

VOLUME XXXVII

THE VIEW

NEWSLETTER OF THE RIDGEVIEW ALUMNI ASSOCIATION STEERING COMMITTEE

THRIVING IN RECOVERY

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**THE RIDGEVIEW
ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION
3995 SOUTH
COBB DRIVE
SMYRNA GA
30080**



RECOVERY IS A
LAUNCHING PAD.
NOT A SAFE
HAVEN.

OUR GREATEST GLORY IS
NOT IN NEVER FAILING, BUT
IN RISING UP EVERY TIME
WE FAIL.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

CAN WE GIVE YOU A LIFT

Remember hitting your bottom? Do you remember that moment when you first began to feel some hope? Looking back, can you remember those angels who appeared at that precise moment when you needed help the most? I can. They helped lift me up until I could stand on my own.

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

Treatment costs money, real money. Programs, therapies, prescriptions, food, shelter, and all the while, life continues to go on outside without us. As active members of the Ridgeview Alumni Association our fund-raising focus is the **Ridgeview Alumni Charitable Corporation, a Nonprofit 501c3** to financially help the person currently in treatment. Whether it's more time in treatment, housing, medications, or educational support, we all know how a helping hand at that critical moment can make or break a spirit.

*The Ridgeview Alumni Charitable Corporation is dedicated to providing that powerful connection.
Won't you make a commitment to help lift someone up?*

Ridgeview Alumni Charitable Corporation (RACC)

Date: _____

____ **YES**, I wish to contribute to the Ridgeview Alumni Charitable Corporation. As a person in recovery, family member, friend, business owner or corporate representative / sponsor.

Here is my donation of \$_____.

Name: _____ Phone: (_____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Make checks payable to: Ridgeview Alumni Charitable Corporation

Mail to: Ridgeview Alumni Charitable Corporation | 3995 South Cobb Drive | Smyrna, GA 30080-6397

The Ridgeview Alumni Charitable Corporation is a nonprofit (501c3) charitable corporation and donations are tax deductible.



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THE WORLD MAY BE ON FIRE, BUT I CAN STAY CHILL

SUBMITTED BY: VICTOR E.

When I started recovery at Ridgeview, I was not concerned with the world at large. The chaos I had created in my own life was overwhelming. Not only could I not manage my own affairs, I was so inundated by the symptoms of my addiction and depression that nearly all my thoughts and actions were self-seeking, self-motivated, and downright selfish. I did not have the time nor the inclination to pay *real* attention to any people, places, and things outside of my self—including politics, world affairs, cultural issues, friends, or loved ones. My life was chaotic, and I was a storm that stirred up trouble.

What changed? I got better. I built a routine and painfully, reluctantly made a lot of changes. I began to practice self-care, followed the advice of others who were successful in recovery, and I paid attention to my spiritual well-being. I made recovery the undisputed priority in my life and let my higher power take care of the rest. Slowly but surely, I began to integrate my “normal” life (finances, job, relationships, etc.) with



my recovery. As this happened, I was able to confront the world and take part in day-to-day activities most people without mental illness are able to undertake naturally. I was trudging the road of happy destiny. Recovery was teaching me how to live.

Then *&!# hit the fan. 2020 happened. No explanation needed.

I was forced again to acknowledge my powerlessness and to practice acceptance. I had to change my entire life and routine (again) painfully and reluctantly. I have to remember that my main priority is saving my life from my disease of addiction and my disease of depression. I have to remember that no matter what, those things take precedence, and I have to continue recovering.

I have done this by going back

to the basics and reminding myself what worked for me, what got me better in the first place. Meetings, sponsor contact, step-work. Prayer, meditation, spiritual awareness. Self-care and self-love. Staying connected with a recovery network. Basics.

Today these things look a bit different because of what is going on in the world. I can't go to the gym, so I exercise at home. I can't attend in-person meetings, so I go online. I still need to sleep a sufficient amount and wake up at a reasonable time. I still need to eat regularly, shower, make my bed, and change out of my pajamas (most of the time). The whole situation has forced me to revert back to the beginning of my recovery and to the things that originally brought me success.

Most of the things that happen in the world are completely out of my control, but I *can* control how I respond to them. I know what helped me when I began my journey in recovery, and I can continue to do those things, albeit differently. I don't need to internalize any external chaos. I can be the calm amidst a storm.

The world maybe on fire, but I can stay chill.

I was forced again to acknowledge my powerlessness and to practice acceptance.

SURVIVING COVID QUARANTINE

SUBMITTED BY: TOM S.

Having an alcoholic brain, I am prone to think in black and white, all or nothing; and “we are going to be like this FOREVER!”. Even though I know that is not true, I sometimes think like that anyway. To get out of that mind trap, I use some of the same, simple tools from our recovery program that have helped me through other difficult times in the past. One is to tell on it! Let someone else know what is going on in-

side my head helps stop the squirrel cage from spinning out of control. Another is call someone out of the blue, when they are least expecting it, just to say, “Hey there. Been thinkin’ about you.” That seems to help both of us lighten up.

Changing words changes my attitude. The very words “Lock Down” make me think I am in some kind of prison. No one slams the cell door shut at night and stands guard

outside my cell. The reality is we are in a self-quarantine to help save ourselves and our neighbors from catching some very bad cooties! I think of it as being of service to my fellow humans by using common sense to not make matters worse. I love having a program to guide me through these very difficult times.

THINK LIKE A SUNFLOWER IN 2020

SUBMITTED BY: ELAINE B.

