program is going to work for me today. All I know is, you took a lush like me out of the gutter and transformed me into a useful human being. You taught me how to try to live on a spiritual plane. I have found a new way of living that I'm comfortable with. By applying these principles into all my affairs, my life works. It really does!

PERSONAL CRISIS AND THE PROGRAM

Submitted by: John W.

As Valentine's Day 2005 approached, I was working on a seven year pink cloud.

My life was better than it had ever been and kept getting better every day. I had recently graduated from technical college with two computer programming degrees, was very excited about starting a new career doing what had been play for me for many years, my health was better than it had been in years, I had just become the grandfather of twin girls, and I was very much in love with my wife, my best friend, my soul mate; very much in love.

That's why I thought it was strange that for the first time in 24 years she had not even mentioned Valentine's Day to me. I had fixed a special dinner, put flowers on the table and written a wonderfully romantic note to her.

But she barely noted it that night.

A few days later on a Sunday night after a rather difficult weekend together, She said "I guess you are wondering what is going on, what with no Valentine's Day and the way I've been acting"?

Immediately, I knew I was going to hear something that was going to upset me. What I didn't know was what her next words were going to do to me and the life I had come to love so much.

"I want out of this marriage, John".

I've often heard people say "My blood ran cold". I know now, all too well, just what those words mean. A cold, painful chill shocked my entire being, racing to my heart, choking off my breath.

I couldn't believe what I was hearing as she went on say how she had not loved me for a long time and that although I had become a wonderful person in sobriety, a person I should be proud of, she can never love that person.

Each word brought a shock more painful than the one before.

She went on to say that she needed to move on, to find someone she could love and someone about whom she could feel passion.

Spring Focus: It Works – It Really Does

I was in an emotional free fall. Twenty four years of love, happiness and joy with the love of my life was being ripped from my very existence.

The horrible notion that my life was over flooded my mind, pushing all reasonable thought aside. It was then, for the first time in my sobriety, I began to *really* test how this program works.

It was not more than 15 minutes into this nightmarish conversation that my six and a half years of AA training began to take over.

I remember closing my eyes and forcing myself to ask, "What does the program tell me to do in situations like this"?

The answer came to me immediately. "Call for help".

It works. It really does.

Incredibly, because there is an instant plan waiting just for my crisis, I started to calm down. I had not even heard a friendly voice yet but I was beginning to slow the emotional free fall.

I got an answering machine with the first call.

I got Eddie the second call.

Somehow, between the sobs, I managed to tell him what had happened.

Moments later I was in my car, leaving the coldness and pain, heading for the warmth and comfort of his support, love and wisdom. For the next three weeks, he never let me get far from that wonderful umbrella of love and care.

After just a few minutes with Eddie, I began to feel the healing start. All of the wounds were not even open yet, but being with another alcoholic at the height of that personal crisis, immediately started the healing process. It was not yet an hour after I heard those horrible, life altering words, and I was already beginning to heal. The process had begun because I had enough presence of mind in the wake of that crisis to look to the program for what to do next; the next right thing.

It works. It really does.

Needless to say, I did not sleep that night. I've since found that the night is still not my friend, but it's getting better.

As I lay awake tossing alone in the big bed, all the wisdom that had been shared in the years of AA meetings, came into my consciousness.

Here I was now, after many years of me being the alcoholic *offering* the love, comfort, support and fellowship, suddenly thrust onto the other side of the program. I was now to be the beneficiary of "How It Works when the crisis is yours".

In the days that followed it became dramatically clear that the benefits I had enjoyed when offering my experience, strength and hope, paled in comparison to those I was receiving when the adversity was mine.

I have to wonder how anyone gets through something like this without the program and fellowship.

From the moment my wife first spoke those impossible words, up until this moment, I have never once considered drinking. It's quite the opposite, I'm extremely grateful that I have all of sobriety's tools to get me to the other side of this crisis.

The program's wisdom continued as my friends reminded me that I can not let resentment overtake me. The program tells us that resentment is the number one cause of relapse, and I certainly had opportunities to build resentments.

As a matter of fact, when I let myself feel anger and resentment toward her, I get physically sick. I have to force my mind to expel the resentment to get relief.

I'm coming to realize now just how much damage I must have caused when I was an active alcoholic. Apparently, neither she nor I, Alanon nor AA had been able to repair that damage.

Further, thinking about her situation, I can't imagine living with someone without loving them. It must have been horrible for her. I, too, would have wanted to get out of the marriage. I have told her that. I'm hoping that's one way of forgiving her and making amends, something the program tells me that I must do now in order to stay sober.

