

Oxford House
Time for Recovery



Commemorative Program

10th Oxford House World Convention

Hilton New Orleans Riverside
New Orleans, Louisiana

October 30 – November 2, 2008

Oxford House World Convention

Convention Schedule

	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00 AM – 8:15 AM	Continental Breakfast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reminder – World Council Nominations Due by Noon 	Continental Breakfast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voting until Noon for World Council By Houses Attending Convention 	Continental Breakfast 7AM – 8:15 AM [General Session Begins at 8:15AM – Closes at 10:15AM]
8:15 AM – 9:30 AM	First General Session [8:15 – 9:45] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invocation Welcome John Walters Keynote Election Process 	Third Breakout Panels <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Efficacy in Oxford Drug Courts & Oxford Treatment & Oxford Oxford House Duties 	Closing General Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remembrance of Members Who Have Died Tradition Renewal – Alumni and Current Members Conference Summary Closing Remarks
9:45 AM – 11:00 AM	First Breakout Panels [10:00 – 11:00] <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reentry from Jail Funding Expansion Dual Diagnosis 	Fourth Breakout Panels <ol style="list-style-type: none"> OH and State Agencies Showing Pride in Recovery Child Welfare in OH Protecting House Money 	
11:15AM – 12:30 PM	Second Breakout Panels <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Medication in Houses Importance of Research Assuring Quality Control 	Fifth Breakout Panels <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans and OH Peer Advocacy OH and The Law Utilizing the WEB 	
12:30 PM – 1:45 PM	Luncheon on Your Own [Petitions for Oxford House World Council election turned in by 12:00 PM.]	Luncheon on your own Alumni Lunch; Get Tickets	
2:00 PM – 4:15 PM	Second General Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligible Nominees give 3 minute speeches Dr. Clark Video Riley Regan – Time for Recovery 	Fourth General Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize New World Council Members, Vote on Resolutions 	
Evening	Awards • River Cruise • Dinner [Assemble 5:30] ➤ Assemble Napoleon Ballroom ➤ Invocation 5:30 PM ➤ Board Member Remarks ➤ Awards ➤ Leave for cruise at 6:45 PM	Banquet at Convention Hotel (6:00 – 8:30 Napoleon) ➤ Invocation ➤ Dinner ➤ AA/NA Speaker ➤ Awards ➤ Dance; 9:30PM – Midnight	

Meeting Rooms: General Sessions: Napoleon Ballroom;
Breakout Sessions #1 Oak Alley; #2 Jasperwood; #3 Magnolia; #4 Elmwood

Time for Recovery

AA and NA Meetings Throughout Convention

Candidates for World Council: Must Get Petitions In On Time

Oxford House World Services

1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 300
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Welcome to the 10th Annual Oxford House World Convention. Oxford House has come a long way since the first self-run, self-supported Oxford House started in 1975. Today there are nearly 1,300 houses. The name Oxford House has become a well-known part of the successful alcoholism and drug addiction treatment protocol for recovery without relapse. Oxford Houses provide the *time for recovery* tailor-made to fit the individual differences among human beings. Every man, woman and child in the world has some unique characteristics even though as a species we share many characteristics. For the last 33 years, the men and women of Oxford House have demonstrated the cost-effectiveness of Oxford Houses both by results and a willingness to let independent researchers study the outcomes and the nuts and bolts of how Oxford Houses operate.

The early Oxford House residents [1975] gave later residents a great legacy – the concept and the disciplined democratic system of operation set forth in the Oxford House Manual[®]. Fourteen years later [1989], another group of residents developed the chapter concept and system of operations to enable individual houses to help each other by sharing their experience, strengths and hopes with each other. Twenty-four years later [1999], another generation of Oxford House members started the Annual Oxford House World Convention. Along the way, members of Oxford House kept coming up with ideas to improve, share and expand the Oxford House concept and system of operations.

As we gather in New Orleans, Louisiana for our 10th Annual Oxford House World Convention, it is again time to look back at our organization's success, affirm the aspirations we have for our organization and honestly measure where we are at this point in our history. Like AA and NA, we can sum up many Oxford House milestones with slogans that track our progress, growth and success. The first Oxford House World Convention nine years ago in Washington, D.C. asked the simple question: "*If Not Us, Who?*" The next year in Kansas City, Missouri we emphasized "*Recovery Without Relapse.*" In 2001, back in D.C., the theme was, "*If Not Now, When?*" In Seattle in 2002 the convention theme was "*Changing the Culture of Recovery.*" Back in DC the next year, our group summed up our mission: "*Recovery, Responsibility, Replication.*" In 2004 San Antonio hosted our convention and our focus was "*Back to Basics.*" The next year the theme was "*Family, Fellowship, Freedom.*" At the eighth convention held in the middle of the country in Wichita, Kansas, the organization proclaimed, "*Oxford House Comes of Age.*" In many ways, Oxford House had come of age but the following year, back in the Nation's Capital for the 9th Annual World Convention, Oxford House broadened its horizon with the question; "*What If?*" Now as the 10th Oxford House World Convention convenes, the focus is on "*Time for Recovery.*"

Behind "*Time for Recovery*" is the reality that Oxford House encourages residents to stay as long as they need to in order to achieve recovery comfortable enough to avoid relapse – forever. On another level, the theme provides a call for the Nation's leaders to face the fact that even though government seriously entered the battle against addiction to alcohol and drugs nearly 40 years ago, only recently has the Nation recognized that the enemy is so big that intervention, detoxification and treatment alone cannot do the job. Everyone involved with alcoholism and drug addiction is beginning to realize that a broadly-based national recovery movement is needed where professionals and those in recovery work together. Oxford House, with its recognition that "*Time for Recovery*" gives everyone the time to heal from addiction, is a leader in the new national recovery movement.

The personal stories of Oxford House residents and alumni included in this program are but a small sample of the great reservoir of life experiences that has formed Oxford House, as we know it. These stories illustrate the diversity that contributes to the welfare of the organization as a whole, and each story is a testament to the happiness and success that can come from being part of Oxford House. Each individual is part of the story that is Oxford House and it is time to build a library of individual stories. A sampling of stories has been included in this program. As more residents and alumni send Oxford House World Services their stories, we will publish them in a book.

Let us celebrate recovery at our 10th Oxford House World Convention and may all hereafter remember that, in New Orleans 2008, the men and women of Oxford House recognized that Oxford House provides “*Time for Recovery.*”

Alton “Jake” Hadley died
September 4, 2004.
He got Oxford Houses for his state.

The work of Oxford House does not happen without a lot of support by a lot of people. In Louisiana, Alton “Jake” Hadley started the ball rolling; Michael Duffy now carries it. We remember Jake who died nearly 4 years ago. Thanks to both men.



Alton “Jake” Hadley headed up the alcohol and drug agency in Louisiana and was a mentor to the current agency head, Michael Duffy. Three years before his death in 2004, Jake tracked down Paul Molloy in Washington, DC to try to get Oxford House to come to Louisiana. His concern was that while the state had a network of halfway houses too many residents were not able to get in. “We have a six month time limit,” he said, “but too many need more time and a lot are not able to get in.” Could Oxford House help shorten the waiting lists at halfway houses and could people really stay as long as they needed to become comfortable with sobriety,” he asked. The answer was yes and today Louisiana is well on its way to developing a strong statewide network of Oxford Houses.

Why do we remember Jake? Jake sought out Oxford House and he kept pushing development within the state even as he battled his cancer for several years. As a leader in the field and his state, Jake knew a “good thing” when he saw it and he doggedly went after it and convinced his fellow professionals that Oxford House could make a difference. For many people living in Louisiana Oxford Houses has made a difference, and they should know that Alton “Jake” Hadley played a role.

Thanks also to Friends of Recovery from Kansas. Not only was the group formed specifically to get the strong network of Kansas Oxford Houses going, but they have also continued to support the expansion of Oxford Houses all over the country. This year, Friends of Recovery donated \$2,500 to help fund the Oxford House Women’s Conference that begins Thursday at 3:00 PM. Thank you from all of the Oxford House family.

Oxford House – Time For Recovery
New Orleans Oxford World Convention 2008



John Walters Opens 10th Oxford House World Convention

Time for Recovery *and* Oxford House are not new to John Walters, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Since he was sworn in as the Nation's Drug Czar in December 2001, John Walters has been a strong supporter of Oxford House. This is the sixth annual Oxford House World Convention that Director Walters has participated in. During his first year in office he attended the third Oxford House World Convention at the Washington Court in DC. The next year he was with us in Seattle. He has participated in all the Washington, D.C. conventions and is now with us in New Orleans.

Walters knows that demand reduction is the best tool for reducing drug trafficking and that recovery from addiction is the best way to reduce demand. He also knows that Oxford Houses provide the time and peer support to enable recovering individuals to become comfortable enough in sobriety to avoid relapse. Without Oxford House living, about 80% of individuals relapse. With Oxford House living, 80% of the recovering individuals master sobriety and stay clean and sober. During his tenure as Drug Czar Walters has closely watched the methodical tripling of the number of Oxford Houses and his office meets periodically to learn the good research news from the NIAAA/NIDA sponsored DePaul University studies of Oxford House. Mr. Walters will address the opening general session of the Convention.



CSAT Director Dr. Westley Clark [at left] and Riley Regan, former state alcohol and drug agency director in New Jersey are regular participants at Oxford House World Conventions.

Both have shared their expertise with past convention attendees. Both know that only by reducing relapse can enough treatment slots be made available to permit thousands to begin the recovery process.

Dr. Clark will have a video message and Riley Regan will speak at the General Session on Friday afternoon.

Time for Recovery



10th Annual Oxford House World Convention

Hilton New Orleans Riverside

New Orleans, Louisiana

October 30 - November 2, 2008

Thursday, October 30th

Annual Oxford House Golf Tournament Tee Time

7:00 AM

This is the Tenth Annual Oxford House Golf Tournament. It is held in conjunction with the annual world convention both for the enjoyment of the participants and to underscore the fact that recovery without relapse enables all recovering individuals to enjoy all aspects of life. This year's four-man scramble tournament is held at the Audubon Golf Course, 6500 Magazine Street in New Orleans. Following the golf a barbeque will be held at Oxford House – Uptown, 2837 Napoleon Avenue, beginning at 1:00 PM. Golfers and any other convention attendees not attending the Women's conference are invited to the barbeque and a local house tour will follow.

Registration

1:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Court Assembly Foyer

Women's Pre-convention Conference

3:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Jefferson Room [Meeting]

Belle Chase Room [Dinner]

World Council Meeting

9:30 PM - 10:00 PM

Oak Alley Room

AA Meeting

9:30 PM - 10:30 PM

Rosewood Room

NA Meeting

9:30 PM - 10:30 PM

Melrose Room

Candidates for World Council should pick up nominating petitions at the Registration Desk. **Nominating petitions must be turned in by noon on Friday.** Resident member candidates need signatures from residents representing five different houses. Alumni candidates need signatures from five alumni members.

Friday, October 31, 2008

Continental Breakfast 7:00 AM - 8:15 AM
Napoleon Ballroom

Opening General Session 8:15 AM - 9:45 AM
Napoleon Ballroom

Invocation by Major Mel James of the Salvation Army will officially open the 10th Oxford House World Convention. Welcome from Dr. Kevin Stephens, Chief of Public Health, Office of the Mayor, City of New Orleans. Paul Molloy will provide an overview of the convention and set the convention theme: "Time for Recovery". Keynote for Opening Session by John Walters, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. James McClain welcomes the delegates on behalf of Oxford House, Inc. Board of Directors and describes the process for the election of World Council Members.

First Breakout Panels 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

- Re-Entry from Jail
Oak Alley Room
- Funding Expansion and Overcoming Barriers
Jasperwood Room
- Dual Diagnosis
Magnolia Room Room

Second Breakout Panels 11:15 AM - 12:30 PM

- Medication in Oxford Houses
Oak Alley Room
- Importance of Research
Jasperwood Room
- Assuring Quality in Oxford Houses
Magnolia Room

Lunch and AA/NA Meetings 12:30 PM - 1:45 PM

Lunches available for purchase in Lobby

- AA Meeting in Rosedown
- NA Meeting in Melrose

Second General Session 2:00 PM - 4:15 PM
Napoleon Ballroom

Video from Westley Clark, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., CAS, FASAM,
Director of Center on Substance Abuse Treatment [CSAT]
World Council Nominee Speeches
Riley Regan; Keynote Address - "Time for Recovery"

Assemble for Friday Evening Cruise and Awards 5:30 PM - 6:45 PM

Invocation Napoleon Ballroom
Awards: Reggie Midget Award and Hundred-Year House Award
Boarding Creole Queen following Invocation and Awards

Creole Queen paddle wheeler cruise, food and jazz 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM

Saturday Morning, November 1st

Continental Breakfast

Napoleon Ballroom

7:00 AM - 8:15 AM

Third Breakout Panels

Self-Efficacy in Oxford House
Oak Alley Room
Drug Courts and Recovery
Jasperwood Room
Treatment Provider Utilization of Oxford House
Magnolia Room
Oxford House Officer Duties
Elmwood Room

8:15 AM - 9:30 AM

Fourth Breakout Panels

Oxford House and State Agencies
Oak Alley Room
Showing Pride in Recovery
Jasperwood Room
Child Welfare in Oxford Houses
Magnolia Room
Protecting House Finances
Elmwood Room

9:45 AM - 11:00 AM

Fifth Breakout Panels

Veterans and Oxford House
Oak Alley Room
Peer Advocacy and Short-term Mentoring
Jasperwood Room
Oxford House and the Law
Magnolia Room
Utilizing the Oxford WEB Tools
Elmwood Room

11:15 AM - 12:30 PM

Lunch

AA Meeting in Rosedown Room
NA Meeting in Melrose Room

12:30 PM - 1:45 PM

Alumni Luncheon [Tickets at Registration Desk: \$20 per person]

Oxford House - Time For Recovery

Saturday Afternoon, November 1st

Fourth General Session

2:15 PM - 4:15 PM

Napoleon Ballroom

- ◆ Report of World Council
- ◆ Introduction of New World Council Members
- ◆ Presentation of Disaster Preparedness by Joe Chavez
- ◆ Vote on Convention Resolutions

Veterans Committee Meeting immediately following General Session [Elmwood Room]

Banquet

6:00 PM - 8:30 PM

- ◆ Invocation
- ◆ Tom Fellows Award
- ◆ Founders Award
- ◆ AA Speaker: Michael Duffy

Dance

9:00 PM to 12:00 PM

Sunday Morning, November 2nd

Continental Breakfast

7:00 AM - 8:15 AM

Napoleon Ballroom

Closing Session

8:15 AM - 10:15 AM

Plaza Ballroom West

- ◆ Remembering Oxford House family members who died during the last year
- ◆ Lessons learned at the Convention for Oxford House
- ◆ Group recitation of Oxford House Traditions

The following five pages summarize the eighteen breakout panels. Thereafter, residents and alumni of Oxford Houses around the country share their stories. The stories describe the terrible price that addiction extracts from the individual, their families and the community. As Oxford House continues to provide the "Time for Recovery," it is important that all of us share our stories to motivate communities across the land to establish Oxford Houses so that many more recovering individuals are given an opportunity to master recovery without relapse.