I'll be honest with you. When I first heard about the theme for this newsletter, I had to work hard to remember most of 2020. Not because I'd forgotten – how could we forget such a mess of a year? – but because this year has seemed like a century long. And yet, I've grown accustomed to the new normal in many ways, so at other times it feels like this year has flown by with the same speed as many others.

We went from in-person 12-step meetings and lots of hugs to being in our separate residences and learning how to Zoom video conference. We became experts at the most commonly asked question in the 2020 year: Can you please mute yourself?

I was an isolator extraordinaire before my time at Ridgeview, and I knew isolating often led to depression. And yet, what did lockdown and 2020 require most of us to do? Isolate. The results of 2020 will, unfortunately, long be felt in our recovery community, from more people turning to substance abuse to higher rates of depression and anxiety.

Despite the work I had done in recovery, I wasn't immune to the dark cloud of depression or the squirrels-on-steroids anxiety. Back in March and April, when the virus surged and lockdowns were occurring, things appeared bleak.

My soul gets fed by traveling, by learning, by being with people and sharing. All those things were cancelled. My back yard patio became my nature haven, but it wasn't the same as the National Parks of the Southwest, where I had trips planned.



As the days trudged onward, I wondered if we would ever go back to normal. Would we ever be able to meet in person and get hugs again?

That was the main thing I missed, the thing I vow to never take for granted again: seeing my fellow recovery buddies and giving big hugs.

But as much as I miss so many things pre-2020, I can't help but note there were so many good things that came out of it too. Not that I would choose 2020 again, but as with so many things in life, there are always silver linings in the clouds.

Attending Zoom meetings and other support groups became easier without the hour commute in traffic, so I was able to participate more often. I learned about online classes on a variety of topics that fed my soul, while being able to remain safe for myself and my family. I started collecting more plants and spending time in nature.

Something about 2020 was shifting my focus from doing to being. And in that shift, my Higher Power and I became closer.

My spiritual retreat that I'd planned in Arizona would have to wait, but I figured out a way to do a getaway without risking my health. I spent a weekend in an airstream trailer a few hours away, and the location was on a giant farm in a smallish town with lots of beautiful sunsets, cows and

sheep, and—most importantly—big fields of sunflowers.

That's when I just shook my head and had to thank my HP. You see, sunflowers are one of those things that have a great lesson for all of us in 2020. And yes, I am a sunflower nerd. Sunflowers, by their nature, follow and turn toward the sun to get their nourishment and growth. The sun is essential for their well-being and their blooms actually turn throughout the day to follow the sun's primary point.

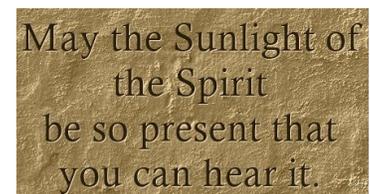


But have you ever asked yourself what happens on overcast days? What do the flowers

do then? I'll tell you. The sunflowers turn toward each other. By connecting with each other, they get the nutrients they need until the sun shines again. And therein lies the best lesson for all of us in 2020: we need to keep our focus on our Higher Power, just like those flowers need the sun. But some days it rains. Or it's cloudy. We might not feel as close to our HP, or life's external circumstances may be weighing us down.

But in those times, that is when we need to turn toward each other. By continuing to connect, we offer each other hope and friendship – even in 2020.

So be like the sunflowers. Shine on!



OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER

SUBMITTED BY: CHAD H.

I was walking through the inpatient unit and saw something amazing.

It was a moment of awe and inspiration. It was a sight so familiar but just far enough away to have been forgotten.

For the past four years, I have been working in the marketing and admissions side of the hospital.

From day one, ten years ago, I bought into the magic the facility was selling.

Today, the weather was a perfect 72 degrees. The winter month brought a warm but dry feel.

The energy in the group room was so strong, my presence was not even noticed as I attempted to slip through the glass door.

I had once again forgotten the new key to the unit and was trying to leave without asking someone to let me out.

As I crossed the room, the music, the smiles, and the glow of sun pulled me in. I stopped and looked over at the group session.

"Hey what is this about?"

Before I could get a response, one of the adolescent patients said, "Wait, aren't you Chad."

I nodded and said yes, assuming she knew me from years past.



Another patient, answered my question: "We're writing positive characteristics about ourselves and sticking them on."

I looked around the large circle of 25-30 patients to see hundreds of sticky notes stuck all over themselves.

There was an upbeat song playing, and all I saw were smiles, peace, and laughter.

Once again, my presence seemed to fade as the few patients who even noticed I was there in the first place went back to nodding their head, laughing, or writing.

I left out the door and walked back to the access center.

Suddenly, I realized the girl didn't know me from years past; she knew me just recently from the access center. She was amazed she could remember anything.

Most of the images that come through the admissions side door are of great pain and suffering. It's ground zero in their journey.

IN MEMORIUM

SUBMITTED BY: JANE S.

Early January 2021, we lost an awesome Case Manager – Dianne Madison. A lot of people recall their Case Managers from the Day Hospital. We were in long, daily meetings with them, and our brains were more or less functional. Dianne worked on Cottage C. We don't spend too much time there, and we are detoxing, or nodding out on new meds, or our brains are completely scrambled.

Cottage C is where Dianne was. She began as a CA, or what are now

called MT's. Then she became a Case Manager, a therapist. She helped people dig deep into what had formed our core personal beliefs. She left the medicating to the doctors, and she concentrated on helping us understand ourselves.