With the help of the wisdom of the fellowship I am strengthening my sincere hope that she will be able to find the happiness and joy she had been seeking apart from me.

It's amazing, when I honestly express that to her and others, I feel a lightness around my heart, a feeling totally opposite from that when I nurture resentment and anger toward her.

It didn't take a psychiatrist to convince me which of the two feelings was better for me. It's what the program has been telling me from the first day.

It works. It really does.

I also spent a lot of time making certain that I did nothing to make the situation any worse than it was.

I had no trouble at all knowing that a drink would only increase the pain exponentially, but there were certainly a lot of other things I could have done to make matters worse.

I recalled instances when other men in this situation would immediately try to find something to provide instant relief from the pain; maybe a singles cruise, a wild trip to Las Vegas, an affair with another man's wife; anything to try to numb the pain of the reality of what had happened to them.

With the help of all you I was able to carefully and reasonably consider what I should and would do next.

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My wife announced that she was going to do something in two weeks that I knew would be just too painful and dangerous for me to tolerate at our home alone. I had to leave before then.

For a number of years I have been planning to relocate closer to my children and grandchildren in the northeast, but I had not been doing anything to get me there. My plan, of course, was to have my wife with me. That was my plan, obviously, not my Higher Power's plan.

This now appears to be a classic example of my Higher Power doing for me what I would not do for myself. Considering all the circumstances, I had no other choice but to go "home".

I called my sister and asked if I could come to stay with her until this crisis was resolved. She has welcomed me into her home and offered much love and comfort.

My daughter and grandchildren have welcomed me with more love and support, and I am holding those precious twin girls in my arms now. If there was any doubt that I'm not where I'm supposed to be, the feeling I get when holding those babies erases it completely.

Another important lesson from the program is the need to stay in the present, stay in the moment.

I found that the pain was most severe when my mind and heart would look backward to all those wonderful years together with my wife. I suppose some of it was "euphoric recall", but it hurt all the same. Most all of the pain came when looking backward.

When I looked to the future there was very little pain, but quite a bit of fear. The program teaches to us identify fear, look it in the face, know it for what it is.

I was able to determine that my fear in this situation was based in the unknown. Would I ever find someone to love me again? Would I be alone for the rest of my life? Would I ever be able to release that person who was the love of my life, totally letting her go and not holding on to any false hope that she would change her mind and come back?

Would I ever be able to find a job in the Northeast, or be able to buy another house?

The list of fears seemed endless.

But as the days progressed I realized that it was easier for me to process the *fear* of the future than it was to deal with the *hurt* of looking backward.

Once again, it did not take a psychiatrist, just a sponsor, to convince me that I should do more looking forward than backward.

This is when I had the opportunity to practice yet another principle of the program...faith.

I am so very grateful that my faith in a Higher Power, which has come to me only as a result of this program, is carrying me through the fear, actually turning

the fear of the future into excitement and optimism about the future. That alone is a profound miracle.

It works. It really does.

Throughout this entire process one other principle of the program has been made dramatically clear. That is the benefit of discussing all of my feelings and emotions openly and honestly with those I trust in the fellowship.

Whenever I feel that Tsunami of sadness and hurt wash over me, I quickly reach out to someone who will listen to what I am feeling, what I am thinking, and I get the immediate benefit of the wisdom of this program as it is freely given by another alcoholic.

One hour of open, honest dialogue with an AA friend lifts my spirits and mood for another eight hours. It never failed, and still works every day.

There is another on-going emotion that requires daily, if not hourly attention from me.

That is the tendency for me to want to hold on to her, control her and manipulate her back into my life. But I know from the program that I can not control her or any other person, place or thing.

I have to fight off the urge to try to turn back the clock, to make it all better, to wake up from the nightmare. I have to let her go. I have to continually ask my heart to release her.

The program tells me all of that will take time, and time takes time. But I believe I have accepted that now, accepted the fact that there is no going back. There is no way to determine what the future holds, but there is the assurance that the future will be different from the past.

And therein is found perhaps the most important principle that makes this program work for me.

Acceptance.

I am coming to accept the reality of this situation and to have the faith that whatever has happened and what will happen is in my best interest and that as long as I stay sober, work the principles of the program and continue to try to be a better person every day, my life will continue to improve every day.

I've learned from you that this fellowship is available anywhere in the world; that the AA friends you leave behind, are there to meet you at the next destination.

