

*(Continued from RICARES' web site where Page 1 & concluding paragraph appear:)*

We then broke out into our workshops. First, a choice of either "**Building an Inclusive Recovery Community**," facilitated by Bill Lowenstein, the Executive Director of the New England Institute for Addiction Studies; or, "**Families Building Roadmaps to Recovery**" with Donna Aligata, the Executive Director of Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families. I chose to attend Bill's workshop and we had a group discussion about behaviors that can happen within our recovery community that could hurt people new to recovery such as predatory sexual advances, or a non-welcoming attitude toward those recovering with the assistance of methadone or suboxone treatment. There are many of us who come into recovery with the traumatic experiences of sexual abuse in our past. We discussed the need of creating more safe places to experience the healing power of helping one another in a non-threatening environment. Regarding treatments like methadone and suboxone, we agreed as a group that there are many paths to recovery and that not everyone seeking recovery is comfortable or feel welcome in traditional 12-step recovery meetings. So what can we, regardless of our own personal path of recovery, do to be sure that peer supports are in place for all to get the help needed to continue in long-term recovery? It was a beautiful thing how many of us were on the same page in our comments regarding "all-inclusive" meetings that we have been to, and how wonderful they are! We agreed as a group to go back to our states and take the initiative independent of whatever our personal recovery paths are, and host other support groups to fill these kinds of needs. Groups that are specific to women, and gay/lesbian/bi-sexual/transgender if not already in place, may need to be started. These and "all inclusive" meetings, meaning no specific recovery path is discussed, can be held in either the recovery centers where there are any, or the offices of our respective state-wide advocacy groups. We ended the workshop and were told there was an "all-inclusive" meeting planned for that evening. Several of us attended, were really encouraged, and decided to keep in touch after the conference. CCAR has already been having excellent success with "all-inclusive" and women's meetings in their recovery centers. We broke for lunch, edified and happy to go home with a solution so that no one need be left out of recovery resources because they are uncomfortable due to past traumas, or, they don't feel they fit certain society-imposed standards.

During lunch on Saturday were motivated by Patty McCarthy, Director of Friends of Recovery Vermont, as well as a New England Regional Board Member of Faces & Voices of Recovery. Patty presented "**Recovery Advocates' Role in a Recovery Oriented System of Care.**"

Saturday afternoon we had a choice of "**Our Stories Have Power- A Media Workshop for Recovery Advocates**" with Pat Taylor, Executive Director of Faces and Voices of Recovery, and Tom Coderre, Chief of Staff to RI Senate President, and former National Field Director, Faces & Voices of Recovery; or "**Basic Elements of Effective Advocacy with Policy Makers**" facilitated by Maryanne Frangules, Executive Director of MOAR. Having already been lucky enough to have had message training from both Pat and Tom, I decided to attend Maryanne's workshop about advocacy to policy makers. Since my current project with RICARES involves legislative advocacy, I was very interested to

hear how advocates from Massachusetts had facilitated getting legislation passed that repealed an exception for taxing alcohol which resulted in retaining funds for addictions treatment and services that would have otherwise been lost to budget cuts. Maryanne is an enthusiastic presenter and she had great materials explaining the Legislative Process. I learned that a state doesn't have one budget but it has 3: the Governor's, the Senate's and that of the House. It's necessary to attempt to get on all 3 which involves finding out who is on each committee (and the Governor's cabinet), and getting people in your advocacy organization who are registered to vote in the committee members' districts to contact the Governor and their Representatives. It is vital for our members to let their legislators and Governors know that passing the legislation under discussion is important to them. We were given drafts of Action Alerts, Fact Sheets, Op-eds, Legislative Letters, and postcards for postcard writing campaigns. I know what I learned will help us at RICARES as we work to get legislation passed that will make treatment and recovery more available for as many as need and want it.

Saturday afternoon there was a choice of attending the 2nd Half of Pat Taylor and Tom Coderre's "Our Stories Have Power" workshop or to attend "**Young People In Recovery**" with Donna Alagata and Greg Williams, the Director and Co-Directors of CTYF (Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families to hear about the special needs of young people in recovery and how they're being met. I decided I wanted to brush up on my messaging skills, so I attended Tom and Pat's workshop for the rest of the afternoon. I was reminded about pacing conversations and staying on topic instead of letting an interviewer distract me with questions about issues we're not prepared to speak on or that take away the focus from the message that we wanted to get out to the public. We also went over bridging phrases for such times when we're asked something of that nature, such as "I don't know, but what I do know is," or "I can't speak for them (him/her), but I can say," etc. The practice sessions done were very helpful and I walked away with a written out short version of my story:

"I'm Leslie Miller and am in long-term recovery, which means that I have not used alcohol or other drugs for more than 5 years. Besides abstaining from alcohol and other drugs, I'm committed to being a productive member of my family and community in order to improve the quality of my life and of those around me. Long-term recovery is helping me be a better person and I am passionate about making avenues leading others to long-term recovery more accessible, both through community support groups and advocating for recovery-conducive policies to our legislators."

Our Ian Knowles, Director of RICARES, was responsible for planning for the **evening activities**. What a perfect evening he planned for our enjoyment! It started with a video presented by Pat Taylor, Executive Director of Faces and Voices of Recovery, which I unfortunately missed. When I arrived for the rest of the evening activities, everyone there seemed to have enjoyed the video Pat played for them. Then we were in for a treat with a **drumming and meditation program** presented by Lon Jackman, from Keystone Hall in Nashua, NH. The program was somehow both relaxing and invigorating! And then Ian concluded the evening by facilitating an "**all inclusive**" **meeting** and it was such a unifying and spiritual experience, hearing others who have different recovery paths and

have ended up on similar spiritual planes. It was certainly a balancing experience for us all and we are committed to staying in touch with one another and taking the format back to our individual states to make it available for those in recovery who may feel they don't fit into other more specific groups.

Sunday morning we got to hear from the **New England Recovery Delegates to the "A&E Recovery Celebration"** in New York City this coming Saturday, September 12th, as well as other events going on during **National September Recovery Month** all over New England.

After breakfast we could either hear about "**The Connecticut Experience**" from Diane Potvin, the Regional Manager of CCAR (Communities for Addiction Recovery), or attend a workshop on "**Diversity Among Us-Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (GLBTQ) Community of Recovery**," facilitated by Stephen Gumbley, Co-Director Addiction Technology Transfer Center of New England, Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies, Brown University. I stayed and learned about what was going on in neighboring Windham, CT. In 2000, Diane Potvin was hired by CCAR after volunteering for a few years. She was able to help facilitate the first ever recovery community center in Connecticut there in Windham and since 2001 has been co-hosting a public access TV show "Positive Faces," providing opportunities for individuals to educate their viewing area that recovery is well and alive in Windham! Then we adjourned to a delicious final meal together, which gave us a chance to gather one another's contact information and say our goodbyes, all going away feeling enriched for having been there.

**I'll end with some thought-provoking and inspiring phrases I heard and jotted down during the conference:**

"Meet the people we're they're at."

"We're *people* in recovery *not agencies* in recovery."

Shift from acute care to "recovery-oriented system of care."

"Be a community of consequence."

"Nothing about us without us."

"Put ourselves at the table—don't wait to be invited!"

"Treatment is not recovery—treatment sets people up for recovery."

"Supporting recovery is a community responsibility."

"Recovery process: achieved abstinence and an improved quality of life."