I volunteered on cottage C for about 10 years, a lot of it in Dianne's group. She came in early. If I was staying late to facilitate an EA meeting, Dianne was still there. She was sifting through her clients remarks, putting

together a report on where they were in the healing process.

I loved her, and I miss her.



RESILIENCY: SURVIVING TIMES OF TROUBLE

SUBMITTED BY: STEVE D.

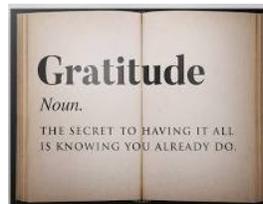
In these times of the COVID-19 pandemic, I must accept that my recovery and emotional endurance will be challenged even more. Certainly, my sobriety is tested on any day, and I must consistently rely on and implement my plan for sustained recovery. I am retired, live alone and for me the pandemic and my self-quarantine have added a heightened sense of social isolation, boredom and a real fear for my health and safety. What must I do to survive this and avoid relapse?

As a psychotherapist working primarily with children and families, I became fascinated with resiliency in children. I wondered how a child, enduring the most horrific of traumas, could survive emotionally and progress with the challenges of their ongoing development. At the time, I worked with children, who were enduring trials such as physical and emotional abuse, poverty, racial discrimination, and/or a lack of a nurturing, supportive and accepting home life. Some of these children I evaluated were not only surviving, but thriving. How could this happen? I reflected.

I began to study the concept of resiliency, especially in children. What I learned was that for resiliency to emerge and endure, there were several possible, common influences in the resilient children's lives. One of my conclusions was that perhaps the most powerful impact in a resilient child's life was having at least one individual, who was supportive, nurturing, and was a stable, positive "cheerleader". This one individual is a redeeming, encouraging force in the child's life. This person need not necessarily be a family member but may be some part of the child's social network. Could be a neighbor, teacher or corner store owner. It was as if this one asset balanced out all of the trauma and allowed the child to succeed in life and sometimes even flourish. Amazing. Of course, there are many children coming from traumatic circumstances for whom this

positive factor did not significantly impact their emotional development. Those were the kids I treated.

For today, I seem to be surviving the challenges that the pandemic brings. Some days are better than others, but I'm getting through. Overall, I seem to be resilient, bouncing back from the pandemic's troubles. How can I apply the concepts and principals of resiliency to my own life? I find that the recovery plan I have crafted over time incorporates elements that encourage resiliency. Perhaps I can identify some of those influences. First, working the AA 12 steps. Like I have been taught, working the steps is an ongoing process, accomplishing only what I must do today with the help of others. Progress through the steps has allowed me to have some degree of self-confidence and positive self-esteem. This has enabled me to find the courage to address the challenges brought on by the pandemic. I realize that this strength can be applied to any troubled time that I must face.



Another vital component of my recovery plan is my social network. For me, that one individual, who is a "cheerleader" in a resilient child's life, equates to my many, supportive friends. Not one, but many. A challenging demand of the pandemic is that I cannot physically be near my friends. I am grateful that I can at least see and speak with some of my friends, using the marvel of Zoom meetings. I miss the hugs, but I can capture those important faces and hear their voices. While I can attend AA meetings thanks to Zoom, my most important contacts are with people in my Continuing Care Groups and the Ridgeview Alumni Association meetings. These Zoom meetings are unlike most social situations. While I'm participating in these Zoom

meetings, I am in a place where every other person in the meeting is pulling for me and wants me to succeed and be happy. AA and Continuing Care meetings are "we" meetings. I cannot accomplish my goals in recovery without the support of others. These friends encourage me to bounce back and thrive, to be resilient.

When I think of those, who support me in recovery, I must also think of my family. The thing that I am most grateful for today is being sober. A very close second is my family, especially my adult son and daughter. AA has given me the steps to take to be the father and brother I was intended to be. It remains a work in progress. I am so grateful and blessed to have a forgiving family. Today, I practice "living amends", as best as I can. My incredible family is worthy of that effort. My loved ones give me a reason to be resilient and survive the trials of this pandemic. They also provide me with support I need to succeed with that.

Of the many other possible contributors to my resiliency, the last influencer I would like to address is *gratitude*. In AA, we are taught about the sustaining, healing power of gratitude. For me, being grateful is bedrock for my recovery. If I do not feel grateful, then I am not doing something right. In those times, I have found that taking pen and paper and writing down a gratitude list sustains me. Personally, actually writing down the list is key. Perhaps some of the outcomes that may bring power to this act include the physical action of writing it down, using several brain functions and neural pathways, or seeing it complete on paper or the sustained focus on identifying all the things for which I am grateful. For whatever reason, writing a gratitude list pulls me from the doldrums.

Sustaining my resiliency is an effort at times. I need to keep myself in my recovery basics and continue to be aware of the power that my blessings bring.

PARADOX REVEALS RECOVERY

SUBMITTED BY: CINDI B.

Discovery of the great truths often lie in paradox. For me, I discovered a great paradoxical truth during the 2020 pandemic. This was the year in which strength and resilience were borne of surrender.

After many years of being out of recovery, I returned on April 22nd, 2020. In those prior years I thought that I had the tools and the lessons and could make it on my own. Sometimes all that falling down takes a long time. I was highly resistant to the return, though I am now not sure why.

As with many of us who are caught in addiction, shame holds a tight grip. Shame, a bully that poisons the hope that things can be different or better. It lies to us and demands secrecy. It has the power to pull us into dark recesses of depression, where we feel we have nothing to bring to the table. This was where I found myself on that fateful day in April.