I have been welcomed here by a group of wonderful people who meet twice a day, seven days a week. They immediately accepted me into their family and surrounded me with the same love and support I left in Georgia.

I'm enjoying 90 meetings in 90 days again, working through the sad moments and celebrating the exciting moments.

Spring Focus: It Works – It Really Does

If there is ever any doubt in your mind that this program works, it really does, please remember my story and that of the millions of others who are reaping the miraculous benefits that our program provides.

Thanks for letting me share.

IT WORKS-IT REALLY DOES

Submitted by: Sheryl S.

Hello, I'm Sheryl and I'm an alcoholic. On August 18th, 1990 is the day I surrendered to my innermost self that I had a problem with drinking and I was an alcoholic.

I didn't have a clue what an impact these words would have on my life from this point on. I entered into Ridgeview to learn that what I was suffering with a disease called alcoholism. I stayed at Ridgeview for 28 days and upon leaving they handed me a spiritual tool kit of recovery and suggested that I pick up these tools if I wanted to stay sober "A Day at a Time".

The journey began with a single step. One of the first things I heard being read was How It Works. Someone in the meeting asked "Why does this program work?" An oldtimer answered, "The program works fine. So it's your job to work it and Just Do It."

When I walked through the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous I made a commitment to stay sober to go to any lengths. Also, I realized that I was given a precious gift of sobriety and not everyone is given this gift. At this point I had no idea what this would entail in regards to recovery or help others.

First I came to meetings where I would hear suggestions and have the same things repeated over and over again so it would get through this thick skull of mine. Find a sponsor who would help me work the steps and simplify things when this alcoholic wanted to complicate the steps. Take time to pray and meditate which meant inviting God in daily and being still to listen. Today I just love this time. Reading the Big Book if that means one paragraph a night. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.

I saved the Spiritual aspect of the program to talk about last even though it certain wasn't the last part in recovery. I too prayed that prayer not to many twenty-four hours ago with complete humility for God to please help me and without the God of my understanding I don't think it would be possible that I would be alive today.

I invited God back into my life and since that time my life has changed for the good. Today, I'm generally happy, joyous and free and due to Alcoholics Anonymous and the 12 Steps I do know a new happiness and a new freedom.

You good people told me when I walked through the doors of A.A. that you would love me until I could

learn to love myself and today the gift I received I'm able to love others in return. My soul has mended and my heart is healed all due to God and practicing these principles in all my affairs.

Has it been easy? No. There has been many times when the thought of a drink has come into my alcoholic mind. This has just been a thought. It is so noted in the Big Book that there will be a time that the only thing between you and the drink will be the God of your understand and I know this is a true fact. It has happened to me on several occasions. I'm grateful today that I prayed and didn't drink.

I had a nurse while I was in RVI once told me, "I don't care if your butt falls off, you pick it up and take it to a meeting. I still remember 14 years later and there are days I just pick myself up and take myself to a meeting.

My final words come from the Big Book, "Do not get Discouraged" and Keep Coming Back because It Works-It Really Does. You Must Work It. God Bless.

THE GIFT OF CHOICE

Submitted by: Chalise T.

I have made many mistakes and done everything wrong.

This does not mean that I am doomed or that I have to continue traveling this same road. I've been given the amazing gift of choice whether or not I can control my drinking, drugging, or my life.

I do have the choice to party while paying with all that is important to me or to hold on to everyone and everything that lights up my life.

And all this will cost me is my booze and drugs. They say that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results; so this time I choose my sanity.

Today's thought is:

The prayer of amends must be a way of life, not just a sad cry at the end of failure.

--Anonymous

FAITH VS CHARACTER DEFECTS

Submitted by: Stacey K.

Relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing had yet been done. C.S. Lewis

We often try to turn our will and our life over to the care of God, as we understand God, but we are not always successful. We are human: We change our mind. We talk ourselves out of our good resolutions. We

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forget. We fall back into old, destructive habits of mind and mood.

But all we have to do is make a decision. We don't have to do the actual turning over. We are, in fact, incapable of sustaining this action. But we can, very simply make the decision. Surprisingly, when we do, turning over our will often gets taken care of for us. We find that we are indeed enjoying what seems to be God's will for us. The secret lies in making the decision as often as needed. We can decide daily or even hourly. We can in fact, rely on God every time we need help.

This day and every day, I will decide to rely on God all over again.