We hope that these stories will prompt everyone in Oxford House to share their story. The success stories of alcoholics and drug addicts overcoming addiction give new residents hope. Oxford Houses provide the time, peer support and discipline to stay clean and sober forever.

Oxford House - Time for Recovery

Summary of Breakout Sessions

Friday Breakouts: First Breakout Session

Re-entry from Jail

Oak Alley Room

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Panelists: Marty Walker, Oxford House Outreach in Louisiana, Kurtis Taylor, OHI Prison Outreach in North Carolina, Steve Shapiro, Federal Public Health Advisor, CSAT, Wendell Howell, Executive Director, Delaware Addictions Coalition

Marty Walker is the Oxford House outreach worker in Louisiana and an alumnus of Oxford Houses in Oregon where he went from prison to Oxford House. Kurtis Taylor specializes in convincing and helping those in recovery getting out of prison to get into an Oxford House. Steve Shapiro works with Dr. Clark at CSAT and has worked on prison re-entry for more than 20 years. Wendell Howell is Executive Director of the Delaware Addictions Coalition and a strong supporter of Oxford Houses for re-entry from jail. Three themes will be highlighted in this panel: [1] the great need for post-incarceration recovery opportunity; [2] the value of Oxford House as a transitional residence; [3] practical ways to motivate returning prisoners to get into Oxford House and [4] practical ways to integrate post-incarceration and Oxford House admission practices.

Funding Expansion and Overcoming Barriers

Jasperwood Room

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Panelists: Glen Silver, Nonprofit Strategic Planner and Grant Specialist, Rich Christensen Oxford House Outreach Pennsylvania, Kathleen Gibson Chief Operating Officer, Oxford House, Inc. Ron McMillian Director, Oxford Houses of Canada

Lessons learned from the decade of expansion from a small cluster of Oxford Houses in the DC area to a network of nearly 1,300 Oxford Houses is that Oxford Houses can be successfully replicated but it requires the utilization of trained outreach workers and technical support from Oxford House World Services. The technical support – and from time to time legal civil rights protection – costs money. This panel will look at ways and means to fund future expansion and growth in the number of Oxford Houses. Glen Silver is a consultant to nonprofits and understands the foundation field. Rich Christensen is an alumnus of Oxford House and an outreach worker who has successfully convinced some states to develop new networks of Oxford Houses. Kathleen Gibson is COO of Oxford House World Services and has been successful in developing new avenues of funding in North Carolina. Ron McMillian has developed a strong network of more than 30 Oxford Houses in Alberta Canada.

Dual Diagnosis

Magnolia Room

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Panelists: John Majer, PhD Daley College, Chicago, Illinois, Kirstin Hallburg, CAC Omaha, Nebraska, Paula Harrington UNC Human Resources and NC Oxford House Outreach, Riley Regan, former Director in NJ and NH and a long-time authority on addiction.

Many Oxford House residents have mental illness in addition to addiction. This panel will discuss how Oxford Houses can help individuals suffering from both afflictions. Dr. Majer was on the DePaul Research team and is lead author of *A Longitudinal Analysis of Psychiatric Severity Upon Outcomes Among Substance Abusers Residing in Self-Help Settings* in the current issue of the American Journal of Community Psychology. Kirstin Hallburg directs the Oxford House statewide program in Nebraska and Paula Harrington is an alumna of Oxford House and an outreach specialist in North Carolina. Riley Regan served in the Maryland Alcohol and Drug Agency when the first Oxford House started. He headed the Governor's Commission on Alcoholism and Drug Addiction in New Jersey when Oxford House began expansion. He subsequently headed up the New Hampshire agency and in the early 1980s was a leader in forming the National Association of Drug and Alcohol Directors.

Friday Breakouts: Second Session

Use of Medicines in an Oxford House

Oak Alley Room

11:15 AM – 12:30 PM

Panelists: Riley Regan, former Director State Alcohol and Drug Agencies, Robin Breckenridge, RN Oxford House Outreach Louisiana, Judy Maxwell Oxford House Outreach Washington State, John Fox Oxford House Outreach North Carolina

This panel will examine the use of medication by those residents of an Oxford House who must take prescribed medication to deal with chronic mental disease or pain. Every Oxford House has or will have individuals who depend upon medication to avoid serious health problems. What medication is acceptable within an Oxford House and how do houses monitor the use of such medication is the central issue.

Importance of Research

Jasperwood Room

11:15 AM – 12:30 PM

Panelists: John Majer, PhD Faculty, Richard Daley College, Leon Venable, Alumnus, Oxford House DePaul Research Project, Chicago, Ill and Current Members of the DePaul University Research Team [Stephanie Mears, Robert Angulo, Phyllis Timpo, LaTasha Washington, and Courtney Harris]

This panel takes a look at the value of research as a tool to better understand recovery from addiction to alcohol and drugs and to better understand the dynamics of self-help. The NIAAA DePaul Study tracked 897 recovering individuals living in 219 Oxford Houses across the county. The NIDA DePaul study randomly selected 150 individual getting out of formal treatment and randomly selected half to go to Oxford Houses and half to go to where they would normally go following treatment. At the end of two years, the Oxford House group did about twice as well as the control group in staying clean and sober without relapse. What do these studies mean and what other research is needed to help Oxford House improve and help society to integrate Oxford House into the best practice treatment protocols? The panel will also discuss current DePaul Oxford House research.

Assuring Quality in Oxford Houses

Magnolia Room

11:15 AM – 12:30 PM

Panelists: Myrna Brown, Retired Washington Outreach Coordinator, James McClain, Alumnus and Board Member, Terri Martin, Texas State Association, Paul Stevens, OHI Outreach Virginia, Victor Fitz, Alumnus and FORA Board -Kansas

As a self-run, self-supported recovery home concept Oxford House residents and alumni recognize that the reputation and effectiveness of Oxford Houses and Oxford House, as a whole, depends upon checks and balances to assure that every house adheres to its charter. This panel will look at the ways and means Oxford House utilizes to assure that all houses stay on track. Chapters, State Associations, outreach workers and Oxford House World Services are some of the tools that keep houses on track. Workshops and the utilization of the web resources are also important tools for assuring good quality. This experienced panel will discuss the importance of quality control and the ways to assure it.

Oxford House - Time For Recovery

Saturday Breakouts: Third Session

Self-Efficacy in Oxford House

Cypress Room

8:15 AM – 9:30 AM

Panelists: John Majer, PhD Faculty, Richard Daley College, Chicago, Illinois, Jeff Hunt, OHI Outreach Oklahoma, Mike Zalusky OHI Outreach New Jersey Marissa Marks, Texas Association of Oxford Houses, Willy Ottosen, OHI Outreach Wyoming

This panel will look behind the overall outcomes of both the NIDA and NIAAA DePaul studies and examine specific findings related to self-efficacy, women in Oxford House, ex-offenders in Oxford House and how length of time in an Oxford House relates to sobriety without relapse. Key to long-term sobriety is getting comfortable enough with sobriety to avoid relapse. What is it about Oxford House living that produces sobriety comfortable enough to avoid relapse?

Drug Courts and Recovery

Jasperwood Room

8:15 AM – 9:30 AM

Panelists: Lars Levy Director, National Association of Drug Court Professionals Samantha Lyons Administrator Montgomery County, Maryland Drug Court Joe Chavez OHI Outreach, Hawaii Antonio Russell OHI Outreach, North Carolina Anna Mable Jones OHI Outreach DC and Montgomery County

This panel will look at how drug courts and Oxford Houses can work together to promote recovery without relapse for individuals who participate in a drug court program. Mr. Lars Levy [in addition to being a Director of NADCP] is the Administrative Director for the treatment services for the Louisiana Sixteenth Judicial District Drug Courts in the parishes of St. Mary and Iberia. Samantha Lyons, the Administrator Director of Montgomery County Drug Court, works closely with Anna Mable Jones of OHI. Joe Chavez in Hawaii and Antonio Russell in North Carolina have both worked with drug courts to facilitate utilization of Oxford Houses. Specific emphasis will be on ways to improve utilization of Oxford Houses for drug court participants.

Treatment Provider Utilization of Oxford House to Improve Outcomes

Magnolia Room

8:15 AM – 9:30 AM

Panelists: Riley Regan, Therapist and Former State Director, Gary Baker, Louisiana Office of Addictive Disorders, Kirstin Hallberg, Counselor and Outreach, Omaha, NE, Charles Bartlett, Kansas Alcohol and Drug Agency

About 47% of Oxford House residents attend weekly counseling in addition to AA/NA meetings. It appears that a number of treatment facilities realize that Oxford Houses provide an opportunity to gain sobriety without relapse. This panel will explore the benefits of using Oxford House following detoxification and formal treatment. The panel will also discuss the barriers that keep more treatment facilities from actively encouraging the establishment of Oxford House and the difficulties counselors have in getting clients into an Oxford House on a timely basis. Will the real time availability of vacancies at individual houses encourage better utilization of Oxford Houses by treatment providers? Should Oxford House residents try to make periodic presentations at treatment facilities? What information should Oxford House be getting to providers? These are a few of the questions to be considered by the panel.

Oxford House - Time For Recovery

Oxford House Officer Duties

Elmwood Room

8:15 AM – 9:30 AM

Panelists: Gino Pugliese, Oxford House Regional Outreach Manager, Washington State, Troy Manns, Outreach Worker North Carolina, Xavier Hodge, Outreach Worker, District of Columbia, Judy Maxwell, Outreach Worker Washington State, Kelly Crowder, Outreach Worker, Virginia

This panel is a nuts and bolts panel for newcomers to Oxford House. Normally Chapters and State Associations hold workshops to teach house members and Chapter officer the duties and responsibilities of each office in an Oxford House or Chapter. This is a nuts and bolts session for individuals new to Oxford House who have not had a chance to discuss the role of each elected officer. The President, Secretary, Comptroller, Treasurer and Chore Coordinator are the elected officers of each house. Each has specific duties to carry out to make sure house meetings run well and houses run well. Most of those duties are internal to the house but with the new website the Secretary has the additional duty of keeping the data concerning a particular house up-to-date.

Saturday Breakouts: Fourth Session

Oxford House and State Agencies

Oak Alley Room

9:45 AM – 11:00 AM

Panelists: Flo Stein, Director North Carolina Alcohol and Drug Agency, Tori Whitney, Director D.C., Alcohol and Drug Agency, Patty Paterson, Oklahoma Alcohol and Drug Agency, Quinetta Womack, Contract Manager Louisiana, Melinda Trujillo, Contract Manager Washington

This panel will discuss the ways that a close working relationship between Oxford House World Services and a state's alcohol and drug agency can help to develop a meaningful network of Oxford Houses within a state. The benefits and barriers of working with a state agency will be examined. Specific focus will be on ways and means to encourage more states to foster development of Oxford Houses. North Carolina, Washington, Louisiana, Oklahoma and the District of Columbia all have contracts with OHI. The panel will address the general benefits of having statewide or area wide networks of Oxford Houses in order to reduce recidivism. It will also discuss the ways that Oxford Houses can provide a low-cost continuum of care and the benefits of thinking in terms of recovery rather than only detoxification or treatment alone.

Showing Pride in Recovery

Jasperwood Room

9:45 AM – 11:00 AM

Panelists: Alonzo Grapes Association of Persons Affected by Addiction (APAA) in Dallas Tony Perkins Vancouver, Washington Anna Mable Jones Outreach DC and Recovery DC Movement , Anne Doolen, Executive Director, Alcohol Drug Council of NC [ADCNC]

Faces and Voices of Recovery has played a leading role in making September Recovery Month a way to show the general public that alcoholics and drug addicts can recover and become productive, responsible members of society. Alonzo Grapes [APAA – Dallas] represents Faces and Voices and also is a resident of a Dallas Oxford House. Tony Perkins has been a leader in promoting Oxfest, a celebration of recovery, in Oregon. Anna Jones is active in activities in the DC area to celebrate recovery. The panel will discuss the importance of showing pride in recovery as a way to reduce the stigma associated with alcoholism and drug addiction and to encourage more and better treatment. Anne Doolen is Executive Director of the Alcohol Drug Council of NC, which has been a leader in promoting alcohol and drug treatment in the state.

Child Welfare in Oxford Houses

Magnolia Room

9:45 AM – 11:00 AM

Panelists: Lori Guerrero, Oxford Alumnus – FIT for Recovery Outreach, Portland, Oregon, Heidi Shultz, State of Oregon Child Welfare Case Worker, Jeff Stiles, Oxford Alumni -FIT for Recovery CADC, Judy Maxwell, Oxford House Outreach, Washington State

Today, there are more than 65 Oxford Houses where children live with a parent [58 for women with children, 8 for men with children]. The recovery outcome for parents has been excellent and often they have been able to come to an Oxford House only because the house had voted to accept children. In each situation the welfare of the child is of prime concern to the residents of the house. This panel will discuss the safeguards that should be put in place to assure child welfare. It will also discuss the promise and problems associated with houses that accept children and whether all is being done to meet the need of those in recovery who have custody of their children. Focus will be on the Oregon program and what lessons can be learned as Oxford Houses continue to fill the national unmet need.

Protecting House Finances

Elmwood Room

9:45 AM – 11:00 AM

Panelists: Paul Stevens Oxford House Outreach Virginia Terri Martin Oxford House, Houston, Texas John Fox Oxford House Eastern Regional Manager, North Carolina Paula Harrington Alumnus, Outreach, North Carolina Jacqueline Lockett Outreach State of Missouri

Every Oxford House is able to benefit from the 33-year experience of other Oxford Houses by having a sound system of control over house finances. Unfortunately, some houses will not take advantage of the sound system of checks and balances that evolve to protect the integrity of money within a house or a chapter. This panel will review what works and what does not work. Oxford Houses are well served in learning how to prevent embezzlement. Many Oxford Houses have unnecessarily had to learn the hard way. If residents of each house follow sound methods for keeping track of funds, collecting each individual's equal share of household expenses on time and paying bills on time, the house will have adequate funds to pay its bills and avoid embezzlement.