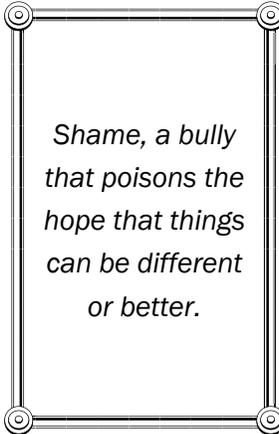
As I sat hiding in my room with my vodka, lying to myself that I was 'getting some writing done', a little window opened in my mind that shook me awake, roused me from my sleepwalking. My life felt like a dream that was hurtling down a path in the wrong direction. I could see my brokenness, and sometimes brokenness can carve right into the soul. I felt the darkness closing in. Suicide suddenly seemed a viable exit strategy. But I have grappled with depression for enough years to be well aware of the lies it spews. I recalled prior promises I'd made to

myself - promises to not listen when deep depression takes a seat at the table.

I don't think it was my own will that roused me from that chair, though. A power greater than myself lifted me from my seat, and with an urgency I knew I had to stop thinking and simply act.

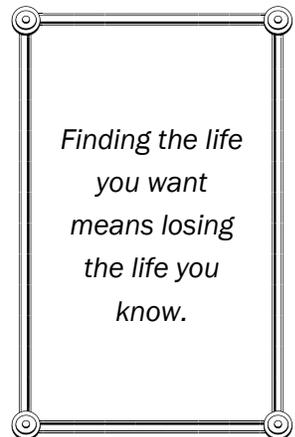
With the loud beat of my own fears throbbing through my heart in great pumps, I decided to give Ridgeview one more try. Fear can be what we feel, but brave is what we do - and the brave in that moment came from somewhere else. Even with that fear drumming loud, shouting that I had tried this before, I could see the bondage in which I was caught. I could run right back into the meaningless (but familiar) arms of addiction, or I could run for another shot at freedom.

Upon initial reentry into recovery, I couldn't figure out if where I was was right, or what I was doing was right, or what in the world it was that I was so afraid of. I felt lost, blind, like trying to move forward by reading Braille, feeling my way moment to moment. I found myself in the deep end, but it is when you're in over your head that you touch the depth of God. God



whispered that I could run at any time, but why not try just staying in the moment? I felt something within relax just a little - the palest light entered my weariness. And those moments began to stack together. What I discovered was that hope is born when a mustard seed of faith holds on for just a moment longer. What I didn't realize at the time was that this was my moment of surrender - a moment to moment surrender.

As I relaxed a little, I saw that others were alongside me, that they were loaning me their healed scars and courage until I could show mine and find my own. In these beautiful souls I realized that there is a grace that can wash away lies. The shame I harbored, it began to die when I told its stories in safe places. Shame may be a bully, but grace is a shield. And I found the grace, and the love when I felt most unlovable, right when I needed it most. It is available to any of us, we just have to be open enough to receive it.



To walk in recovery is to defy the darkness. Much of our happiness depends on our being brave - brave enough to be vulnerable. Brave enough to keep going when it would be easier to quit.

(Continued on Page 9)

THURSDAYS WITH SAM

SUBMITTED BY: SEAN C.



I remember hearing about Sam A. way before I met him. His reputation was larger than life. Sam was in charge of the Ridgeview Institute Alumni Association. If I wanted to stay sober, I was told to join the alumni before I was discharged.

Although I am taller than Sam, he was bigger than I had imagined. My immediate impression was that this man was clever and wise. *He gave me hope from the very start.* Sam was kind, but yet I intuitively knew not to cross him. That holds true today!

My story at Ridgeview Institute started on February 10, 1999. I was admitted into the “outpatient” program and allowed to go home at the end of the day. By following all the suggestions, I did everything that I was told to do. (At least that’s what I recollect.) I got a home group and found a sponsor who started to take me through the Steps, and I signed up to be a part of the Alumni Association.

During this time, Sam asked me to show up to the men’s meeting at Triangle every Saturday morning. I was skeptical at first, but I never missed a Saturday. My love for that meeting is still intact today. Sam always seemed to have an empty seat next to him,

which would allow me to be with him during the meeting and converse.

God bless Sam, because he spent countless hours with me trying to teach me to speak Southern. Being from Boston, I taught him how to say “High’-uhh, Pow’-uhh” and “So’-buhh”. It was during this period that I started to

wear a lot of orange and root for the Auburn Tigers. Now that’s respect!

Unfortunately, after five months, I didn’t listen to my sponsor and flew back to Boston to be with my family for the July 4th holiday. I ended up getting drunk. This started a 20 day bender, which landed me back at Cottage C. When I came to, Sam was sitting at the foot of my bed. He asked, “What happened, Champ?” I remember crying and asking if I could come back to the Alumni. That’s when Sam gave me a hug and told me he would see me on Thursday.

Let me change gears for a second and talk a little bit about the history of Alcoholics Anonymous. In 1934, a gentleman named

Bill Wilson was having trouble getting and staying sober. On several occasions, he ended up at the Towns Hospital in New York. Bill Wilson was one of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous and the principal author of the “Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.” It was at this particular hospital that he met a

doctor named William D. Silkworth. They used to call Dr. Silkworth “the little doctor who loved drunks.” Silky, as his friends liked to call him, worked with thousands of alcoholics and is considered a saint by many. He introduced Bill Wilson to the medical facts regarding alcoholism.