The theme of last night's Cottage C meeting was the difficulty we have doing things that we don't want to (i.e. taking suggestions from the program, addressing character defects, making significant changes in the course of our everyday living - that may or may be directly linked to drugs and alcohol consumption.)

This topic was brought up by a person struggling with relapses. And the solution shared by people in recovery is that we must change or die, because the same person will drink again. Addressing our character defects is the only way to change, and it seems that the longer we stay sober the more important it is to work on this part of our program (steps 6 & 7). Without taking the appropriate action to have the willingness to change and allow God to remove these parts of our personality/behavior we are basically walking closer and closer to a relapse. In my life I have always gone for the least path of resistance, tried to find the easier, softer way. I guess I used to believe that I could use denial in my favor, "If I don't address it, maybe it will go away." AND "Look at all the other great stuff I'm doing!" But today I realize this way of thinking and ACTING doesn't work for me. If I am lazy in addressing the issues I find most difficult God is determined to bring me back to them and he will give me consequences to prove he is watching and waiting for me to become the person he would like to see me become.

A great example of this is how the character defects I am running away from keep me trapped from having the things in life that would truly give me freedom. By putting off the changes I need to make to truly surrender my life I am asking God to give me no better existence than the one the character Bill Murray plays in the movie "Groundhog Day".

So what is better, invite God into my life by taking a look at things I know are holding me back, the things I don't really want to change, because I feel semi-comfortable using them as my "outs" or better yet my excuses. Do I take a chance and stop making excuses?

Here's the other option, submit to a life of repeating half measures, holding on to self pity,

selfishness, laziness and denial because "I've seen the other team and they look bigger, stronger, brighter and better so I'll play it safe and let them have the trophy, I'll hand it over with no contest. I'd rather duck out quietly and save myself the impending pain, shame, and disappointment I know will result in me getting out there and giving it my best shot because I can see the future & I know I'll most probably lose the game, my self respect and the love and admiration of all the fans watching. It's simpler to hide with the other screw-ups and pretend I really never wanted to play anyway, pretend that I didn't have the dream, the vision of a life untarnished by the notion that my weaknesses are so bad that I'll do anything to keep them from appearing in the light of day. If I continue to hide from my possibilities by living another day where I only do the stuff I know I can do, because then I won't have to suffer the disappointment of failure, I am the biggest loser of all. Not only do I give up on myself and ultimately my sobriety, but I give up on God. Because only by surrendering my biggest fears to faith only if I take the action of not running from things that make me uncomfortable, seem difficult, or appear to take too much effort will I free myself from deciding the outcome of self-imposed failure.

If I continue to recycle my character defects because of my own fear, than I am quitting before I give myself a chance. I am playing God.

I am deciding that self pity, selfishness, laziness and denial are good enough reasons to hold me back from having the things in life I know I am meant to have, from having the happiness and freedom in life that God wants me to have. Because I am sober and have gained clarity, I can connect with the dreams and freedom that I once knew before I was jaded by the possibility of failure.

What a waste it would be to spend my life settling for my character defects rather than letting them go and allowing God the chance to fulfill my destiny. It seems so simple a choice to make when I realize that all I really need to do is let God see that I truly have faith in his power.

MY BEST CHRISTMAS YET

Submitted by: Luke W.

This past Christmas was quite different from years before. Newly sober, I spent the holidays in jail because I had to pay the consequences of my actions prior to getting sober last fall. It was the first holidays I spent away from my family.

The Christmas Spirit among my fellow inmates was a bit somber, but I tried to spread some holiday cheer the best I could. Of course the tangible decorations and sparkling lights were missing, but

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memories of Christmas' past kept me going. The material gifts wrapped up in beautiful paper and ribbons were gone, but it was okay because we all had more than we needed thanks to the Big Guy upstairs.

Everyone in the facility thought that Santa forgot about us, but he didn't. God handed over three gifts to St. Nick and his posse of flying reindeer to give to me. They were the gift of life, my health and that of my loved ones, and another sober day.

It definitely was a completely different Christmas this past year, but it has been one that I will never forget as long as I live. Thanks again for my special Christmas this year and for giving me the gift of a sober life for one more day.

REFLECTION FOR THE DAY

Someone once defined the ego as "the sum total of false ideas about myself." Persistent reworking of the Twelve Steps enables me to gradually strip away my false ideas about myself. This permits nearly imperceptible but steady growth in my understanding of the truth about myself. And this, in turn, leads to a growing understanding of God and other human beings. Do I strive for self-honesty, promptly admitting when I'm wrong?