Saturday Breakouts Fifth Session

Veterans and Oxford House

Oak Alley Room

11:15 AM – 12:30 PM

Panelists: Worth Bolton, MSW Clinical Instructor, UNC Chapel Hill, Admiral Paul Mulloy, [Ret. USN] OHI Board Member, Ken Rocky, Department of Veterans Affairs, Homeless Coordinator – New Orleans, Tom Dugan, Alumnus and Vet, Washington State, Antonio Russell Oxford House Outreach and Vet – West Virginia

About 20% of the nearly 10,000 residents in the national network of Oxford House are veterans. As men and women come home from the current Iraq War, some veterans with alcohol and drug addictions – and sometime with PTSD – are moving into Oxford Houses. It can be anticipated that demand will increase in the next few years as the number of vets who have seen action increases. This panel will discuss how to build better bridges between just returning veterans and older veterans in recovery from substance abuse. Elsewhere near the end of this program a letter from Secretary Peake praises Oxford House but laments current funding restrictions that preclude paying for outreach to establish more Oxford Houses to serve the nation's veterans in recovery from substance abuse.

Peer Advocacy and Short-term Mentoring

Jasperwood Room

11:15 AM – 12:30 PM

Panelists: Keith Gibson Oxford House Alumnus and Mentor – North Carolina Kurtis Taylor, Outreach Worker and Mentor– North Carolina Donna Moody, Peer Advocate North Carolina

Kathleen Gibson developed a peer advocate program to assist those in recovery getting out of prison and/or treatment to get into an Oxford House and to succeed in recovery. This panel will discuss how this innovative program works. It may well become a model to help thousands of incarcerated individuals to reenter society in away that minimizes recidivism. The panel will explain how the program works and discuss its application to other situations where the newcomer needs help to get a job and transform his or her life from addictive behavior to clean and sober behavior.

Oxford House and the Law

Magnolia Room

11:15 AM – 12:30 PM

Panelists: Paul Molloy CEO, Oxford House, Inc., Riley Regan Expert Witness and Former State Director MD, NJ, NH and Kelly Crowder, Outreach Worker State of Virginia

Paul Molloy, as CEO of Oxford House, Inc., has directed enforcement of Oxford House civil rights in a number of cases since Oxford House expansion began in 1989. Riley Regan has been an expert witness in a number of cases under both the Federal Fair Housing Act [FFHA] and the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]. Kelly Crowder is an outreach worker in the State of Virginia and has been working with seven houses in Winchester, Virginia that are the subject of a zoning dispute. The panel will discuss legal problems that have confronted Oxford Houses. Both the outcomes of cases and the steps recovering individual establishing Oxford House should take to avoid litigation will be discussed.

Utilizing the Oxford House Web Tools

Elmwood Room

11:15 AM – 12:30 PM

Panelists: David L., Information Technology Specialist – Oxford House, Inc., Blake Bippes, Outreach Worker – Washington State, Joe Chavez Outreach Worker – Hawaii, John Fox Regional Coordinator – North Carolina

The new Oxford House Website contains a lot of information useful to house members, treatment providers, drug courts, the recovery community and the public at large. The transparency of Oxford House is by design. The organization prides itself on being open to its members and to the public. One of the important tools on the website is the real-time vacancy search. Of course, the vacancy search will only be as good as the correctness and timeliness of the data put into the database by each Oxford House. This panel will discuss the mechanics of how each house can make certain that information about it on the website is accurate and timely. The panels will also point out the useful legal, scientific and referral information that can be accessed from the website. This is a place for house leaders to learn how to do a good job in providing accurate information and in teaching others how to make the website something of real use to recovering individuals looking for a place to live and for providers, researchers and drug courts to learn about Oxford House and how it works.

Oxford House – Time for Recovery

Oxford House Stories[©]

This segment of the program contains a selection of autobiographical sketches by current and former residents of Oxford Houses. These recovering individuals are sharing their stories in order to help others afflicted by alcoholism and drug addiction to understand the hope afforded by Oxford House. Many readers will be struck by the devastating damage associated with alcoholism and drug addiction. There is no pill or magic bullet that can produce a cure for addiction. The only path to recovery is total abstinence from alcohol and addictive drugs. Few are able to master such behavior change alone. Together with the 12-Step programs, Oxford House offers its residents the opportunity and time to use peer support, a safe living environment and a disciplined system of operation to achieve the behavior changes necessary to avoid a return to the use of alcohol and addictive drugs.

The thousands of individuals who have found a path to recovery by living in an Oxford House know that Oxford House has come of age. All members of the Oxford House family hope that by sharing these personal stories of hard-won recovery, they will contribute to the growth of the Oxford House network, guide those not yet in recovery toward an effective program, and foster the understanding and support of the broader community.

Arthur's Story

My biggest enabler was Uncle Sam. Although I had used drugs while in Viet Nam, my real struggle with my addiction started while I was fighting cancer. I was in the hospital for 3 years (1973-76). It was then that I realized that pain medications provided a totally different type of high – a high that I grew fond of.

Whenever I asked for pain medicine, I was given it – whether I needed it or not.

The first time I sought help for my addiction was 1988 and I was 46 years old. I had been kicked out of my living arrangements. I ended up in the psych ward in the Naval Hospital in Bethesda and was sent to the VA Hospital from there.

There were 33 other people in the drug rehabilitation program there. We were told that only 3 would make it and remain clean. After completing the program I went to a transition house but my time there quickly ran out. Fortunately, they had applications for Oxford Houses.

I interviewed for acceptance at Oxford House-Delafield in August of 1988. At Delafield I learned a lot of tolerance and acceptance. I had to. I had a gay roommate. He eventually became the best roommate I ever had and one of my best friends. As a member of Delafield I was fortunate to have attended the very first Oxford House World Convention.

I was a member of Oxford House – Delafield from 1988 to 2008. I managed, with the help of Oxford House, to be 1 in the 3 out of the 33 that made it. I moved from Delafield to Oxford House Decatur in 2008. I didn't move because it was a bad house; I moved because the responsibility I learned while living there allowed me the opportunity to become part owner of the house. Because Oxford House has saved my life and I can still reap benefits from living here, I moved to Oxford House Decatur.

I came in at 46 years old and am still clean at 66. I believe that if it were not for the structure, principles and traditions of Oxford House, I might not be clean today. People were gung-ho about Oxford House back in the day. I just hope that I can pass some of that spirit on to the Oxfordites to follow.

Try Oxford House. It will change your life. There is no sober house, SRO or other recovery housing that can or will ever compare. Thank God for Paul Molloy for thinking that the lives of drunks and druggies were worth saving.

Donna's Story

I'm Donna and I am an addict. I was born in New York City, part of a close and loving family. I was no stranger to the use of drugs and alcohol during my youth. Most of my friends and relatives around my age smoked marijuana and drank socially. I continued to use marijuana and drink occasionally up until I entered school. It was during my last year of school that my addiction progressed. I started to experiment with cocaine and more frequent alcohol use.

Over the next 15 years, my addiction became the most overwhelming force in my life. My life was totally unmanageable. I continued to get jobs and lose them. I moved to 4 different states, and began using in all of them. It wasn't until April of 2006 that my life had spiraled out of control and I hit my bottom. My addiction had me stealing from my mother and family, putting my life in jeopardy on the streets. Enough was enough.

I entered a long-term rehabilitation facility and began my road to recovery. I was introduced to a 12 step-program that taught me how to love myself again. I began to realize that I was suffering from a disease and that I could live a life that did not involve using drugs in any form. When I left that facility, I called for an interview at the Sawmill Oxford House. I was accepted into the house and I was full of gratitude.

I was blessed with finding a job right away. With the help of the ladies in the house, I was able to focus on my recovery and attend lots of meetings. Now that I have been in my Oxford house for two years, I have received many blessings. I am a supervisor on my job where I have been for two years, I am working as a peer advocate, helping other women to transition into Oxford Houses. I am sponsoring women in recovery and I am excited about my future.

Jackson's Story

I was born in Stillwater, Oklahoma on October 23, 1978. I was conceived on the last night my mother and biological father had together before getting a divorce. A few months later my mother was re-married and, since my biological father didn't want to be a dad, he gave me up. My mother's second husband adopted me. By age three, he had split town and didn't bother paying child support or contacting us. I remember living with my grandparents during pre-school while my mom went to nursing school. It was by my grandparents that I was instilled with a set of morals and manners. I would also go to see my biological father's mom, my other grandma, about once a month and she was a Sunday school teacher for the local First Baptist Church. She is the one who instilled in me my religious beliefs.

I soon moved back in with my mother during my elementary school years and can remember vividly the feeling at school that something wasn't right. I couldn't put my finger on it or even describe it, but I knew something inside of me was different. Something was off. I began to act out in class for attention and approval. I became the class clown and always seemed to have to go above and beyond my peers to feel as if I was their equal. I did well in school and also excelled in sports, especially soccer. By the time I became a teenager I was starting to rebel and have conflicts with my mother. It was about this time that I came in contact with my adopted dad.

My adopted father was living in Texas and I went one summer to go visit him and his new wife. I loved it. He seemed to spoil my brother and I while we were there that couple of months. It may have been his way of making amends. I decided I was ready to have a male figure in my life and so I moved down to Arlington, TX in the summer of 1993. I was starting 9th grade and filled with self-esteem issues. I didn't know any of the kids so the first year I just kept to myself. Then, in 10th grade, I was at the High School and even more kids were there that I didn't know.

By the middle of my sophomore year, I remember wanting so bad to fit in with the popular crowd that I decided to drink with them. I can't remember my first drink, but I do remember that feeling. When alcohol entered my system all my odd feelings of self went away. I became whole. I was complete. Life was meaningful. Life was good. I fell in love with that feeling that it gave me and knew that I wanted to feel like that permanently. As high school went on, I became fairly popular and even began smoking pot as another means to seek euphoria. I was on top of the world.

There were soon hints that I was beginning to have a problem with my drinking. I would want to start partying earlier than all my friends and when the party was winding down, I was just getting started. I didn't understand why people wanted to quit drinking or leave the party. I lived to party and my life centered on where I was going to party, who with, and what substance we were going to party on. I finished high school with a 3.3 GPA and an A+ in party 101. I decided that college could wait. I needed a year off to relax and enjoy life.

It was during my year away from school that I found heavier drugs. Meth, acid, cocaine, and ecstasy were all easily obtained. I would do any drug you put in front of me except stick a needle in my arm. I had a horrible phobia of needles and blades. Drugs and alcohol became my god. I may have been a saved Christian, but ever since moving to Texas I had quit talking to God. I didn't need him anymore. I had found something that was more effective and acted quicker. I needed relief from the boredoms of life everyday and drugs were there for me. Drugs were my solution to the problem that is my life. I was making good money, living with passive parents, and had very little responsibility. Partying took up a good portion of my waking moments.

My partying took me to places where drugs were everywhere and soon I was introduced to Crack-cocaine. Once I tried it I knew I had found my drug of choice. I had arrived. The instant gratification that I had been searching for was finally found. It wasn't long before I was in way over my head financially because of my crack using. The

winter of 1998 was a very cold year for me. I began hopping motel rooms smoking crack with people that I used to avoid. I was out on a three or four day binge one week and decided to come home to shower and change clothes, but when I arrived and tried to get in the house my key wouldn't unlock the door. My parents had changed the locks. How dare them! They were scared of me? They didn't want me? I'll show them! I make them wish they wanted me! I went out and hit the streets hard. It was only a day later that I was broke, homeless, without a vehicle, and laying my head on a concrete slab outside the rundown motel. That next day I called my grandmother who I lived with as a kid and she came to pick me up that day.

I spent the next two months detoxing at her house. All I felt like doing was sleeping and eating. I once again hated myself and what I had become. She helped me get into college at Oklahoma State University in the fall of 1999. I began working again and things were looking up. That is until I felt a lump. My lower abdomen had a tiny lump about the size of a marble. I thought it was probably a cyst and would eventually go away. Within a couple of weeks it had grown to the size of an egg and I was experiencing a horrible pain when I tried to bend over. I finally submitted to going to see the doctor and they decided to have it removed. It turns out it was a lymph node that was swollen but was not cancerous. The doctor then gave me an ultrasound and CAT scan. Multiple masses appeared all over my abdomen region. The next procedure was a needle biopsy. They got some tissue, enough to find it to be cancerous, but not enough to know what kind. This was not good. The last resort was major surgery.

The beginning of 2000 was another one of those cold winters for my life. I had the major surgery where they cut my belly open to get to more lymph nodes. It took thirty staples to put me back together and a week in the hospital before I could be put on solid food. They found out that the cancer was Hodgkin's Lymphoma and it was in Stage 2. I was lucky they said, that it didn't reach my bone marrow. Then it could have set up shop anywhere. I didn't see it as being too lucky. I was to spend the next 7 months undergoing chemotherapy. I lost all my hair, had to stay isolated from friends, lost 25 pounds in less than a month because I couldn't keep any food down. My disease took over and helped me justify using during this time.

I smoked lots of pot to help with my appetite and with nausea. I ate tons of pills to relieve me of the aches and hurts from surgery and chemo. I did this and lay on the couch for months. All I would do was watch TV, play video games, or sit in front of the computer, all the while seeking oblivion one joint and pill at a time. After I had my last cycle of chemotherapy I came up with the brilliant idea of making up for lost party time. I had cabin fever like you wouldn't believe. Since I had turned 21 right before getting sick I hadn't had a chance to experience the bar scene. So that's exactly what I did. It wasn't long before I was sitting at some run down house smoking crack and spending money like it was nothing. It got worse and worse and I did some pretty awful things to family and friends to find ways and means to get more crack. It all came crashing down in the spring of 2004.

My mom and her fourth husband were on vacation and I decided to pawn every tool, CD, DVD, and electronic equipment that they owned so that I could party on crack while they were gone. I had every intention of getting the items out of pawn before they got back but when my paycheck came in, I went to the dealer's house before the pawnshop. Needless to say I didn't get anything out of pawn. I can remember the look on my mom's face when she walked in from her trip home and saw the dust ring on the table from where the TV they owned used to sit. My step dad wanted to call the cops, but my mom said that I should go to treatment. I accepted going to treatment and ended up at Valley Hope in Cushing, OK. I never knew what A.A. or N.A. was until getting to treatment. I had heard of them and knew that it had to do with drinking and drugging but that was it. It was in treatment that I began to talk to God again and it not as a foxhole prayer. I had plenty of foxhole prayers while using and during my cancer battle. This time was different. I really knew I needed something greater than me for help.