When I think of Sam A., I think of Dr. Silkworth. Sam, to me, is “the little counselor who loves drunks.” Between Dr. Silkworth and Sam A., there have to be hundreds of thousands of alcoholics who wouldn’t be alive today without their intervention. For me, Sam is one of the most important people I have ever met in my life. I don’t believe I would be alive today if our paths had never crossed. I’m not trying to put Sam on a pedestal, because he is human also. However, over the years, I have observed how so many people love Sam because of what he has done for them and what he means to their lives.

Although I majored in journalism, I don’t have the vocabulary to express what Sam means to me. I’m not articulate enough to express my feelings for this unselfish saint who still has no problems with telling me the truth. At the risk of hurting my feelings, Sam will always give it to me straight, because that is the way he loves me.

Thank you, Sam, and go “War Damn Eagle!”

I didn't listen to my sponsor ... I ended up getting drunk.

THURSDAYS WITH SAM

SUBMITTED BY: MIKE P.



“Have you guys met Sam Anders yet? He’s a cool guy! You’ll hear him pulling up to the Day Hospital on his motorcycle. He wears these glasses that make him look like Bono! I can’t wait for you to meet him.”

From a staff member, I heard these words as a frightened patient sitting in a lecture at the Day Hospital in June of 2008. As it turned out, all these descriptors given that day were true to my experience, and so much more.

Sam Anders ended up being a vital role model during my treatment at Ridgeview and perhaps more importantly, during my post treatment. Sam has an extraordinary presence about him that is loving and compassionate but will not allow any co-signing of nonsense (aka B.S.) when it comes to the lifesaving, life-giving gift of sobriety.

Every time I was struggling and needed guidance from him, I would be met with a consistent model of his undivided attention that never seemed to waiver. He also became one of my biggest supporters, and I couldn’t wait to tell him each year that I had managed to stay clean and sober.

Sam gave me my 1 year chip at the Men’s meeting at Triangle and said something like, “AA truly works miracles. I mean you should have seen Mike a year ago; he was a REALLY sick dude!”

Three years later, I told Sam

that I was thinking about becoming a therapist and one day hoped to work at Ridgeview, like him, to which he replied, “Are you sure you wanna get into this mess? Well, go back to school and get your Masters,” as he kindly walked away.

Sam ended up being a vital role model during my treatment

Three years after that, I had the honor of sitting next to Sam in my first staff meeting as a Case Manager in the Day Hospital and was blessed to work with him until the day he retired.

As I write these words, I am aware of tears forming in my eyes due to the gratitude and love I have for one of the most incredible and influential people in my life. I love Sam like a father, a mentor, and a dear friend. Thank you, Sam, for all you’ve done!

PARADOX REVEALS RECOVERY (CONT FROM PAGE 7)

Brave enough to break wide open so that we can grow large. Because if we do not risk anything, we actually risk everything. Finding the life you want means losing the life you know. It’s a whole and holy exchange.

This incomprehensible grace that has shaken me awake asks, “What do I really want my life to be about?” Our life is a tapestry, and I get to decide where to sew my next thread.



For that, my gratitude runs deep. Gratitude has become my native tongue, my first language. It keeps me showing up, doing the small things again and again – which can actually be the great thing that bears resilience.

This is what a life transplant feels like. Joy and thriving are borne of surrender. We find that what we thought was failure was actually a terrific moment of success. The paradoxes that illuminate life’s truths.

These broken places we carry – they most qualify us to bring healing to others, just as so many have done for us. We cannot pay it back – we can only pay it forward. And today I am most grateful that the refrain of my life won’t become the sad and woeful words, “If only....” Because today I’m living life wide open, with an army of loving arms that surround, as we all walk each other home.

AN INSPIRATIONAL PERSON TO ME

SUBMITTED BY: JEFF W.

Depression, anxiety, PTSD – Completed Ridgeview Intensive Outpatient Program on January 12, 2017. Immediately became active in Ridgeview Aftercare since that time.

Have you ever been inspired by a person, a quote, a poem, a song, or a scripture verse? Sometimes our thoughts, feelings, and emotions are perfectly captured by these outside influences.

I would like to share my thoughts and feelings around a very inspirational person that I have grown to admire and to respect. This person was born with very severe asthma. His mom, from nearby Roswell, was his constant caregiver in his early youth, and “he did the best that he could” with his health problems. I imagine that going outside and playing with the local kids was almost impossible.

As a teenager, he began to “push his limits” and undertook a program of gymnastics and weightlifting. Given his physical limitations, I admire his attempts at two rather grueling activities. I would imagine that he may not have been the “star” in either sport. My thought would be that an activity like hiking would have been the means of a major improvement in his physical conditioning and self-image.

My friend went to college and did very well. The long hours at home and the desire to “better himself” were major motivators, I am sure. Married at 22 to “the love of his life,” his challenging childhood health issues were behind him, and the future looked bright. Their first daughter was born four years later on February 12th.

On Valentine’s Day, two days later, both his mom and his wife died

within hours of each other! His mom had contracted a severe fever, and his wife had an undiagnosed kidney disease! I cannot even imagine. The loss of two loved ones on the same day is horrific. And your newborn child is 2 days old! And all of this on Valentine’s Day no less! Severe sadness . . . depression . . . disbelief . . . loss of hope . . . anger, these are some of the emotions that I would have felt, and I cannot believe that he would have felt any differently.