TODAY I PRAY

God, teach me understanding; teach me to know truth when I meet it; teach me the importance of self-honesty, so that I may be able to say, sincerely, "I was wrong," along with, "I am sorry." Teach me that there is such a thing as a "healthy ego" which does not require that feelings be medicated by mood-alterers. May I slowly, on my tightrope move toward the ideal of balance, so I can do away with the nets of falsehood and compulsion.

TODAY I WILL REMEMBER

To keep my balance.

A LESSON LEARNED

Submitted by: E.C.

There are certain life lessons I have finally learned. That's the "good" news. The "bad" news is I'm about to celebrate my Fiftieth birthday. I know; better late than never.

Lesson #1: *If I spend more money than I make, I'll never have economic security.*

Lesson #2: *If I take in more calories than I burn, I'll eventually explode.*

Lesson #3: *My spiritual condition is my top priority*

Okay, so lesson # 3 is really the most important. (I told you I'm a slow learner) and as simple as #1 and #2 are, I had to get sober to comprehend them! So if lesson #3 is paramount to my sense of well being, how did I stumble on the fact that my spiritual condition is the key to life? By hitting bottom. It was only after finding out what didn't work, that I was open and willing to try another way. I thought I arrived in treatment with a booze and drug problem. That was just a symptom of the real issue: I was dying from a soul sickness. I spent my life in unhealthy relationships with people, substances, things, fantasies, etc... .

My idea of the "good" life got me sad, sick, and sorry. It took the love and care of the people at Ridgeview and in the rooms of alcoholics anonymous to show me a new way. That way led me to a spiritual connection that I secretly yearned for since childhood. Unconditional love that can't be found in a drink or a drug.

I was one of those who had faith and lost it. Thankfully I was told early in sobriety that I could come up with my own concept of a power greater than myself. Also, that religion was not the exact same thing as spirituality. After that, the mere mention of the word God didn't shut down my willingness.

My thoughts cleared, and I only had to answer one question. "Do I now believe, or am I willing to believe, that there is a power greater than myself?" Since I was sitting in a mental institution, a broken shell of a man, I had to admit that "I" was certainly not the Master of the Universe!

That's how my spiritual journey began. I worked the twelve steps with a sponsor, followed suggestions, and went to a lot of meetings. But it was an inkling of faith in something other than a vial of cocaine or a bottle of vodka that gave me a feeling I hadn't experienced in a long time - "hope".

I have conversations with my higher power today, just like I would with my best friend. That's my way of praying. I'm not willing to slip past the eleventh step today. If I were to let that happen, then a "slip" surely would follow. Quiet contact with the God of my understanding is like a breath of fresh air in this often stifling, fast paced world. If my spiritual condition is being nurtured, than I can face each day with the knowledge that I am never alone. What a great feeling!

What a valuable lesson.

P.S. - oh yeah, don't forget about Lessons #1 and #2

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IT DOES WORK

Submitted by: Jane B.

After almost 6 years of sobriety, I relapsed. I had worked the program to the best of my ability until the last few weeks. That was when I began to obsess and worry, to feel extreme shame and inferiority, to isolate and to take control of my life without asking for God's help.

My first fourth step was far from complete. There were certain things that I did not admit – even to myself. When I prayed (and I often did not take the time to do so) I asked for His will but kept some of the control for myself. I felt far from lovable – even by God. My feeling of inadequacy made me cling to my daughter and put a distance between us.

As I tried to control everything around me I lost confidence in my own abilities. The more I doubted myself, the more controlling and possessive I became. The more controlling I became, the more I hated myself. The downward spiral was devastating and, finally, I drank.

God gave me another chance; through the help of Ridgeview, my doctor and the AA program. I am now working the program with as much honesty and willingness as I can muster.

In addition to earnestly asking for God's plan for me for that day and for the power to carry that plan through, I pray for acceptance of life and of myself. I also ask God to help me love myself.

As I work the program, I find that my relationship with my daughter has improved tremendously. I relax, and allow God to do His job with her. She is much more open with me, knowing that I will not give advice unless she asks for it. I don't obsess anymore and seldom worry. I am even learning to love myself.

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Submitted by: George Mize

Dedicated to Bob Weinhold for he "suggested" that I read The Road Less Traveled by Scott Peck, M.D.