God was there and during treatment I became close to Him. After treatment I made several mistakes. I didn't follow the suggestions given to me in treatment. I only went to meetings. I didn't get a sponsor. I didn't work the steps. I quit praying daily. I relied on my own strength to get me through the day. I wanted to cut corners so that when I made it, I could take credit for it. Ego and pride grew as I began to get things back. I stayed clean for eleven months and then the relapse that had been building up finally came to a head. I had a random thought that it would be nice to get high smoking crack. It was a small thought and it didn't last long, but I acted on it immediately. I had no defense against it. One week later I was kicked out of my girlfriend's house and was in trouble at work and with family. I spent the next few months doing the rotten things I did before. I got myself in serious financial debt and manipulated family to bail me out time after time. I even introduced my mother to crack and we began smoking together.

It wasn't long before my step dad found out. I had taken my mother's checkbook and written 20 checks for cash within a two-day period. To avoid being hurt bad by him, I decided to return to Valley Hope and try treatment one more time. I was told by most of my family that this was my last chance. I knew something was different about me this

time. My bottom was deeper this time. I was more willing to try suggestions this time. I got out of treatment and by the first week I had a sponsor. I attended somewhere around 150 meetings in 90 days. I worked the steps honestly with my sponsor and had all twelve completed in seven months. By my sixth month I began chairing meetings and attending district and area meetings. I got involved with my home group. I would show up to meetings early and stay late. I began to make friends and we would go have dinner and go out together to have fun sober. I made the club house MY home group. I invested in it and the people that attended it. When I reached one year of sobriety, my group voted me in as alternate GSR. I then was voted in as district Gratitude chair by the district. I was participating in my own recovery and enjoying life. Most importantly I was letting God run the show and giving God the credit for the good in my life.

Somewhere during that first year the miracle happened. The obsession to drink and use was removed. Many more miracles happened as well. I went from being my own worst enemy to becoming my own best friend. I felt okay to be me. Life was no longer missing something. The void inside me was God shaped and God was the only thing that could fill it to satisfaction. I became interested in helping others and getting out of myself. I began to sponsor newcomers and work with others in recovery. During a session with my counselor I was told that there could be a chance for Oxford House to come to town. I jumped on board and got in touch with the landlord that was interested. She owned a duplex in town and wanted to turn it into a recovery home but didn't know what she was doing. I shared with her how much it would help the community and those living there if it was converted to an Oxford House. She loved the idea and I somehow got hold of the number for an outreach worker and hooked them up with the landlord.

During this time God was using me in other ways to reach others. I started a Valley Hope Alumni group for friends, family, and alumni of Cushing Valley to get together once a month and have dinner. I also spoke with the director of Valley Hope and set up one day a month for a group of us to come share experience, strength, and hope with the patients on how important it is to get connected with a home group and to stay in touch with people in recovery.

My story of how I came to Oxford House is probably not the normal story. I didn't come out of treatment and move in a house. I didn't move into Oxford House – Shalimar in Stillwater until I had over one year of sobriety. I was living with my grandmother and God was telling me that it was time to move on. I was scared to move into a single apartment by myself. Isolation could become a problem I sensed. Oxford House coming to my town and me being involved with getting it there was no coincidence. God has a plan. I thought his plan was to bring Oxford House to Stillwater so that I could ease into society as a self-supporting member. This in part is true. I have learned so much by living there the past six months. I am financially responsible thanks to the treasurer position. I am clean thanks to the guidelines set in place for keeping a clean house and room. I am responsible like never before thanks to the structure that Oxford House as put around me. I am held accountable for my actions thanks to the roommates that I have and love.

Oxford House is teaching me how to be a man. I have been living as a child for all of my adult life up until this point. I had never lived on my own. I was always living under the roof of a family member. I remember the first week at the Oxford House. I was the first one to move in and needed groceries. I suddenly realized that I didn't know how to grocery shop. I was so used to food already being in the fridge at grandma's house. I didn't know the first thing about what I needed to buy, how much to buy, and how much it would cost. It is amazing how gratifying the little things of life are to me today. Little is such a relative term. What is little to me today, one year ago was very big. What is big to me today may turn out to be a little thing down the road.

Oh, and about God having a plan. I completely underestimated God's plans for me. It turns out his plan was for me to move into Oxford House so that I could one day be employed by them and open houses all over my home state of Oklahoma. It is funny how things always end up working out for the best in the long run. I have always known that I wanted to work with others, helping them better their lives ever since I got serious about recovery. Today God opened that door through Oxford House so that I can do just that. My failures of yesterday can be shared to someone struggling today for a victory tomorrow.

Oxford House – Time for Recovery

Jack "Randy" M's Story

After being released from long-term residential treatment (7 ½ months), I moved into a court mandated ¾ house. There was limited structure for 45 men transitioning from all kinds of different facilities. The house rule was "no drinking on premise," but we had drunks, practicing addicts, and "Working Girls" plying their trade and services around the clock.

Three others and I decided our sobriety was at stake and looked into opening an "Oxford House". We had no Oxford House experience, but we found an understanding landlord who let us rent a house – initially on a weekly basis. This allowed us to move in immediately without a security deposit, or a whole month's lease up front. The house was, and is, known as "Oxford House-Dovemeadow". After we obtained our conditional charter, Mollie Brown encouraged us to petition our local chapter for recognition.

Much to our dismay, the chapter denied our joining, citing that we hadn't been approved by their Housing Committee, and we were sent home. The house elected to remain an Oxford House, without chapter affiliation. I was contacted again by the State Board and by Mollie Brown, both of whom asked us to attend another meeting. After the chapter received encouragement from the State Board, we finally were accepted and now Dovemeadow happens to be one of the strongest houses financially, and with high member participation at the chapter and state levels. On July 14, Dovemeadow and Collingsworth each loaned \$1,000.00 to Colmenero House to open. One of the Dovemeadow's senior residents and I moved into that house and are happy to report a full house.

My experience has been very positive, and a good learning experience, contributing to my recovery. I cannot fathom my successful recovery without my "Oxford House Experience." I now serve as an officer on my state board and chapter. I helped Dovemeadow open from a "Grass Roots" level, without a loan of any kind, relying on all furniture donated from various sources, and an understanding landlord allowing us to pay weekly. Later I helped convert a woman's house in trouble to a men's house, and lived there until they got on their feet. Now I have the privilege to see Colmenero House get off to a good start.

Gino's Story

I was born and brought up in Watertown, Massachusetts, and a direct suburb of Boston. I was the fourth youngest of eleven children in my family. My father was on the Watertown Police Force and for a number of years was the detective in charge of going after illegal drugs. I was a "normal" kid going through high school except I smoked a lot of pot and drank a lot of booze. In 1976 I graduated from High School and, looking back, I suspect the schools just wanted to get rid of me as well as others. Back then, they just kept promoting you to the next grade whether you worked for it or not, so they gave me a diploma and said good-bye.

I joined the carpenter's union and learned how to be a pretty good carpenter but soon left the rather strict union to go out on my own. By then I was a regular user of cocaine. I sniffed so much that within a couple of years I had the first of nine operations on my nose in hopes that doctor's could put it back together enough to permit me to keep snorting. Along the way I managed a couple of car washes and enjoyed the freedom and contacts I could make to get more dope. By December of 1989 I was a mess and one of my brothers who was working in Alaska convinced me to go with him up to Fairbanks to work on the pipeline. For six months I did not drink or use drugs and saved what I thought was a lot of money – so much that I started using again. My bother kicked me out of his house because he didn't want me around anymore. I turned back into the cocaine addict and thief I was in Boston. I spent all the money I made working on the pipeline and was now homeless in Fairbanks Alaska. I started getting in trouble with the police and living the life of a homeless drug addict. The weather started getting bad real quick and it's not fun being homeless in Fairbanks in the winter.

On Christmas Day 1990, it was 45 degrees below zero and I had no place to sleep. I went to the Yellow Pages to look for someplace to get treatment. I found Lakeside Milam listed which was located in Washington State. I called the 800-number and a voice answered and soon asked me if I had health insurance. Fortunately I did as a member of the pipe-fitters union. I told him and he said, "stay by the pay phone and I will check it out. If it checks out, I will call you back." He did and about a half hour later the pay phone rang and I answered. The Lakeside Milam guy told me to go the airport in Fairbanks where there was an airline ticket in my name to get my butt down to Seattle. He told me to do it right now or the tickets would not be good. I arrived at the Fairbanks airport, got the tickets and boarded the plane. Everyone was wishing everyone else Merry Christmas but all I knew was that at least I was no longer facing homelessness in minus 45-degree weather.

When I arrived at the airport in Seattle, I saw a fellow waiting for me holding a hand-letter sign "Ride for Gino." He took me directly to Lakeside – with no stops along the way. For 28 days I welcomed being in out of the cold but I worried about where to go next. Several of the counselors at Lakeside told me about a new program called Oxford House that had just come to the State of Washington. They explained there were two houses for men and one for women in the state. They fortunately took me to interview at both of the men's houses.

The first house I interviewed at was Mercer Island. Mark Spence, an outreach worker from Washington, DC was there for the interview. During my interview I was upset because a puppy ran into the living room and pooped in the corner. I was shocked and let them know it. They told me they would have a house meeting with existing residents and vote on whether or not I could live there. The counselor took me next to the other men's house located a few miles away in Edmonds. Tom Dugan and the other guys at the Edmonds House were far more welcoming and the house had no puppies, dogs or cats. I really hoped they would vote me in and they did. I called Mercer Island to let them know that I would not be coming. I got Mark Spence on the phone and he immediately said, "You did not get voted in, but try the house in Edmonds," and he added, "If they don't accept you, we will be opening more houses." I just said I had and they had accepted me.

I moved in January 23, 1991 and became part of the family of men in recovery living and running Oxford House – Edmonds. I stayed 15 months and became convinced that I was now free of addiction and convinced myself it was time to move back to Boston. I did okay in Boston for about 3 months but then I began using again. I realize now I didn't give Oxford House enough time. It was back to the old life. One Sunday I was out of money and needed a fix. I was driving past Mass General Hospital and noticed a construction site with nobody around on a Sunday afternoon and a one-man tamper just sitting there waiting to be taken. I backed my van up close to the tamper, got out, found a plank and begin to push it into the back of my van. It slipped off the plank and a cop driving by stopped, came over and asked what I was doing. My mind clicked into overdrive. "My damn boss expects me to move this over to the other side of the building to tamp the gravel down and get the slab ready for concrete on Monday. Here I am all alone trying to do something that requires two or three men to do." "Who do you work for?" he asked. I looked up over the police officer's head and saw a construction sign with the company's name on it. I told him I worked for that company and he helped put the machine in the back of my van. I got out of there waving at the police officer as I drove away and went to a place I knew would pay good money for the hot machine. They did. I bought some more drugs and thought I was on top of the world. All I worried about that whole week was when were the cops going to come get me for doing that. I finally realized that when the cop realized he helped me heist that thing he never said anything because he didn't want to be known as the cop that helped in a heist. He probably said he never saw anything or anybody on that site that day when the machine came up missing.

My family convinced me to move back to Washington State and get back involved with the Oxford Houses. They seemed to be the only thing that has ever worked for me. I drove my van back to Washington State and move into the new Bellevue (Bell-Square) Oxford House that Tom Dugan was opening. That lasted for about six weeks. Tom and the others had to expel me for using cocaine

Soon I was off in my van to a find a new place where people would leave me alone. I began an aimless voyage in my van all over the United States. My brother on the Watertown police department reported me as a missing person. While much of the next year is hazy I recall some close calls. One morning after I had pulled off the road near Gulfport, Mississippi and slept in my van, I was just getting ready to move on when I was surrounded by four or five lawmen with guns drawn who said, "Put your hands up." I did. They then asked me to get out the van. I kept my hands up and explained that I had to put the van in park, so could I put my hands down to do so? For some reason they did not understand my Boston pronunciation of "park" and got very excited. Fortunately, one of the officers realized what I was saying and reached over and moved the gearshift to park. I was so afraid that if I went to get out of the van, took my foot off the brake and it moved because it was not in "park," they would have all emptied their guns into me. They brought me to the local police station and towed my van along afterwards. The sheriff told me that if I could pay the tow truck driver, they would let me go. I told him I had no money. He told the driver to take whatever was fair payment from my van. He took my toolbox. Then the sheriff told me to get in my van and get out of town and don't ever come back. I said I had no money for gas and the men in the sheriff office took up a collection and gave me about twenty dollars to buy gas. I did and headed for Phoenix, Arizona. I later learned that my brothers had flown to several cities to view bodies in the morgue to see if I was the John Doe being reported in connection with the missing person file.

Two and half years after I left I got back to the Seattle area only to be arrested for burglarizing a garage. When in jail my family sent Tom Dugan bail money to get me out of jail. Tom decided it would be good if I stayed for a while and after 30 days he came to explain that he was my uncle and would post bond. He was just opening another Oxford House in Mount Vernon and said I could come help get the house started. I did and in March 1995 – following my 30-day detox in jail – I moved into my third Oxford House. Since I moved into my first Oxford House I have watched the number of houses in Washington State increase from three to nearly two hundred. Early on I learned that I could help new houses get started and my mentor, Tom, often volunteered my services to help start houses all over the country. In 1997, Paul sent me to Arizona and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I guess I taught the guys in Pittsburgh better than the folks in Arizona because that ten-man house has survived while there are currently no Oxford Houses in Arizona. Whatever my skills were then, they have become better. I was hired in Washington State in July 1998 to help get new houses started and to help keep existing houses on track. The men and woman in the Washington Oxford Houses really deserve the credit for our state's successful network of Oxford Houses. Along with early residents of Washington State Oxford Houses like Tom and Myrna, hundreds of men and women who have made Oxford Houses work in the state have helped me understand the job of an outreach worker. Their good teaching has enabled me to become a regional supervisor of other employees of Oxford House, Inc. who are slowly but surely moving toward our goal of having an Oxford House available for everyone seeking recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction.

Teddy H

I came from a broken family. At the age of 5, I was sent to live with my father, an alcoholic. There were parties at the house all the time. At the tender age of 6, I started my drinking career. I was the cute little kid that snuck sips from unattended drinks. It was also a practice in my father's eyes to prescribe hot lemon toddies whenever I was sick (lemon juice mixed with honey and whiskey). I got my first taste of drugs at the age of 11 when my older brother returned from Woodstock. I found his bag of weed in his dresser drawer. I thought it was a new type of tobacco and asked him if I could smoke some (I had started smoking cigarettes when I was 9). He was more than happy to give a lesson in the world of marijuana.