“Get out of town!” . . . I am not sure that I would have left my newborn in the care of a loved one and begin traveling, but he left his daughter with his sister and “hit the road.” Some may say that he was running away from his problems, and some may say that he needed time to “process” all that had happened and to “rededicate” his life as one that was still worth living. When he returned from his travels, he did begin to rebuild his life. Two years later, he married again, although I am sure that his past memories haunted him to some extent. It is sometimes hard for us to forget the past, concentrate on the “here and now” and to look forward to the future. We cannot change our past, but we can learn from it.

Being a patriotic soul, he joined the Army when the US was threatened by foreign powers and left his new wife and young family at home. This had to have been a hard decision for him, but you must weigh your priorities in life and make tough choices. After having dealt with his “demons” on that horrible Valentine’s Day, and after now having been a servant of Uncle Sam, he wanted to provide for his family.

He began in an entry level position and worked hard to succeed. Along the

way, he lost his eyesight in his right eye in an unfortunate accident: more “ups and downs” that he seemed to handle based on his love of journaling. All of us can benefit from journaling on occasion. Eventually, he rose to the highest position in his profession. Success at last! He retired at a rather early age and began to search for ways to “give back to the community.”

Life is a series of “ups and downs,” and retirement did not start out as “golden.” Shot by a person whom he did not know and had never even met or seen before, he was definitely “in the wrong place at the wrong time.” He recovered and began retirement again! Five years passed by, and one of his sons, wanting to serve in the military as did his dad, joined the Air Force. In a matter of months his plane was shot down by enemy combatants, and he died overseas. Really? Another tragedy? More of the ups and downs?

Our friend “kept the faith” and kept on journaling. Here are some of his reflections that I find inspirational and that I reflect upon in certain situations. I would encourage you to read each one and spend a few seconds reflecting upon that particular thought as well as the life circumstances of our friend that may have encouraged him to share such a statement.

- ◆ “Believe you can, and you are halfway there.”
- ◆ “It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried.”
- ◆ “Knowing what is right doesn’t mean much unless you do what’s right.”
- ◆ “A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.”
- ◆ “Do what you can, with what you

(Continued on Page 11)

AN INSPIRATIONAL PERSON TO ME (CONT FROM PAGE 10)

have, where you are.”

- ◆ “Courage is not having the strength to go on; it is going on when you do not have the strength.”

My inspiration, my teacher, my coach. . . Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt, 26th President of the United States.

You may know him as the hero in leading the “Roughriders” up San Juan Hill in the Spanish American War, the youngest American President, the first US President to win the Nobel Peace Prize, or one of the four US Presidents chosen to be represented on Mount Rushmore. He lived quite a life for a

person who died at the relatively young age of 60.

The lesson that I have learned from studying his life is that when we get down, we get back up and keep on trying, just like Teddy did. When we fall again, get back up again, and keep on traveling “The Road of Life.”

RESILIENCY—THE ABILITY IN RECOVERY TO GO FROM “WHY ME?” TO “WHY NOT ME!”

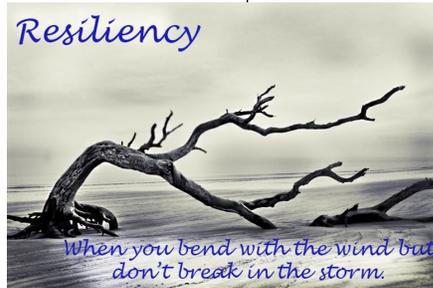
SUBMITTED BY: JAMES W.

“Resilience – The quality of being resilient a) the ability to bounce or spring back into shape, position, etc. b) the ability to recover strength, spirits, etc. quickly; buoyancy after being stretched, bent or especially compressed” – Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language

Recovery does not promise us an easy life, but it does teach us to live life on life’s terms. Resiliency is key to living life on life’s terms. A key to being resilient is to know where my strength comes from. Prior to recovery I had to rely on my own limited reservoir of strength. I am sure if you are like I am, you know how far that would carry me. However, now that I have a “new employer,” I have access to the ultimate power and a new lease on life.

One of the resilient benefits of recovery is that I am no longer in the results business. I realize that I am responsible for doing my part. I cannot control outside persons, places, or things. Those are under the providence of my Higher Power whom I choose to call God. God as I understand Him has a plan for me, a plan to prosper me, a plan to heal me and to render me of maximum service. Now, this plan does not ensure everything will go my way, but it does dictate that everything will go as it should. One thing is for certain: as I pray to God regarding His will for a specific person, place or thing, God will either change the situa-

tion, or He will supply me with the grace to accept that person, place or thing. What is important is that He molds my character through growth opportunities to be resilient enough to accept the outcome. Furthermore, my Higher Power grants me the resiliency



to make use of any situation so as to be of maximum service to another human being. I have learned through recovery that not all things that happen to me are about me or are for me. I have been able to take the good with

the seemingly bad. I can even face life on life’s terms, and instead of asking “Why Me?”, I can boldly state “Why Not Me!”

DON'T CHANGE A THING!

SUBMITTED BY: TOM S.

I am one of those people who dislikes change unless it's something I want to do. When the Covid crisis struck, and my home group had to stop meeting at a local church, I thought that would be the end of AA and everything associated with it. The idea of

Appreciating change, even when it sucks

changing the way I was accustomed to staying sober was frightening to me. Our friend Sam A. used to say: "Show me a rut, and I will furnish it and move in." I know that one! However, there is that acceptance thing talked about in recovery. I have used it to get through

these different and sometimes difficult times. I began online meetings, started calling others in recovery even when I didn't want to, went back to reading our Big Book again and even got a new sponsor. I had not communicated with my previous sponsor in months (not recommended). So now AA still exists; I am still sober, and the world is starting to change again. Here we go, one more day!