Forgiveness is the road less traveled in relationships. When I came into this program, I already knew everything. I had figured out that the way to not have problems in relationships is to **not have relationships**. I told myself that it's common for people to discard relationships that aren't pleasant. Leaving a hostile, dysfunctional relationship after 23 years of marriage, I now know, means I have to work that same struggle with someone else, some other time. Looking at relationships from this perspective removes the **FEAR**

about them. Acknowledging that conflict is due to my ego's selfishness makes it possible for me to understand this form of attempt at control.

Rather than choosing to join as **ONE** in spirit and love, I chose to fight as a separate, hateful human being. I passed judgment on our families, our friends, and others socially, professionally, and, eventually, legally. I discovered that I was trained to interpret life's details all wrong, that I had only been taught what my parents, teachers, and religious leaders had learned.

What's happened in the past doesn't need to be addressed again. Not here. A perspective I no longer share colored my experiences. Forgiveness is necessary to leave the past behind. The **FIRST STEP** is to acknowledge my eagerness to judge. The **SECOND STEP** is to become willing to rise above it.

How we get from judgmental to accepting is the journey of our lives. By monitoring what I think and say to others, and myself, I am learning who I am and every experience offers me a choice to change my attitudes and self-perception. It's never too late to take the road less traveled and become what I can be. Along this journey, I keep meeting myself repeatedly in others (**mirroring**) with new opportunities for **self-awareness** and **self-forgiveness**. I realize that my reaction to others is merely a reflection of my anger to myself. **What bothers me about you is what bothers me about me.**

Forgiving others mysteriously lessens my own self-condemnation of my past. I realize every experience is an opportunity for **forgiving** and healing. **Recovery** means being done with the rigid, shame-based rules from the past, and formulating healthy values based on self-love, love for others, and living in harmony with this world. Recovery does not equal abstention from life, but **learning to live fully**. It's been said that the teacher appears when the student is ready and as willing, as only the dying can be. All that's necessary is to **be willing to believe...**

Picture yourself walking through the darkest night, tired and lonely, but not needing any light. A **View** of this **Ridge** gradually comes into focus. A Friend appears to walk along with you, or maybe to carry you (like in the "Footsteps" poem). Lost, until a Teacher with a map appears. Many **Steps** later, you notice you are thirsty. A Spring of fresh, pure water appears and you can drink as often and as much as you want to. Maybe **feeling thirsty** is necessary to first notice and then **accept the gift** of the water? It's a **continuous cycle (of recovery)** – this need and supply, desire and fulfillment, **unless** we break it. All the necessary supplies have already been planned and are ready for this **journey**. All that is necessary is to **be willing to believe...and an understanding of a Power greater than ourselves...that we can be restored to sanity...if**

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we turn our will and our lives over to Him (or Her).
We are worth **believing** in, aren't we?

IT WORKS !!!...EVEN IF YOU DON'T.

Submitted by: Jeff A.

Last December I waltzed into cottage C because I told my recent 'interveners' that I would do so. They had come to my house at the request of my wife, Jenny. Of course I had no idea they were coming. Coming inside from the pouring rain, my best friend Frank said I looked like James Brolin towards the end of "The Amityville Horror" probably an accurate description.

I knew why they had come. And I decided I'd promise them what ever they wanted. What ever they wanted me to do, I vowed I would do: not because I wanted treatment but because it would get them the hell out of my face and out of my house ASAP.

These two men are the best friends I've ever known. They dropped everything to help my blasted, pathetic self. I told them what they wanted to hear. So, into Ridgeview's locked-down ward I went to do five days of detox, and then get out. That was the deal.

I had no intention of stopping my drugs, and alcohol. This short token stay in cottage C was a cleverly conceived ploy created by my highly developed mind, and guaranteed to be a foolproof display of my sincerity. They obviously didn't realize who they were dealing with. Also, it would insure my timely release from the detox ward, and keep the next refill of morphine, oxycodone, and/or methadone on schedule. After all, that's the reason for my tactics to begin with – I wanted/needed to get my drugs.

Having relapsed before, and having felt the despair, confusion and fear that goes with it; I had always wanted at some level to cling to the hope that recovery was possible. The spark had always been there. And it worked. By God's grace, the help of others, and my desire to be clean and sober, things had turned around.

This time, however, would not be the case. I had the education about addiction. I had the "treatment wisdom". I could speak the "treatment speak". I was heavily armed. My ammunition was my previously acquired wisdom. My weapon was a sharply tuned, clever, magnificent magnifying mind. They didn't stand a chance.