I was always a shy person, but this new experience gave me a newfound courage to open up to people. The only problem was that the people I was opening up to were all into the EXPERIENCE (as Jimmy Hendrix describes it). I progressively started smoking more weed and also started trying other drugs. I started growing my hair long and became a part of the HIPPIE movement. At 12 years old I ran away from home for the first time. I ended up in San Francisco in the Haight Asbury district and my drug career really took off. I was introduced to Barbiturates and to LSD, Tuenol, Seconal, Demoral, and Phenobarbitol, I did it all. My Acid experiences were spectacular journeys into a world never before seen. I crashed in houses where there was every drug imaginable being used. I lived like this for 6 months until I was busted for possession with intent to distribute. Being a minor, I was sent back to my father.

My father was a very abusive drunk. I was constantly beaten and neglected. Food was a rarity in the house. If it weren't for neighbors I probably would have starved. My older brothers had moved away from the house – so it was just me and my father – and I took the full brunt of his fury. At 13, I ran away again. This time I went to see if I could find my mother. My father tried to keep where she lived a secret, but I searched through his personal stuff and found out she lived in California. Once again I thumbed my way from Maryland to LA. Mom took me in with no problem. The problem was that the man she was married to was as bad if not worse than my real father. I tolerated him for a few months until I had enough. I snuck into their bedroom one night and stole his wallet then left California. I just started hitchhiking my way across the country, living on the \$1400 that I stole from my stepfather. That ended when a police car stopped where I was thumbing. He ran a check on me and found out about the grand theft charges. I was once again sent back to Maryland to live with my father.

The abuse continued at home and I decide to do something about it. My father was a retired DOD Police Officer and I stole his 38 revolver one day while he was at work. My plan was to shoot him that night, but he found the gun before I had the chance to carry out my plan. His solution to his problem (me) was to send me of to live with some relatives in Pennsylvania. That worked for about a year until I got to where they couldn't control me anymore. I was the sent to live with relatives in Virginia. Same results, I would find the right people and continue in my drinking and drugging. Every morning, before school started, we would sit in the school parking lot drinking Boone's Farm wine, doing bong hits, and eating whatever pills we could bring from home. My next set of relatives was in Kentucky. I really enjoyed it there. My Aunt raised horses and would let me help with their training, but I still found the right connections to score weed and some pills. Doing farm work for the local farmers paid a nice bit of money to support my habit. My uncle

there was a State Trooper and my family thought that this would help reform me. It turned out that my uncle was also a pothead and we got along just dandy.

I graduated High School and 2 weeks later I enlisted in the Navy (Jobs were hard to come by in rural Kentucky). The drugs stopped for a little while as I went through Boot Camp. As soon as that was over I started looking for those secretive people that were just like me and built up my connections. I was amazed at how many of my fellow sailors were both alcoholics and drug addicts. I fit into it like a fish takes to water (My own little McHale's Navy). There were plenty of hiding spaces to go and smoke using a one-hitter pipe while in port and out at sea you could always go to the back of the ship and smoke a joint. The wind would carry any smell and just blow it away. At night you could always find 4 or 5 small circles with joints being passed around. It was in the navy that I was introduced to Crystal Meth and Cocaine. It was there that I was also introduced to my most favorite drug of all, Methaqualone (Quaaludes). With them I found a true friend. Slowly, my tolerance built up until I got to the point where I was taking 4 ludes just to get off.

Most people take one lude and loose control of their ability to function normally. I would take 4 and ride my motorcycle to go bar hopping. The same thing happened with most of the other barbiturates I was taking. It was not unusual for me to eat 9 Seconal and go partying. A normal person would be in a coma from overdosing, but with me it had a different effect. I wouldn't know why until many years later. This behavior went on for the 8 years I was in. It came to an end in 1986 when the Navy started doing drug testing. That ended my plans for a career in the Navy. During the time I was in the Navy I also discovered a new passion, Motorcycles. I had started going to Biker Bars while I was in and continued that practice when I got out. On the day I was discharged I made a purchase of an ounce of Crystal Meth. My plan was to ride until that was gone and that would be the place where I would try and start a new life. It took 7 days to get from California to Tulsa, Oklahoma; stopping about every 100 miles to refresh my buzz. Looking back, it's a wonder I didn't kill myself along the way.

In Oklahoma I landed a great job as a Sheet Metal Worker. I also immersed myself in the biker culture along with getting drunk every night in the bars and getting stoned as well. My favorite drug was getting harder and harder to find (they stopped making them because of some FDA ruling). Most weekends during the spring, summer, and early fall meant Bike Rallies, those non-stop drinking and drug binges. This behavior went on until 1991 when I quit drinking and doing drugs with the exception of Marijuana. I was laid off after 7 years at the sheet metal shop. I sold everything I owned (The School bus that I was living in and my motorcycle), bought a pickup truck, and headed to Colorado to prospect for Gold. I spent the spring there with some luck and headed for the true gold country in the California Sierras. I had some very good luck there and ended up with approximately \$4,000 in gold nuggets and dust. I made my way to San Diego to get the gold appraised and to sell it. My plan was to spend the winter in the Arizona desert prospecting for gold and turquoise. The same day that I arrived in San Diego, as I was checking into a motel, someone broke into my truck and stole everything that was in it including the gold that I worked so hard to get. I only had enough cash to get the motel for a few days so after that I was homeless with a truck that had the windshield broken out of it. That meant I couldn't drive it or afford to get it fixed. During this time I had quit using Marijuana simply because of the isolation I experienced while out in the wilderness.

I managed to find a job after just a few days and started working in a shipyard. I followed Government Contracts with several Shipyards over the next 3 years, slowly building up a bit of cash surplus to get something else going. In 1994, I found out about a land auction in Tennessee and won a bid on a piece of property. I had enough cash left over to buy an old work truck, a tent, and a few essentials for roughing it for a while. I also bought a few carpentry tools and started my own business doing remodeling. Business was good and with the used building material I got from the jobs I was doing, I was able to build myself a nice little house. Since I was self-employed I could start smoking weed again without having to worry about getting drug tested. Things were going great. I owned my own home and had my own business, and was getting ready to build a shop to expand my business venture, until December 1996. It was then that I fell on a job and broke my back. I was not able to work for 2 years and had to sell everything I had to pay the hospital bill of \$60,000. Once again I was homeless and broke. The State of Tennessee would not offer any insurance and I thought I couldn't use any VA medical benefits because of my bad discharge.

I found out that Florida had a state insurance program that I could qualify for so I hitchhiked down to Orlando and got enrolled in their program. I managed to survive from food assistance and a makeshift shelter I made in the woods. Eventually my abilities returned and through a grant I was able to attend truck-driving school. Since DOT regulations required drug testing, I had to quit marijuana again. I am one of those people who don't really consider Marijuana as a drug. I drove a truck for 3 years, slowly building up a surplus of cash so that I could start again. I bought another

piece of property in Tennessee and built a small cabin there. The only problem was that there was no electrical service there and no water. I basically lived in the truck I was driving. The company I was working for made me mad because the truck was a piece of crap and kept breaking down. I left the truck at a truck stop and went to live in my cabin in the woods. I managed to keep myself in food and weed by working with a friend hauling scrap metal until the truck we were using broke down and we sold it for scrap. Since there were no jobs around the rural area I was living in, I decided to head elsewhere to find work. I ended up in Temple, TX. It was there that I found out that I was eligible for VA medical services.

In 2003, I had a mental breakdown and was locked in a psych ward for 11 days. The diagnosis was Bi-polar Disorder. My doctor also diagnosed me as being a Dry Drunk (I had never heard this term before). As part of my outpatient care, I attended AA for the first time. Me being a devout Atheist, it didn't take long for me to realize that AA was not for me. In 2005, I went through a Substance Abuse Program and a Resident Vocational Rehab through the VA and managed to stay away from weed for 8 months. Once I was discharged from there I immediately returned to using weed and stopped all treatment. I did pretty good doing odd jobs and living in shelters. In 2007, I had another breakdown and once again was locked away for 11 days. This time when I was released I got hooked up with Oxford House in Tennessee. The Social Workers at the VA hospital in Nashville are very familiar with the local Houses. On December 7, 2007, I was welcomed into the Oxford House – Hilson as an emergency member sleeping on a couch. Five days later they found a bed for me at the Hamilton House. One day later I got a decent job and was able to start paying my share in the house. The job that I started was closer to the Oxford House – Hilson but they didn't have any beds. I waited for 4 months before a bed became open and immediately moved back into the Hilson House. November 26, 2007 was the last day I used weed and I have stayed away from alcohol and hard drugs since 1991. I am currently the Comptroller of Oxford House – Hilson and still undergoing out patient care for Bi-Polar Disorder. I have also been able to find my Higher Power so that I can work the AA Steps.

Today, I have over 13 ½ years clean. In March of 2008, I started my twelfth year working for Oxford House Inc. and I have the most wonderful, loving, caring girl friend in the world (Judy). My family fights over me and whom I am going to stay with when I visit them in Boston – not who has to put me up because I have nowhere to go. I own my own home; I'm in the process of buying rental homes and working on being able to retire very comfortably some day. I owe very much of this to Oxford House for being there for me.

Billy L's Story

Early in 1986-87, I had been on a long binge but had somehow managed to make and keep an appointment for intake into a rehab program at the VA Hospital. I finished the program but only managed to stay clean for 3 months.

Using again, I was back off to the races. I eventually ended up back at the VA Hospital but was put out for hanging with my new girlfriend. I HAD NO PLACE TO GO! Because I had befriended the guys in the VA they took up a collection and my instinct told me to go to the shelter. I took my one bag of belongings, and the \$5.00 they'd collected and found my way to the New Way treatment facility.

At New Way I learned a few good things about myself. I was actually a good speaker and very personable. This was amazing to me because I was always shy. There I attended my first recovery anniversary. Eventually I was asked to lead a meeting and found out that I was pretty good at it.

My skin cleared, I gained weight and started wearing nice clothes. During my time in the program I met another person in recovery who had a trailer out on Virginia Beach. He invited me to come out; I asked permission to go and thought it was granted. To my surprise, when I returned I was asked to leave the program. Again, I HAD NOWHERE TO GO! I saw a flyer at a meeting and interviewed with Oxford House Adams Mills. They only had 2 openings and I showed up to see that there were 5 other guys interviewing. To date I am still grateful that I was one of the guys selected. I had no job but had managed to save up a little money while in treatment. Man, did they ever motivate me to find a job and I did. That was the best group of guys I have ever met.

Not only did I find a good maintenance job but I also found a girlfriend. I was enjoying life.

Later I found out that Oxford House Inc. was hiring and I started working as an Outreach Worker. I was fortunate enough to go places and start houses in Minnesota, Illinois, North Carolina and New Jersey.

I left outreach when my daughter was born. My battle with cancer brought me back to Oxford House. It was affordable but, most importantly; I had the support of my housemates to help me through this difficult time.

Oxford House works! I am living proof. Even after 19 years clean, it is still working for me. My Oxford House experience has not only helped me to get clean but to stay clean as well.

Misty's Story

My name is Misty and I am most definitely an addict. I am 32 years old. I grew up with both my parents and a brother 3 years older than me. I had a fairly decent childhood. It wasn't perfect yet there wasn't anything major like physical or sexual abuse.

I first tried marijuana at age 11 and soon after that tried alcohol. Of course, I liked how they both made me feel. I started using both of the drugs on a daily basis at the age of 16. This was also when I had my first experience with crack. This landed me in a psychiatric ward at 16 and in the NC Department of Corrections at 17. After prison I continued on in my using.

I met my first husband-to-be in 1994. I was 18 years old. We had our first daughter in the latter part of 1995 and were married in 1996. Our second and third daughters came along in 1998 and 2000. During the marriage I was still using marijuana on a daily basis as well as drinking and taking pills as I felt it necessary. Although we managed to take care of our daughters and meet their basic needs, I can look back on it now and see how my addiction had the best of me. We fought a lot and ended up in jail for domestic violence more than once. Eventually, our life together would come to an end due to tragedy and from the direct result of our disease (addiction). This tragedy took place on May 15, 2002. I had left my husband as I had many times before, but this particular time he didn't take to it very well. He hunted me down, found me, and came very close to taking my life. He stabbed me 21 times with a butcher knife and left me to die in a pool of my own blood. By grace alone I survived. I was rushed to the hospital and sent in for emergency surgery. I had 8 holes in my intestines that had to be repaired, a punctured and collapsed lung, and an ear that was almost taken off, which had to be repaired by a plastic surgeon. I would spend the next 3 days on life support fighting for my life. I was in and out of the hospital for the next month and was soon fully recovered.

Unfortunately, after recovering, I chose not to return to being a mother to my daughters but instead to cultivate a full-blown active addiction. At this point, my parents would take on the responsibility of raising my girls. I would stay strung out on crack for the next nine months until I was introduced to crystal meth. For the next year I would smoke meth everyday. It was being manufactured in my home so I had easy access to it.

On March 11, 2004, I had had enough. I got into a detox in Asheville, NC. I spent a short six days there, then was interviewed and accepted into Oxford House Wyoming. I would spend one of the best years of my life there. I got involved with my house as well as the chapter immediately. I loved it. Life was good. I left the Wyoming house after being there a year to open Oxford House Round Top. A month after the house opened, I started slipping. I wasn't making very many meetings, rarely talking to my sponsor. Needless to say, I used again. Of course, I left the house almost immediately and stayed out in active addiction for nine months. Nothing had changed. I ended up back in my home town strung out on crack once again. I experienced being stabbed again, this time by a drug dealer whom I had robbed. My other lung was punctured, but I was released from the hospital the next day. I was right back at it-smoking crack with four fresh stab wounds and a punctured lung. Eventually, I ended up homeless in the cold month of January. It wasn't until I found myself sleeping on the concrete floor of an abandoned house in freezing weather, smelling bad from lack of bathing, and having thoughts of suicide that I realized that I had been taught a better way to live. I learned this better way from Oxford House and from 12 step programs.