SURVIVING COVID-19

SUBMITTED BY: SEAN C.

First of all, Covid doesn't have to be morbid.

Around 10:30 p.m. on December 31, 2019, I was driving an 18-wheel tractor-trailer through the Pocono mountains in Pennsylvania. It was snowing and getting icy, so I decided to pull into a truck stop for the night. I was thinking about the Ridgeview Alumni having fun at the New Year's Eve party. I was also imagining my wife at home with her son and daughter-in-law playing with the dogs. In other words, I was on the pity pot feeling sorry for myself.

I called my sponsor, and he put things into perspective as he always does. He said, "It looks like 2020 is going to be a lousy year unless you change." How prophetic. He told me that his secret is to shine the light on the dark parts and look for the good. As I've often heard, "It's either a lesson or a blessing'."

How could anyone have foreseen the events of 2020? So many developments: Coronavirus, shelter in place, Black Lives Matter, protests, forest fires, hurricanes and flooding. You had the Census, elections, in school or virtual learning. One other fact that people seem to forget is that Tom Brady left the New England Patriots! I am truly overwhelmed.

I decided to put my sponsor's advice into practice and look for the positive. So I went out and bought Buccaneers tickets; no, just kidding. To

change my attitude and focus on the positive are not quickly done. Sometimes the pity pot can be pretty comfortable.

My situation at work was miserable and getting worse. Being new to the trucking industry, my learning curve looked more like a straight arrow pointed at a downward angle. Between January and March, all I could do was to talk to

others in the program as well as constant contact with my sponsor

Mike. Using Uber to go to meetings while I was on the road was a luxury when I had the chance. For a time, I was keeping my head afloat.

As March rolled around, the virus kept spreading. Thus came the explosion of Zoom meetings. I jumped on the Zoom platform like a fly to a garbage truck! (How about that Southern saying? I'm learning!) It was nice to see my AA cronies from Georgia as well as Massachusetts.

Although my wife and I missed each other while I was away, she was describing what the "shelter in place" looked like and that I would be shocked if I came home. While on the road, I wasn't aware of how serious the coronavirus was becoming. Traffic was

lighter, masks were "suggested" upon entering truck stops, and the weigh stations were starting to close. Other than that, and listening to the news, the immensity of the situation hadn't become a reality in my life yet.

When I was finally granted "home time" in early April, I was indeed shocked at what was going on. There were no more live AA meetings. No sports. We couldn't even go to church. My wife and our friends were slowly adapting to the new normal, but I was in a state of disbelief!

As it turned out, this was a perfect opportunity to slow down and appreciate the simplicity of my surroundings. The constant urge to accomplish one task after another was no longer there. I had time to meditate in the morning. My wife and I talked more because we were both home and didn't have to go anywhere. We took walks in the woods around Kennesaw Mountain. Once I slowed down, I noticed more peace in my life. Great lesson!

When I look for the blessings in this pandemic, I actually discover some wonderful surprises. I'm fortunate to have a job that delivers food to places throughout the country. The advent of Zoom meetings has enhanced my program. I find myself praying more, especially for those who have been inflicted by the virus. Although I'm on the road a lot, I find myself closer to my wife when I'm home. I don't take things for granted any more. I am so grateful to be sober today. Life is still pretty good when I stop and think about it.



ALUMNI GIVING BACK: FIRST RESPONDERS EVENT MAY 2021

SUBMITTED BY: ELAINE B.

May 15, 2021 was an amazing day to give thanks. Blue skies overhead, white fluffy clouds drifting by, and the Ridgeview Alumni Association hosted an outdoor event on campus to thank all the first responders in the community.

We had a great turnout for the grilled burgers and hot dogs, chips, beans, and Ellen P's famous banana pudding. Paul M. and David B. took the helm on the grill, and Elaine donated funny 2020 life mugs that made great containers for dessert and something to remember the RV event by.

Joseph W. provided his "handy" pick-up truck to make the logistics of set-up a much easier experience. The residents even pitched in to help set up tents and chairs for the

alumni, and Eddie brought music from the 70s/80s so everyone could have a rocking good time!

Every EMS van that pulled in had eager participants and we even had a few arrive before the start time; they played Frisbee while waiting on lunch. Seeing the paramedics take a few minutes from their stressful jobs to toss a Frisbee and tell jokes was a refreshing sight that we will not soon forget.

The event did everyone a world of good to see each other in person again; something so basic that we don't want to take for granted after not seeing each other for 15 months. Some of us were meeting each other in person for the first time, after only knowing each other as squares on

Zoom.

So many first responders only see us when we're at our worst. They drive us to Ridgeview when we've hit rock bottom, and they don't know what our stories are once they leave campus. The event was a great way to show our lives in recovery, that their efforts as EMTs/paramedics are never wasted, and we walk a path to help others.

Some of the first responders even volunteered to take a photo with us for our newsletter! Thanks to everyone who made this event successful. We look forward to making this an annual event and doing more service work for the community in the future.



This issue, as well as archival copies, are available on our website at www.ridgeviewalumni.com. The Newsletter will be in an Adobe PDF format, our website will link to download the FREE Adobe Reader, allowing you to read and print the Newsletter at your leisure.

