

THE NEWSLETTER

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VALUED IN RECOVERY

I encountered my addiction first when I was seven years old. I medicated the discomfort of my parents' divorce with sugar. Seeking a stronger high, I was a daily user by the time I was 15 and addicted to cocaine and alcohol. My substance use disorder led me down the paths that it often does; dropping out of school, disappointing my family, breaking up important relationships, and being incapable of committing to anything.

Incapable of keeping a job for any extended period of time, the intensity and expense of my substance use eventually led to selling my body. Some days, I would see 20 clients in a day, hoping to make enough money to feed my insatiable addiction. I never got ahead, because no matter what I did, I spent everything I earned.

I got in trouble with the law when I was 24. This resulted in a five-year probation stint. I failed

all 48 UAs. The SWAT team eventually blew my house up on February 11, 2008. An escorting gig had gone south, and the man ended up harboring himself in my attic with a gun. The detective sat me down and told me that they knew everything that I was doing. I would like to tell you that that scared me straight, but it absolutely did not.

I used drugs more and more, trying to become numb. Without drugs and alcohol, I simply could not breathe. Before recovery, I woke up every morning feeling like someone had duct-taped my mouth closed, until I would have that first drink or drug. April came around and the police had flash summons me to come in and do an immediate breathalyzer test and urinalysis in front of the judge. This would determine my fate: free or locked up. I drove myself to the courthouse, sat there for eight hours, and still



registered a 0.28 blood alcohol level.

I sat in jail for 78 days with the revocation of probation, no bail, and no bond. Then, a judge decided to send me to treatment, where I was able to receive the help that I needed. After 28 days, however, I left treatment and went directly to the dope house and the liquor store! I physically had lost the power of choice, even though I truly didn't want to use and drink.

This is the first time I truly wanted recovery. My desperation began. I was trying to get sober and had no idea how to do it. The treatment center

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PEG SULLIVAN: A FORGOTTEN PIONEER

I nominate an award - posthumously - to Ms. Peg Sullivan, the founder of On Our Own, Inc., the first chapter of On Our Own in Maryland. She began Maryland's first solely peer supported organization

that enabled persons with mental illness to come back from the brink of total soul extinction. Through her efforts she created an organization that gave back dignity and hope to those with men-

tal illness lingering in hospitals and the community. I learned about her On Our Own, Inc. center while an inpatient in Springfield State Hospital about 14 years ago and joined her

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PEG SULLIVAN: A FORGOTTEN PIONEER

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She sent me at Springfield State Hospital a membership card and thus began my return to "normalcy". Through offering work to us in her centers, she gave us back our lives. She taught us how to be advocates and thus gave us a reason to survive by helping others who had suffered as we have and giving others the hope that On Our Own, Inc. had given us. It restored to

us a purpose in life.

She nurtured such individuals as Tony Wright, our present Executive Director at On Our Own, Inc. I know he is in complete agreement with me concerning Peg.

Peggy Sullivan's life ended and there was not a word expressed by the mental health community in Mary-

land (that I was aware of) and I knew her and respected that she was our pioneer in Maryland who began On Our Own, Inc., the first 100% consumer run drop-in center in Maryland.. We need to honor all our leaders. I have always felt Peg Sullivan has never been awarded the full honor that she deserves.

Sincerely, Caroline Warfield

VALUED IN RECOVERY

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suggested a 12-step program: get a sponsor, stay in the middle of the herd. I just didn't know how to do any of that.

I went to my first 12-step meeting drunk on June 10, 2008. I met the man who would become my husband in the rooms. He guided me to use his sponsor and helped me to be surrounded by people with sobriety. I had a really hard time committing to the idea in the first six weeks, but my misery far outweighed my unwillingness! I put my life in the hands of those around me and trusted them to guide me into my new life.

I'm happy to report to you that on July 24, 2008, I en-

tered recovery and I'm still there. I am certain that following the directions exactly as guided in the 12-step literature saved my life! I am still married to the beautiful man who introduced me to this way of life. We have a darling seven-year-old boy. We own two beautiful homes: one in Miami Beach and one in Austin. We own two companies: a tattoo makeup company and a roofing company. Most importantly, my success comes with the hundreds of men and women that I make my priority to help to get into recovery.

We rest our recovery and life success today on our primary purpose: staying sober and

helping other people with substance use disorder to achieve recovery. My life is so blessed. If someone could've told me this is the way it would've turned out, I would've started my recovery 10 years earlier.

The most beautiful thing about today, other than being in recovery, is the fact that I feel beautiful and useful in my skin. I love myself today. I wake up every morning and know that the universe conspires on my behalf and uses me as a tool for loving others. It is with great humility and dignity that that I face addiction with each of you .

Aubrey Sparks

Poetry Corner

*We play in the water. We swim in the water. We go under the water.
We are friends in the water. We spent are time in the water.
We all got baptized in the water. Angie taught us all how to swim in the water.
The water reunited us. The water brought us together again.
The water divided us. We never ate in the water.
We had the time of our lives in the water. The truth was revealed in the water.
We jumped in the water and faced our fear. I was left alone in the water.
Will we ever get back to the water?*

Chandler W.