I called some friends from my network in Asheville and, by grace, once again made it back into detox. This time I took it a step further and went into treatment for 21 days. Before leaving treatment I did an interview with Oxford House Church Street, which I moved into in February 2006. I almost immediately got back involved with my house as well as the chapter. I stayed at Church Street for a year then moved out and got married to a wonderful man (whom I met in treatment – please – don't try this at home, it doesn't always work). We left Asheville and moved back to my hometown. I stayed connected and involved with Oxford House since the minute I moved out. Today, I am over 2 ½ years clean and am employed full time by Oxford House. I regained custody of my beautiful daughters after 5 long years without them over a year ago. By the way, my wonderful husband and I are still together (it is working for us). We are one big happy family one day at a time. I am blessed. I couldn't be happier. I am so grateful to Oxford House. It taught me how to live again. Today I can be a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, and aunt, a friend, a sponsor, and

an employee, and no matter what, I do not have to use. I could go on and on, but I'll stop. I just can't express enough how grateful I am for Oxford House for making all this possible for me and my family. Thank You, Jesus!

Patrick's Story

About 10 months into recovery my sponsor and I were working on my sex inventory. At the time I was living with a girl also in recovery. After completing this inventory I was pretty disgusted with my behavior in regard to the woman in my life, and I realized that living with her was not a good idea. But where would I go. I didn't know, and I was scared. I didn't want to be homeless again.

I had been going to AA meetings everyday, and even though I didn't really understand anything, I was able to meet a few of the regulars at these meetings. One man that I met was around my age, 45ish, and living in an Oxford House. I shared with him my dilemma, and he suggested that I interview at his house. They had an opening. I did interview there, but was rejected due to the fact that one of the other residents there had a friend coming out of rehab. So they accepted him.

I immediately got scared, and worried again, because I felt rejected once again. I mentioned this to my sponsor, and he promptly went to the Internet, found the Oxford Website, and made a copy of the directory of houses in our area. I didn't call right away, but after being frightened, and feeling enough pain, I did call. I got an interview with another house, and interviewed there, but was turned down there as well. I wasn't given a reason, just told that they only had one space, and that it had been filled. I got fearful again. I called another house nearby and was granted another interview.

At this house, the Lakewood House, I was told that there were two openings. I thought for sure that I had a chance now. When I got there the night of the interview, I was slightly early, and, much to my dismay the house was interviewing another candidate already, and well, you guessed it, I got frightened again. After he interviewed, it was my turn. I told them basically what I am telling everyone here. They knew I was scared, and assured me that even if I didn't get in here, that somewhere I would be taken in. I did feel relieved. After a short time, both of us interviewees were accepted into the house.

After settling in to the house for a while, I found out that this house was struggling. You see, the previous President of the house had been embezzling from the residents for quite some time, and I understand was also using in the house. He and others were promptly dismissed from the house as by Outreach. Unfortunately for the house, however, many of the bills for the house had not been paid, and some of the services for the house had been terminated. In fact the electricity had just been turned back on. As I remember, we all had jobs, and it wasn't long, just a few short months, that everything was settled, and our services were turned back on. I learned the value of gratitude from this experience.

I was made Treasurer of the house about 2 months after my arrival. I guess that the house members felt I would be too frightened to steal. They were right. Anyway, it was at this time that I familiarized myself with the Oxford House Manual. I read my job description, as well as others, and also found that many of the things that the house was supposed to be doing, the house was not doing. The main thing was that the house was not having regular weekly house meetings. We would do the books, but not actually have a meeting. You see, the President at that time seemed to be quite content with this system of running a house. I was not though, and I soon realized that the President might have been cheating the house out of money. I say this because he was saying to the house that he was spending money on items for the house, but was not providing the receipts. I doubted him and challenged him at the meetings that we did have, but to no avail. No one else in the house realized, or even cared, that this might be going on. I spent a lot of time with my sponsor at this time, and it took months of patience and tolerance to accept the President's behavior. Eventually, however, the house began to realize that I might be right, and finally it was brought under control.

Around this same time, I asked the house to pay for myself and another guy to go to the world convention in Washington, D.C.. After the convention I was very excited about Oxford, and was eager to share what I had learned in the house. Much to my dismay, most of the house residents weren't as excited as myself, including the guy I went with, and change seemed impossible. I was elected at this time to President, and I decided that the house could probably only handle regular meetings. I instituted the sample weekly meeting agenda, from the manual, made sure that the traditions were read, and helped other officers to learn their jobs properly. This was enough to bring the house closer together. After my tenure was over, I took no offices and relaxed from house officer duties. The current officers of the house are doing an excellent job. Was this due to my actions?

I really don't know. I'm sure that I helped. Clearly, however, I've learned through recovery that it was not only me. The path that the Lakewood house has taken over these two years, I believe, is the path that it was supposed to take. What I mean is, that only through powers beyond ourselves, is it possible for there to be growth. My ego and pride say that it was I who brought positive change to the house. That simply isn't so. I am not that great, although sometimes I feel that way. In fact, even the previous President brought positive aspects to the house, and myself.

This is what Oxford has brought into my life. First, and foremost, it has brought patience and tolerance. I remember very clearly, when I was whining to my sponsor about the previous President, I was taught to pray for this sick man. I didn't want to, and didn't all the time, but I did enough to get more out of myself, to help another. I also realized that I needed to pray for myself. That's my second major lesson learned. I cannot judge. I'm great at judging others. Take their inventory rather than my own. Through these life lessons, I believe I do that less. Could I have learned these character defects without living in Oxford? Maybe, but probably, at least not as fast as when living the Oxford way of life.

One of the greatest qualities of the Oxford living is its diversity of men, or women, that you find in the houses. You have different ages, personalities, ethnics, politics, religions, etc. If I were living in another environment, then I would have more choice in finding people like me. Also, where else, but in an Oxford environment, will someone say to you, "You hold on now." Such honesty would only in some kind of recovery-based housing environment. I've learned much more, but I am getting long winded so I will close with this.

I've learned that as a sick, very sick man, that at Oxford I can become a sober man. That all I have to do is, not get high, pay my rent, not be disruptive. Is that really that hard? Not for this less frightened man. In fact it's easy. Through gratitude I can do these things with pleasure. To watch my growth, and others, I learn that my condition is treatable. And isn't that what I have been searching for all these years? Yes it is. Thank God for Oxford House.

Keith G's Story

My name is Keith and I am an addict. I want to tell you a little bit about myself, what it was like and what it's like now. My clean date is October 31 1996. To my Oxford family, as I'm sitting here trying to type my story, I must tell you that my emotions are all over the place. This is the first time I have written my story or let as many people into this very private part of my life so I'll say now I love you all, and I hope somewhere someone gets something from my story.

I was born in Trinity, a small town just south east of Greensboro, NC. I was one of two children, just my sister and me I had a loving family, a Christian family who loved and adored my sister and me. We did not want for anything. I need you to know when I say that we did not want for anything that my family was not rich with a lot of money but they were rich with a lot of spiritual gifts. We were a large family who were so close that we had family dinner cooked by my grandmother every Tuesday Night. I have to say just a little right now about my upbringing in the church. It seemed like I was there every day. Today, I'm so thankful for that foundation in the church.

I attended Trinity High School where I was an active student in academics and sports and had many friends. Around my ninth grade year I started experimenting with Marijuana. I loved being high. Everyone around me was getting high and it became a normal thing to do. Pretty soon I was using Marijuana and alcohol on a regular basis. I still felt that I was functioning as a normal member of society.

I started getting in some trouble with my parents regarding my grades slipping. They were unaware of my using. I, however, maintained a C average to allow me to play sports.

After four years of socially using, I was graduating from high school and my sister was in college. After my senior year, my mother suffered her first of two heart attacks. That was the first time that I can say now I did not want to feel what I was feeling. I used drugs and alcohol to escape. Being afraid of losing someone you love so dearly is overwhelming. Family was the most important thing in my life and in the lives of my friends.

I attended Davidson County Comm. College for two and a half years. While there I worked part time and partied a great deal. Somewhere along the way I was making money and could be more and more independent from my parents. By my second year at Davidson, cocaine was on the scene and that was the one for me. In those days if you had a bag of Coke there was no one and nothing you could not get. It was very alluring for a lot of women and this gave way to my wanting to have it around a lot.

After I flunked out of Davidson, my parents cut me off and I went to work full time and the partying took off. Sometime in the late 80's I met my first love. She was attending Greensboro College. At this time I worked for MCI. We hung out on the college scene a lot. It was all about the drugs and my girl. It was awhile after we got engaged

that I realized I had a problem. Days and days of no sleep, chronic nosebleeds and I can remember when my using had some repercussions from my using. I could no longer hide it. She let my parents know that I had a problem. My family was not drinkers, so telling them that I was using drugs was a huge betrayal in my eyes at that time. Her explanation was that she loved me and wanted me to be OK. I told her that I could stop anytime. I did not think I was an addict. She called me an addict and said that if I did not get some help she would leave. I was truly devastated. Somewhere in that time period I met an American Indian man who introduced me into the drug world on a whole new level. I was using everyday and was missing for weeks on end. We would travel to Lumberton, NC and move large quantities of drugs back to Trinity. My fiancée realized what was going on; she could not handle it and this was the end of the relationship. After our break up it became gas pedal wide open. I was at my friend's house and the police searched it for drugs. He was locked up. My life had become full of risk for my friends and me. Shortly thereafter, I met my son's mother. During this particular time period nothing was off limits to me. I felt I could take or do anything. My son's mother and I had a very dysfunctional relationship. However, I have never, not for one minute, regretted my son in any way. I got a misdemeanor drug citation. This was my first trouble with the law. I beat the charges but my life was spinning out of control. The relationship with my father was very strained, my mother was always crying. To have any type of normalcy I would go to grandma's house. She loved me so much but was a great enabler. I would rest at her house then do some odd jobs for her. She would give me money then I would be off and running to buy drugs.

The dates are fuzzy even now. My son was born and I did get to the hospital a day late in Atlanta. The only reason I got there the next day was because my parents took me. Everything had gotten so bad. I began doing a lot of stealing/boosting. It was after a seven-day run staying up in a hotel, scared waiting for the cops to catch me I called my dad. He took me home and I rested up. Somehow they got me to a treatment center in Lexington, NC. This was my first experience with recovery. I stayed for 45 days at that treatment center, and then went to a halfway house in Asheboro, NC. I completed the program for six months. I worked every day, went to meetings, and had a sponsor. I met a good friend named Kenneth. We began our own drywall company. We were making a lot of money. At this time my Dad went through his first bout of cancer. I was clean for the beginning of his treatment. They would come see me on my weekend passes. All my family would come, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Shortly before I left the halfway house, I bought the car of my dreams – a Black 300 Z Nissan. The man at the halfway house came out looked at me and said Keith you have not suffered enough yet and you are going to use again. I told him he didn't know what he was talking about. I was working going to meetings and I met a woman and we moved in together. I started using again with her and my business partner. The drywall business was gone. Here is where I had my first serious encounter with the law. It was like the whole time I was I was clean my disease was laying in wait to emerge stronger and more devious this time. By then my criminal activity had escalated to keep up with my using. I started going in and out of jail.

My father told me if I continued to hurt my mother anymore he would kill me himself. I felt so much guilt and shame. Finally I found myself in the Asheboro jail with 12 felony counts. I knew I was through. I had spent 28 days in ADAT and then moved into the Christian Fellowship Home. On the day I moved in I began working. During that 6-month program I was working, going to meetings working with a sponsor but I stayed worried about the outstanding charges. I completed the 6-month program and I moved into Hearth Oxford House.

At this time I had to face my charges. My father and I went to court. When I got there I was once again arrested for an outstanding warrant. Amazingly I was allowed to go into the courtroom without being processed. I was the last case that day and I remember getting up and the Judge saying stand-up Mr. Gibson he told me he needed a five-minute recess just to go over my stack of charges. When he came back he gave me 3 years suspended sentence, community service and intensive probation. I don't know how I would have done if I hadn't been at Oxford House and those guys. They were all working strong programs of recovery. I lived in Oxford House for 2 years. Oxford House is where I met my wife. I need to say that at the time I met my wife, I had been in a bad car accident. I could not believe how genuinely caring she was. She really cared about the Oxford House and was always looking to put someone to work keeping them busy and out of trouble.

Today I realize that Oxford House not only helped me through early recovery but also gave me a strong, comfortable sobriety that allows me to deal with life on life's terms.

Dan L's Story

I was a total nerd in school. I really didn't have any friends. I had a neighbor, Matt, who occasionally acknowledged my existence, if no other kids were around. Matt showed up on my 18th birthday. He'd snuck a 12-pack of Miller from his uncle. I'd never even thought about drinking. He handed me a bottle and I nearly chugged it. I've heard lots say how lousy alcohol tasted at first. Not for me. It was love at first swallow.

I was a klutzy kid. Two left feet, last chosen for baseball, dreaded gym. Everything a kid wanted to be good at, I stunk. Not just sports. At 13 I had my first crush. Her name was Kate. I idolized her and believed she was of a higher species. My cousin had me sit me next to Kate at his birthday party. She smiled and asked me a question. I looked at her and forgot the English language. I was too paralyzed to be embarrassed. It was like my first blackout, before my first drink. I resolved never to be seen in public again.

The only thing I was good at was video games. My talent was perfect for an anti-social life. At first, it was just Mario, Luigi and I. My universe expanded, but no more people, just more and more video games.

But that bottle of Miller changed my life. I drained it and had another, then a third. Matt said, "Wow, you can really put that stuff away." It was my first compliment.

Matt drank one bottle, so there were eight left. I instinctively knew to monitor my supply. Matt said, "let's go share it with my brother." "Like Hell," I said. I was a selfish drunk in my first forty minutes. I'd found something other than Nintendo I was good at. I was an absolute natural alcoholic.

I suddenly took a liking to Matt's Uncle Frank because he had oceans of alcohol. He was a good, friendly and kind man too. He was divorced, his wife had the kids, but he had every luxury imaginable and he didn't work. His station in life was based on two words: 'Trust Fund'.

Frank was about 35. I was 18 but we totally hit it off. Frank was always drinking and hated drinking alone. I didn't know any other way to get beer. In reality, we were both starved for human companionship. I essentially moved into his house. My father had left when I was three and my mother was a somewhat functioning alcoholic-addict. I don't think my mother noticed I'd moved. She was immersed in her 'Double-V Unreality' – vodka and Valium – always. I guess she thought I was still living my usual life, up in my room, endlessly playing video games.

Matt's older brother said he knew why Uncle Frank and I hit it off so well. He told me I was a 'sycophant'. I was mad as hell; I didn't have a clue what it meant, but it sounded disgusting. I looked it up and all was OK. The dictionary defined 'sycophant', as a 'self-seeking, servile flatterer; fawning parasite.' Sounded like an OK job description to me. And, that was my entire drinking career. I moved in with Frank at 18 and we drank. We were both alcoholics and that's what drunks do.