Let me repeat, for those of you gentle readers who are a bit slow to wrap around the concept: I did not want sobriety. I did not want recovery. In fact, I've never really liked the word 'sobriety' – the phonetics of the word. It sounds like a benign physical malady of sorts – like a slight, involuntary foaming or frothing at the

mouth. Anyway, I wanted no part of it. Are you with me so far?

At some point on the second or third day in Cottage C, my foolproof scheme began to erode. Perhaps narcotic withdrawal had something to do with it. Maybe God decided to participate. Or, embedded in the darkness and pain perhaps remained a flicker of hope. Maybe a combination of all of the above. I've heard the phrase 'beaten into a state of reasonableness'. Well, I was being beaten into some sort of state to be sure.

Things seemed to get worse. My plan disintegrated quickly; because no longer were the drugs available to fuel the delusion. I was nothing more than a very sick, frightened little lost child... a clueless zombie. Please God. Help me. Please Ridgeview, help me.

He did. They did.

Sometime during the fog that was the first weeks of treatment, I decided I wanted recovery. The "treatment wisdom" mentioned earlier was a sham. Put that aside and start from square one. It was a shaky and fragile start. But, it was a start. I prayed for honesty. I prayed for willingness. I prayed morning and night. At times the prayer seemed only mechanical. Other times, sincere. That doesn't matter. I did it anyway.

The suggestions of AA meetings; getting a sponsor and using that sponsor; reading the Big Book; prayer and meditation; participating in aftercare; these are the things that bring healing to the mind, body and spirit. Sometimes it feels only mechanical. And sometimes I don't want to do it.

It's been a struggle. But there is joy in the struggle. I believe the 12 Steps of AA are the keystone.

Are the Steps there to be pondered? No.

Are they there to be analyzed? I think not.

They are there to be worked to the best of our ability so that God may bring healing recovery to damaged lives and the darkness be replaced with the sunlight of the Spirit.

They say it does work. I'm counting on it.

God bless you.

YOUR GUARANTEE

Signed by Bill W.

Submitted by: Chalise T.

The twelve step program works, it really works. For the past seven years I have been testing my luck. My time in this program has been a rollercoaster. I never understood, because I never wanted to do the work that the program requires. I guess I always quit when it came time for a commitment. Now I have 64 days clean and sober. I finally have a guarantee between my Higher Power, the Big Book, and my

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Sponsor. The only way for this to fail is for me to stop working the program.

My recovery is a maintenance plan keeping my life running smooth. My Higher Power is my navigator who leads me where I'm supposed to be; doing for me what nothing or no one else can do; keeping me sober. Without my Higher Power I would be lost and using.

A very important person in recovery is a Sponsor. To me my Sponsor is a Teacher, teaching me how to work and understand the steps. Whether I believe so or not, she's been where I've gone and knows how to deal with the feelings. She shares her experience with me hoping that I will grasp the idea.

The best support of the twelve step program is the Big Book. The basic text of the book (the first 164 pages) puts into words a step-by-step process to live on life's terms. When it comes to the Big Book it might as well be gibberish and that's where my Sponsor comes in. My Sponsor translates the basic text so that I can understand and use it in my recovery.

With guidance of my Higher Power, my Sponsor, and the Big Book I am able to achieve a psychic change. Along with a daily meeting to keep my life in tune, I am able to live in spiritual recovery. I have found that for me to continue living a strong and healthy program I must give to others what was given so freely to me. If you commit yourself to this simple program I will guarantee it works – it really works. And so does Bill W. if you don't believe me check the Big Book.

LIFE OR DEATH – FINALLY, I CHOSE TO LIVE

Submitted by: Dawn B.

Until I came into recovery, my entire life was one of loneliness and acting; constantly searching for any form of love but pushing it away if it came to close. From age 4 to 14 I lived in what I thought was hell. I had a step mother that could easily one-up Cinderella's step mother. It was during this time that I learned not to feel; to be invisible, to disappear. I moved away from that home just after my 14th birthday – I thought life would be better, it was for a while but eventually I realized that although I left home, I went with me and I still did not know how to live. I was 15 the one and only time I tried to consciously kill myself – it almost worked, but for some reason God chose to intervene. It still took another 21 years and a geographical change for me to get "home".

There were some happy moments during those 21 years, but for the most part I tried to figure out what others wanted and expected of me and if they didn't get it; if I wasn't perfect they wouldn't love me. I needed to be loved so badly that I would have gone anywhere, done anything to find love. I found that I didn't hurt so

much in my soul or need love if I could numb the mind and body enough. So, that is exactly what I did, more so during the last several years of my using. I existed – my days consisted of pulling myself out of bed in the morning either smoking bowl, popping a pill or both; usually both. Then I'd put on the make-up like I was putting on a mask to hide the pain and misery; I'd go to work – no one the wiser at least that is what I thought; then finally I'd be able to go home and isolate and numb myself into nonexistence again.

Once again, God intervened; I think he knew I had had enough. Of course it wasn't really my choice; I didn't know I had had enough. I was forced to go to treatment to save my job. I was so angry, but mostly I scared. I really didn't think I needed help when I got there, but I would humor them and do what they said because I wanted to keep my job. After all – my job was how I defined who I was and if I lost that I wouldn't have anything. So off to treatment I went; after the first 3 days I had the weekend to do some much needed soul searching – I finally decided I would give it a try; after all what exactly did I have to lose; I know my life, but I still wasn't there yet. It wasn't until I had spent about 10 days in treatment that I realized I was an addict and that I was exactly where I needed to be. I believe it was then I did the first step and became honest and that acceptance allowed me to open up and become willing; it was then the obsession to use was completely removed. Wow, what a great experience it was and continues to be.

Today, if I had to sum up recovery in one word it would be AMAZING! I enjoy being alive today. I am constantly amazed at my life now; no longer do I let my job define me as an individual – today my job is what I do to make an income; I like the career I have chosen for myself and the place I work because it gives me the freedom to continue to put my recovery first in my life. And that is what I have chosen to do; put my recovery first. I have heard throughout the last few years that whatever you put in front of your recovery you will lose; and I truly believe that for I have had that shown to me first hand through working with others. Today I am an open book with nothing to hide. I have learned to trust, respect others and love unconditionally - not only myself, but mostly love others and allow them to love me. That was self evident this past January when I was hospitalized. For me today, I have found that if I continue to be honest, open and willing my spiritual life continues to grow. And through God's help and the help of family and friends my spiritual journey has just begun – and any day above ground is a good day!

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Remember hitting your bottom? Do you remember that moment when you first began to feel some hope? Looking back can you remember those angels who appeared at that precise moment when you needed help the most? I can.

I can also remember the abject fear of, "how am I going to pay for this?" No insurance, no real savings, no trust fund, no golden benefactor. Scared, having hit my bottom, finally able to ask for help. I was in a safe place. The rest would just have to take care of itself.

Treatment costs money, real money. Programs, therapies, prescriptions, food, housing and all the while life continues to go on outside without us. As active members of the Ridgeview Alumni Association our fund raising goal is an endowment fund that will one day be able to help financially that person currently in treatment. Whether it's more time in treatment, another couple of days in a halfway house, medications, daycare so the patient can make it to the program that week, the needs can be overwhelming at times. We all know how powerful a helping hand at that critical moment can make or break a spirit.

Our goal for the Endowment Fund has to be set high if we are to be able to generate any kind of meaningful income. To date we have raised \$25,000 towards our first \$500,000. Every single dollar raised goes into an asset management account over which the Alumni Steering Committee has sole control.

When the day comes, and it will, that we are in a financial position to begin offering grants to patients a review committee will be established. This group will be comprised of active Steering Committee members who have demonstrated a record of service, and a representative from the hospital. The committee will review the requests and make grants based on need, the patient's participation in their own recovery and the patients treatment teams input.

Obviously we are a ways down the road from making any grants. The next several years are about increasing awareness of our project, raising and investing the donations that come our way. Today, you can make a difference in the life of that person who is still out there.

Won't you make a commitment to be someone's angel, just for today? We have.

Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund Campaign

- Yes**, I want to contribute to the Alumni Endowment Fund. I've been in Recovery _____ years and would like to give back \$_____.
- Yes**, I am not an Alumni, however, I wish to contribute to the Endowment Fund. As a family member, friend, business owner or corporate representative/sponsor. Here is my donation of \$_____.

Name _____ Phone (_____) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

Make checks payable to: Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund

Mail to: Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, Ga. 30080-6397.

Serenity Garden - Memorial Brick Order Form

Name _____ Phone (_____) _____

Message to be engraved on brick: (2 lines / 14 characters per line)

(Line 1) _____

(Line 2) _____

\$25.00 per brick

* Please fill out name and contact number, even if you wish this to be an anonymous contribution, so we may contact you in case any questions arise about the inscription.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

Make checks payable to: Ridgeview Alumni Association, Bricks

Mail to: Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, Ga. 30080-6397

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