One day I opened my mail and it was a 21st birthday card from my dentist. Three years had gone by? Two months later, I got up one day and Frank didn't. I called 911 and cops and EMTs flooded the place. That was my longest day. I was crying and talking to cops and I ended the day in a detox. I was furious with Frank. He went away forever. And, he didn't take me with him.

I landed at Connecticut Valley Hospital in a ward that was a combo rehab- nuthouse-jail. I figured I'd be there forever. But I was 21, the state was gutting human services and I hadn't committed any crime, so 28 days later I'd be out. My counselor told me about Oxford Houses, said they'd drive me to an interview and pay initial costs. He also said he loved coffee, had been to a zillion Dunkin' Doughnuts and saw 'Help Wanted' signs there daily.

I moved into Oxford House Hamden and they told me, "go to meetings, pay rent, do my chore and the rest was just life." Amazingly, I thrived.

I knew I loved Frank. Always will. He was my true father. I was his surrogate son. Yes, Frank gave alcohol to an 18-year-old alcoholic. Illegal, but in the scheme of things, not really bad. I knew I was alcoholic from my first drink and would have been drinking no matter what.

Everything else Frank gave me was positive. I'd just done what he did. He read mountains of books, watched about every fine film made, loved all kinds of music, and regularly went to art museums from Boston to New York. And he

loved baseball. We went lots to Yankee Stadium and Fenway and to lots of college basketball games. Me, the all time nerd, became a big baseball, basketball fan. Amazing! Frank's money cushioned both of us from some consequences of alcohol. There was always someone to drive and someone to get us home safely and make certain our cigarettes were out.

Just sober, I still felt incredibly shy. In my first talk with my sponsor, he laid down the rules and emphasized no relationships my first year. Relationship! I wasn't planning on a conversation.

Oxford House was no less than a miracle for me. I was totally alone in the world and I moved into a true family. That's just not supposed to happen. Seven-eight guys, 21 to 60, most all had very little money, but we were living in a great town, in a terrific old house and were bonded by our addictions.

We were immersed in a double fraternity, the program (AA/NA) and Oxford House. One complemented the other, beginning with the absolute bedrock of our existence; living free of alcohol and drugs. Then honesty, personal responsibility, concern for and consideration of others. And tolerance, empathy and gratitude.

Oxford House was an unexpected, virtually inconceivable gift and blessing in my life. And, as I continue along the road of sobriety, I am amazed to meet so many others for whom Oxford House was, and is, a miracle of sober community.

Xavier's Story

Looking back to my active addiction, I never would have imagined that I would ever be clean. I was always able to accumulate 24-hour key tags or the occasional 30-day chip. I was never able to stop and stay stopped. I couldn't even fathom such a thing as "not using." Before active addiction I considered myself a well-rounded guy. I was the son of a preacher, from a middle-class family, educated, highly skilled, fashionable, well traveled and a jack-of-all-trades. Crack cocaine began to take over my life and made me forget all that I was and once aspired to be. At the end I was worthless and purpose-less.

I would often hear in meetings, "I used to live and lived to used!" At my bottom, only the last part was true for me. I only stayed alive with the hope of my next fix. When the struggle to get more drugs became too much, I decided there was nothing left to live for. With all the energy I could muster up, at a 139 pounds at 6 feet 2 inches tall, I stole three bottles of Nyquil Cough Syrup, bought my last twenty of crack cocaine, and got high for what I thought would be the last time. After the crack was gone, I found a quiet spot in downtown Washington, DC; took all three bottles of Nyquil and the bottle of Percocet (about 40) I had gotten from the homeless health van, and settled in on a park bench and waited for the end.

To my grave disappointment I woke up in the emergency room of Howard University Hospital, mad at God and the world that my attempt at suicide had failed. From the emergency room, I was shipped off to the psych ward. After a couple of days, something in me decided that maybe another try at recovery wouldn't hurt.

I spent 4 months in a treatment facility and got physically and mentally better much faster than I anticipated but there was the impending fear of what to do once I was discharged. Fortunately, the facility allowed me to find a job during my last 2 months. I was able to save money. It was suggested that I go to an Oxford House. Not knowing exactly what an Oxford House was and being a pastor's son and theology student, I assumed that it was something religious and closely related to the Oxford Evangelistic Movement. I interviewed for my first Oxford House and, to my pleasant surprise, I found a group of individuals just like me!

It was in the psych ward that I decided to try recovery again. It was in treatment that I decided to accept my addiction. It was at Oxford House C Street that I *realized* that I don't have to use anymore – even if I wanted to. The support of the family that I found at my first Oxford House was exactly what I needed to build a foundation in recovery.

From Oxford House C Street I was asked to help start another Oxford House – Oxford House Deanwood. It was at Oxford House-Deanwood that I attended my first World Convention where I was elected to the World Council. It was at that same house that I celebrated my first year clean. It was at that house that I started working for Oxford House Inc. It was because of Oxford House that I established a recovery foundation, re-learned to be responsible and developed enough gratitude to motivate me to want to replicate this phenomenon.

Now I no longer live to use. I live with a real purpose and ministry. I live to show others by example that "birds of a feather" can learn to live productive lives and come back from living hell by sticking together. YES I go to meetings. YES I have a sponsor, and YES I am working the steps. BUT - Oxford House was the missing piece to the puzzle that saved my life and for that I am eternally grateful.

The funny thing is, Oxford House has become a religious experience for me. I never thought that I would once again find a real purpose for living. Thanks to Oxford House, I am now fulfilling my purpose.

Tom's Story

My story as an alcoholic is not a whole lot different from millions of other addicts. My drinking began early in my teen years. It wasn't long before I realized that I drank differently than most of my friends. I drank more. The interesting thing was the high tolerance I had to booze. I could drink twice as much as most of my friends and still function. I figured that meant that there was no way I was an alcoholic. It turns out that a high tolerance to alcohol is the first sign.

My real drinking and drugging career became full blown in the late 60's. I was in the Army, overseas at the time where drinking and drugging became an everyday thing. When I got out of the Army, I went back to work at the Newspaper selling Advertising. What a perfect job for an alcoholic. They actually paid me to drink.

Some years later, I ended up in my first of four Treatment Centers. I managed to stay sober for a few years after my first treatment but that was in the 80's. Who needed booze when you could have cocaine? The only good thing about cocaine is that it brings you down to your knees real quick. I started drinking again to get off the cocaine (sound familiar?) The second and third treatment centers came shortly after.

I don't think I have to go into great detail about the destruction this disease not only does to us but to our Families as well. I was part owner in a small Printing Company at the time of my next relapse. It didn't take me very long to run that business deep into the ground. One good thing that happened at that time was that my former wife and family learning the term "Tough Love". Everyone stopped enabling me and I ended up on a "cot" outside the house. My former wife had Detox pick me up and I ended up in a County run 90-Day Treatment Center. After all this, my denial and lack of surrender was still in full force. AA had not yet become part of my life and recovery. When my 90 days were up, my counselor suggested I go to this new place called "Oxford House". I had been in "Half-Way Houses" before so you can imagine my surprise to see this really nice Home in this very expensive neighborhood. It was in this Home where I first learned what the word "Recovery" really meant. It was like living with 9 Sponsors.

The guys in the house made a game out of getting me to AA Meetings. Every night, someone would invite me to go with them to a meeting of which I had 100 excuses of why I couldn't go. Finally, they would invite me out to dinner, which I immediately accepted. We would get into the car, they would lock the doors and inform me that YES we were going to dinner, but we were going to one of those "Damn Meetings" first. It wasn't long before I was going to those "Damn Meetings" all on my own.

There were only two Oxford Houses in the State of Washington at that time. Every time we had an opening, there would be 9 or 10 applications to get in. I remember calling Paul Molloy, telling him he needed to get someone out here to open more Houses. His response was, "Open Houses yourself."

Myrna Brown, who opened the first Oxford House in Vancouver, came up to get us started. Pitching-in and helping open the Houses became an intricate part of my recovery. I was always told that service work is a big part of recovery. But I still feel that those 9 guys in that Oxford House, who had the patience and tolerance to teach me what recovery was really all about, that was my real "Gift".

I'm retired now. I'm back with my wife and family, and very grateful. When I hear people talking about Oxford House, they all say how "Oxford gave them their life back". I remember Sherry Burrows story about how Oxford House didn't give her life back, but that Oxford House "Gave her a Life". That's my feeling. Oxford House "Gave me my Life" and I'm very grateful.

Bert's Story

My name is Bert Hodges and I was born on July 12, 1965, in Washington, N.C. I have 2 sisters who are older than me. My childhood was ok. I worked after school in my Dad's shop from 2nd grade up and full time until 1998. I played football and wrestled in high school. In high school I always felt as if I didn't fit in even though everyone I met seemed to like me.

I took my first drink and smoked my first joint at the age of 14. It wasn't really love at first drink or toke. After that, for a while I drank and smoked whenever the opportunity arose which wasn't much. When I entered high school, things changed. Transportation proved to be great in the aspect of my partying. Then it was going out most every night and smoking weed and drinking. My grades didn't suffer as I always made good grades. I just didn't apply myself to living up to my potential academically. I managed to get through high school without getting into trouble, how I don't know. I graduated from high school in 1983 and went to work in my Dad's shop.

After high school, with a full time job, I began to drink and smoke weed on a nightly basis. It seems that was what all my friends were doing. I could come into work with a hangover and get away with it. There were more than a few times when I would be coming in as my Dad would be going to work as he went in a few hours early every day. He spoke with me about my late nights but I didn't care or change. I was about 21 when I was introduced to cocaine. Fortunately for me at the time, a few of my friends were selling, so I was around coke a lot. My first DWI came at age 21. I didn't see that as a problem. My dealer friends would come pick me up every night so I used every night. At age 24 came my second DWI. With that came my first taste of jail. At age 27 came my third DWI and my second taste of jail. Through all this time I never even considered that I had a problem with alcohol and drugs even though the people teaching the DWI classes told me I might.

I moved away from home at age 23. Shortly after I was introduced to my worst nightmare, crack. I wasn't in love with it at first; it took a lot of work. I could take a hit at first and walk away. Alcohol was my true love at that point of my life. In 1994 I was charged with a hit and run. To this day, I don't remember doing it. I was in a blackout. Anyway, legal problems began piling up. My first taste of prison happened in 1994 with probation revocation. In 1995, I went back to prison for the hit and run. Short stints but no red flags went up about me having a problem. Being the smart person I thought I was, I decided that drinking was a problem because I was going to drive, so I cut down on drinking to a beer or so a day. However, at that point my weekend occasional crack smoking began to be more frequent. In early 1998, my family confronted me about my drug use and, to get them off my back, I went to Wilmington Treatment Center. When I got out, I lasted about an hour back in town before I used and it was off to the races again.

In April 1998, I decided that I couldn't use and work so I quit my father's shop. Within a few months I was back in prison. When I got out, I was back on drugs within a few days. I went back to prison in 1999 because of probation revocation. Got out a year later and joined NA. That lasted for 24 months then it was back on. Again it was off to prison for probation revocation in 2002. Got out and used the first day. Lasted six months to the day of my release from prison and was arrested again with a lot of serious charges. 2003 marked my sixth time going to prison all because of alcohol and drugs. Along the way I abused alcohol and drugs but, in the end, crack was my true love.

My sobriety date is June 19, 2003. I was in jail sobering up and realized that my life was going backwards – all because of alcohol and drugs. I was in jail when, for the first time, I hit my knees and asked God for help with my problem. While in prison I went to meetings and got a sponsor and did step work. Getting closer to release meant deciding where I was going to live. I had already decided in jail that I would not go back to my hometown. Through a chaplain in prison I got an interview at an Oxford house. That is where I went after my release and is the smartest thing I have done in my sobriety. My family wouldn't have even considered letting me stay with them after my release, that bridge was still on fire and is not totally out today. I got a sponsor at my new home group soon after my release from prison and followed his advice even though I didn't like a lot of it. I became teachable and willing to do whatever it takes.

Because of the strong network in AA and my fellow Oxford House members, willingness, desire and the grace of God I am still sober today. Life hasn't been easy because it is not easy starting over completely at 40 years old. My new life is great. I was baptized in 2006. I'm now a volunteer and sponsor at the same prison from which I left in 2005. Oxford House has graced me with a job as a trained peer advocate. That has helped me a lot and along the way, I think I have helped other alcoholics and addicts.

Keith M's Story

My name is Keith McRae, I was born on January 17, 1969 in Lumberton, N.C. to Joe Louis and Mary Magdalene McRae. I'm the 8th sibling of 10 who are my biological brothers and sisters. I was raised on a farm in a small southern town just 13 miles south of Lumberton, N.C. called Fairmont N.C. My Father was a sharecropper, and so were the majority of the families that lived in that community.

So all of my childhood life was spent working in the hot steaming fields on the farm that we lived on. And in my dad's house there's was no such thing as, "I'm not doing this or that." You worked. If you were sick or got hurt, you still went to work. I remember taking my first drink (Home-made wine) at the house of the owner of the house we lived in. They made wine quite often in this huge barrel and had the nerve to leave it on the outside! Of course, I always helped myself when no one was looking, or I'd sneak back up to the farmhouse during the night or whenever the coast was clear, and I always poured out enough for my sister and me. I included my sister to keep her from telling my parents.

I was one of those kids who could do anything but never gave my very best to nothing. I very easily became a thief at a young age because I always felt like the (white man) – whose farm I worked on – always cheated us because he never paid more than one dollar for a day's work. So I always felt like he owed me. At this point I would take money out of his wallet when he wasn't looking or any time I could to make up the difference. That went on for a very long time. Actually it went on until I left home.

School was never my favorite place, but I had to go to live in my Dad's house. He would beat me to the red meat. So I always feared my Dad and what I knew he would do. I became extremely afraid of my Dad; needless to say that we weren't good friends at all. I managed to get to the 11th grade before dropping out of High School. And my cycle began. From that day forth, my whole life up until the age of 37 has only been one of jails and institutions. I served approximately 13 years in prison and have been to jail probably a minimum of 25-30 times and even served jail sentences in the County for petty crimes. It took hitting rock bottom before I decided that I couldn't live like I was living any more. I didn't want to die, and I certainly didn't want to go back to prison.

My clean date is 8/27/06. I made the best decision I ever made in my life when I surrendered to the disease of addiction. Today I'm a grateful recovering addict who not only talks this talk, but also walks this walk. Almighty God, and Oxford has given me a life. Oxford House accepted me when no-one else would, and is still showing me a new way of life; they've even given me a job as a peer advocate here in Wake County to help others just like myself who wants to recover from the disease of addiction. I love, and enjoy my job today. There's no greater reward the end of my workday than to know that I've helped somebody! Since being clean I also got my GED.

Christopher's Story

This is my story. I was raised in a normal two-parent household. Life was great when i was young. I was a happy kid who seemed normal in all respects. My father was a closet drinker and my mother was bi-polar as I later found out later. Because the days were always different, you could not tell what kind of mood the parents were going to be in from one day to the next. "Was it me? Was it something I did or said? Who knew." A lot of self-doubt loomed in me as i got older. To trust my instincts was not a part of me. The feeling that there was something wrong with me followed me for many years and I lived my life to justify it. After all, if you hear that you must be crazy enough times, your going to start believing it so drugs and alcohol eased the pain. It allowed me to escape for a while but the next day there it was. It became a pattern I grew used to. Part of me hated me. The other part was looking for a way out.

The cry for help came in the form of legal issues. You see I couldn't do it on my own. Part of me didn't want to stop. The other part did. I was given me the opportunity to make a change and I did. I now am back on my feet thanks to the Oxford House. It gave me chance to live again and to get back on my feet. I now have a place where you don't have to feel alone

Marissa M's Story

Born and raised in Omaha, NE, I engaged in alcoholic thinking from the get-go. And by that I mean the obsessive desire to fit in and be 'a part of.' It always seemed like other kids didn't have the same paralyzing fear of 'being less-than' that I did. Like I said, it was all about "self" from the beginning and I would do anything for you if it meant you'd accept me. My drug use started out with alcohol and marijuana at age 16 and quickly moved to ecstasy, cocaine and prescription painkillers by 17 or 18. I went to college in Los Angeles, where I majored in English and minored in Heroin Use. Any drug was my friend but heroin was my favorite friend and my only friend in the end.

I went to my first treatment center in 2004, in the fall of my senior year. My parents shipped me off to Minnesota and I was grateful, because I was ready to quit... heroin. I didn't believe I was an alcoholic and I certainly didn't think pot was a problem. After getting high inside the treatment center, I was kicked out and transferred to another treatment center on the East Coast. I had begun to believe that I might be "sick" – my first moment of clarity. I stayed in inpatient for 4 months, and lived in a 3/4 house for another 2 months. I was happily skating along, whistling in the dark, just as the Big Book says.

Then, at about 8 months clean, I drank. Like it was nothing. There began my descent back into hell. I eventually picked up crystal meth, which literally ran my life until February 2007. It made my decisions for me; it chose who I hung out with; what I did and didn't do; and who I had become. Between December '05 and February of '07, I lost the good job, the apartment, the boyfriend, the trust of everyone who knew me, and was charged with shoplifting. I was empty inside and the drugs weren't filling me up anymore. My "exciting" life in the drug world had become astonishingly mundane and predictable. I was just too tired to do it anymore.

I went back to treatment, this time in Texas, on Valentine's Day (which makes my sobriety date, February 15, 2007). I was promptly kicked out of treatment after 10 days for fraternizing. But I didn't drink or use. My experience in the past had been that I knew how to do treatment, but I didn't know how to live outside in the world AND stay clean and sober. I'd heard about Oxford House in Treatment Center #2 and I knew I couldn't go home to Nebraska for my own sanity and sobriety, so I interviewed at an Oxford House in Dallas. I was accepted and then kicked out 2 weeks later for missing curfew. But I didn't drink or use. I persevered, and got into another house (Oxford House Erie), where I still live today, a year and a half later.

Oxford House saved my life and taught me about the best high, the one I could never get when I was running around, using dope and people; that is, the high which comes from Service and Fellowship.

My life continues to shock me!

I am positively stunned at the immediate effects of helping others in my life. There is a magnitude about it that was absolutely beyond anything I could have anticipated. I don't know exactly when the "switch got flipped" inside me, but suddenly I have a purpose. Suddenly, I am attracted to healthy people. Suddenly, I am not constantly wondering how I can benefit myself or how I can stay in the good graces of others. Suddenly, I don't have to be who I think you want me to be to feel "good enough." Validation from others is a requirement that is drifting further and further away from me. Today I'm getting validation from within when I get the warm fuzzies by helping others. It's better than any drug, or any validation I've ever received from another person... EVER! I wish I had known this earlier. This is a world I didn't know existed for me. I saw it in others' lives and never thought for a second that I, personally, could experience such a freedom.

I am experiencing this type of realization often these days and I can't begin to describe the amazing feeling I get... though not for lack of trying, as you well know! I get so excited when we have new members and I hope they latch on to this thing with vigor and enthusiasm. And we get to be *the example*. We get to show them how good life gets... even when we're stressed out and overworked and busy as hell. They will get a chance to see the lights in our eyes.

More importantly, we continue to get a little more freedom than we had yesterday, or last week, or 6 months ago... just by helping those newcomers. Whether they stay sober 10 years or 5 days or they drink tomorrow, I benefit from the experience with that person. I have been overcome with something that brought me back to my purpose, and to the rewards I can reap from being available to and for others.

Self-seeking will slip away as we lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows and we will intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle us.

It's nice when promises come true.

Bob's Story

Upon returning from Vietnam, where I was a combat medic I immediately went AWOL from the company at Ft Belvoir, Virginia where I was stationed. I was out on the streets of Washington D.C. doing everything I could do to destroy myself as quickly as I could. Eventually it was a father's call to the chaplain that reconciled me with the army. The consequences to my actions were minimal and I was able to finish the several months that I had left before discharge. Needless to say, there was not a night that went by that I was not obliterated by alcohol.

Upon discharge from the service, I moved to California where I became a bartender, bought a bike, and spent the next year in an alcoholic haze. I got married in a blackout in Reno to a trust fund baby, a fellow alcoholic. We moved back

East where we had a turbulent year running from the law for various minor infractions. We split up shortly thereafter and I have not seen her since.

I was living on the strip in College Park, Maryland and working various odd jobs ranging from an ice cream man to sweeping floors. I earned just enough money to pay the rent and hang out at honky tonks. I ended up on the V.A. nut ward in 1973 where they dosed me with Valium and I would liquor up down at the local watering hole near the V.A. Alcoholism and/or drug addiction was never suggested while I was there. If they had been suggested preferred I would have preferred being crazy than being labeled a drunk.

After several more years like that, I finally ran afoul of the law and was charged with breaking and entering. I was charged with four felonies. I was twenty-six by this time, and I was scared about going to jail for a sustained period of time – even though my accumulated county time filled about a year of my life prior to this arrest. The Circuit Judge sentenced me on February 10, 1977 to a two year suspended sentence contingent upon the condition that I get help for my mental problems. Instead, I found myself doing a six-month stint at the D.C. Veteran's hospital in a drug and alcohol program where I went to my very first AA meeting on February 14, 1977.

I was scared, had indefinable fears, and very vague spiritual desires. I was open to anything, because I didn't want to go to jail or get any crazier. Finally, we were allowed passes to go to meetings and I went to many Northwest D.C. meetings over the following three months. I got a sponsor, Bill H., and met many other members in the program. I could not put two sentences together at the meetings but I remember people just patting me on the back and telling me to keep coming back. After six long months – and I imagine tens of thousands of dollars in treatment costs for V.A. – I had no safe haven to be discharged to. I ended up in Alexandria Va. with a former resident of the program. I remember standing in the streets of Alexandria wondering how I ended up so far from my support network. I called Bill H., my AA sponsor, and he told me he knew of a place called Oxford House on Huntington Street in N.W. D.C. They had one bed available, and I went over that night for a quickie interview and was voted in by the membership of ten – I made eleven. Thirty-five bucks a week, and all the coffee, cereal, eggs, and sausage I could eat was great – especially in those days when money was tight. Many of the guys from the first house were still living there – Lyle H., Bill W. Whit. H. and Walter B., as I recall. I stayed for a year, immersing myself in work, A.A. and service work. I became a coffee maker, which gave me that sense of belonging that we all lack when first coming around.

I eventually moved to Alexandria, Va. a year later with one of the guys from the house. We lived together three years. Then he went off to teach school in Thailand. I was still in the center of AA and worked the steps of AA as suggested and experienced the promises as promised. When I was five years sober, I decided to explore my spiritual side and ended up joining a religious community. Over the next years I received a great education in philosophy and theology. I decided to return to civilian life even though I was almost ordained a priest. There were many reasons why I chose to leave but primarily I just wasn't ready to give up women.

I found myself in Saratoga Springs, New York, and I remembering seeing Paul Molloy testifying at a U.S. House Committee meeting on C-Span. I had not talked to Paul in over twelve years. That was when he put the bug in my ear about Oxford House going national. I opened the very first house in NY State in 1990, and opened many more in the following years. I even ended up buying a house in Schenectady in 2000 and used that as a base of operations.

The journey continues. I firmly believe living in an Oxford House was a graced period of my life to get some sober time behind me, and to have a chance to really immerse myself in AA and NA. I never remember watching T.V. – only the laugh of a toothless Lyle H. in the morning, and fresh brewed coffee from the always full coffee pot. Thank you God for giving a bunch of drunks the inspiration for renting that house on Huntington Street, and for those who have endured over the years and given their time, treasure, and talent. Paul, who has suffered so many setbacks with former employees, fire theft, and calamity after calamity, has never given up his calling. I only hope he votes me into his house when we both visit St. Peter sometime in the distant future.

Tenth Oxford House World Convention – 2008

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4900 Seminary Road, Suite 320
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Hon. Robert Russell (Emeritus)
Buffalo, NY
Terree Schmidt-Whelan
Tacoma, WA
Hon. John R. Schwartz
Rochester, NY
Hon. Chuck Simmons (Chair)
Greenville, SC
Hon. Keith Starrett
U.S. District Court, MS
Keahi Kimo Souza
Albuquerque, NM
Hon. Jeff Tauber (Emeritus)
Berkeley, CA
Lee Weber
Honolulu, HI
Hon. Robert Ziemian
Boston, MA

Oxford House World Convention
Hilton New Orleans Riverside
Two Poydras Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70130

Dear Residents and Alumni of Oxford House,

I sincerely hope you have a fantastic 10th Annual Oxford House World Convention as you celebrate the 33rd anniversary of the first Oxford House. All the residents and alumni of Oxford House are to be congratulated for providing our alcohol and other drug dependent brothers and sisters the time, peer support and sober living conditions that allow long term recovery and transformation to occur.

The drug court field nationwide heavily relies upon the recovery community to help newly recovering citizens master sobriety. Oxford House is an important part of the recovery community and I know that many drug court clients are clean and sober, their families restored because of Oxford House.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP), please welcome one of our most beloved board members, Lars Levy from Louisiana who is honored to join you this week. All of us at the NADCP look forward to continuing and expanding the relationship between Oxford House and drug courts.

Be well and have a terrific conference!

C. West Huddleston, III
Chief Executive Officer



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

August 18, 2008

Mr. J. Paul Molloy
Chief Executive Officer
Oxford House, Inc.
1010 Wayne Ave. Suite 400
Silver Spring, MD 20910

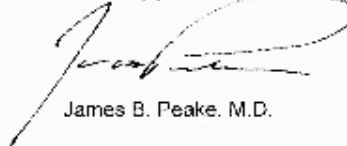
Dear Mr. Molloy:

Thank you for your letter regarding a proposal for a joint venture between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Oxford House, Inc.

I understand that staff from the Veterans Health Administration, Dr. John Allen, Associate Chief Consultant, Addictive Disorders, and Mr. Paul Smits, Associate Chief Consultant, Homeless and Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Services, met with you on August 4, 2008 to discuss your proposal. They tell me that they are impressed with the residential services Oxford House provides to individuals in recovery and the many services you provide to veterans. Although your proposal has merit, it exceeds the authority VA currently has to establish the type of residential program you are proposing.

Thank you for the services you provide to individuals in recovery and especially to our Nation's veterans.

Sincerely yours,



James B. Peake, M.D.



The authors of the preceding stories hope that in some small way their stories will help communities at large to understand the value of encouraging the development of Oxford Houses in their communities. We know that alcoholics and drug addicts serious about recovery will use the opportunity Oxford House provides to become clean and sober and stay that way. With the availability of Oxford House relapse does not have to part of recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction.

Oxford House Resident Profile¹

Number of Women's Houses:	311	No. of Women Residents:	2,296
Number of Houses For Men:	949	No. of Men Residents:	7,145
Global Network of Houses:	1,260	Total Number of Residents:	9,441
Number of States with Houses:	41	Cities with Houses:	278
Average Cost Per Person Per Week:	\$96.75	Rent Per Group Per Month:	\$1,450
Residents Working 6/15/08:	92%	Average Monthly Earnings:	\$1,502
Percent Addicted To Drugs or Drugs and Alcohol:	72%	Percent Addicted to Alcohol only:	28%
Race --		Marital Status --	
White;	56%	Never Married	45%
Black;	32%	Separated	18%
Hispanic	4%	Divorced	32%
Other ²	8%	Married	4%
		Widowed	.1%
Prior Homelessness:	56%	Average Time Homeless:	6 Mos.
Prior Jail:	76%	Average Jail Time:	13 Mo
Average AA or NA Meetings Per Week Per Resident:	5.1	Percent Going To Counseling <u>and</u> AA or NA:	43%
Average Length of Sobriety of House Residents:	13.5 Mos.	Residents Expelled Because of Relapse:	19.7%
Average Length of Stay In An Oxford House:	12.1 Mos.	Average No. of Applicants For Each Vacant Bed:	5.3

As of June 30, 2008 about 20% of Oxford House residents were veterans.

¹ As of June 30, 2008 or March 1, 2008 based on standard OHI survey and house reports.

² Other includes Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander and Hawaiian.

New Orleans 2008

Oxford House—Time for Recovery

Mark your calendar for next year's convention –

September 3 – 6, 2009

Hyatt Regency on Capital Hill
Washington, DC

Oxford House™

1975-2008

33 Years of Organized Self-Help To Enable Alcoholics and Drug Addicts to Recover Without Relapse

- Sole Authority for Oxford House Charters
- Providing Technical Assistance to Establish New Oxford Houses
- Providing Technical Assistance to Keep Existing Oxford Houses on Track
- Providing Organization of Chapters to Help Houses Help Themselves
- Providing the Time, Living Environment and Support to Enable Alcoholics and Drug Addicts to Achieve Recovery Without Relapse
- Providing the Legal, Philosophical, and Scientific Framework for a Cost-effective, Worldwide Network of Supportive Recovery Housing.

Write or Call

Oxford House World Services

1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 300
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Telephone 301-587-2916

Facsimile 301-589-0302

E-Mail Info@oxfordhouse.org

Web Site: www.oxfordhouse.org