If you would like to be notified by e-mail when a new Newsletter is placed on the site, E-mail us at sysadmin@ridgeviewalumni.com or contact us thru the Website at sysadmin@ridgeviewalumni.com. Please put "newsletter" in the subject line.

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

If you would like to submit an article for the next Newsletter, please email it to Elaine B. at ehb216@yahoo.com or Dawn L. @ dawnliistro@gmail.com using "Newsletter" in the subject line.

Elaine Burroughs, *Communications Chair, Proofreader, Steering Committee Minutes*

Dawn Liistro, *Editor, Design & Layout*

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A HOPELESS CASE

SUBMITTED BY: ANTHONY R.

It's hard to have hope when you're a hopeless case. That's what I was around Christmas time in 2013. The only thing I had going for me was that I had a good woman in my life. She had kicked me out of her house twice, and I was renting rooms from random people at that time. I didn't have family. Hadn't had any since my parents died 20 years earlier. I knew only loneliness, depression, and alcoholism. I had tried a few times over the years to make something of myself, but without anyone in my corner, I sank to whatever depths I could. No one cared because no one even knew me. I was a high school dropout with a long rap sheet, a long history of mental illness, and I couldn't draw a sober breath, not even for a job interview. Things were hopeless indeed.

I did not believe treatment and a 12-step program would work. Oh, I had seen miracles happen to people over the many years I had been in and out of mental hospitals, I just didn't believe that miracles happened to people like me. I had attempted suicide before, but it didn't work because I was not completely out of hope. I was going to Ridgeview to prove to myself that, even if I did everything I was told, it wouldn't work, and I could finally kill myself because there would be no more hope left.

So, I went into Ridgeview just before New Year's 2013. (The date was irrelevant; I hadn't celebrated holidays since my mom died when I was 16). The DT's were very bad, especially at night. I remember being very angry. I even received a Haldol shot and a night in the padded room. Before being discharged though, I called a man from the temporary sponsor list. His name

was Stan D, and he would take me through the 12 steps.

I called Stan and went to a meeting every day, just like they told me. I did the step work exactly as Stan instructed me. When a woman at the meetings would say to me: "don't quit before the miracle happens," I would think, "I'll laugh in your face when it doesn't." But miracles were already happening: I wasn't drinking, and the woman who once called the sheriff to have me removed from her home now didn't want me to leave.

I found a family in the Ridgeview Alumni Association. For the first time in my adult life, no one tried to run me off. In fact, I was welcomed and shown unconditional love. My first home group became my second recovery family. A fellowship was growing up around me. I was doing everything I was told, and the miracle was actually starting to happen.

My car was an old 1997 Lincoln Towncar that had once been blue when it still had paint on it. I had been ashamed of the old car until I noticed that some people at my meetings didn't even have a car. The best thing about that old Towncar was that it could haul lots of alcoholics to meetings. Very few of the people I gave rides to stayed sober, but I did.

I started to have hope after I got a few classes under my belt at the technical school. I figured that no one would ever ask about high school again. I could show up to a job interview sober. Maybe I could get a blue-collar job with some benefits now! In the meantime, I kept doing what I was doing because I liked what I was getting. Eventually, I transferred to a four-year university.

Over time, my girlfriend's family – who once tried everything in their power to chase me away – began to accept, and even like me. We lived in a

beautiful condo in a great neighborhood close to Ridgeview. I lived there for seven years (the longest I ever lived in one place). When my car broke down, I got a new one within a few days. The fear of people and of economic insecurity had gone.

When the pandemic hit, I continued going to my meetings on Zoom. I even sponsored men over the phone. At the age of 43, I graduated with honors in the spring of 2020. By Christmas, I was offered a job I could not have even dreamed of just a few years prior; and for more money than I had dared to hope for. The job was located in one of my favorite parts of the country – Wyoming. Because of Covid and Zoom, I knew I could move far away and still maintain my recovery. As the Covid era winds down, I am preparing to lose some connection to my old meetings and the Ridgeview Alumni. Had Covid not happened, I don't know if I would have had the courage to leave.

Today, I am engaged to the woman who saw something in me that no one else, not even I, could see. I have an awesome green collar job that I love going to. I drive a cool car, and I am heavily involved in the AA community where I live. I am grateful for the life that God has given me today. My friends back home know they witnessed a miracle by the time I left Atlanta. God saved a wretch . . . me. I don't know why I was spared when so many good people I have known over the years didn't make it. I think I was just hopeless enough to surrender my will and life to something – anything else besides myself for just long enough to know that it works.

You don't have to have hope. Just believe that I have hope for you.

Grace, Mercy and all the Love in the World,

I found a family in the Ridgeview Alumni Association.

THE 11TH ANNUAL - SAM ANDERS SERENITY SCRAMBLE

Tuesday, September 28, 2021 @ Bentwater Golf Club

100 Golf Links Drive—Acworth, GA

9:00 A.M. Registration 10:00 A.M Shotgun Start

Registration fees are \$380 Per team or \$95 per person (tax-deductible).

Includes round, cart, range balls, light breakfast, snacks, soft drinks, and water.

Lunch to be provided after the round

Advertise your company! Hole Sponsorship \$250 (tax-deductible).

Prizes awarded to top three teams, closes to pin, long drive. Hole-in-one prizes. **\$1,000 in Raffle Prizes!**

Corporate packages available. Call for details.

SPONSOR OPORTUNITIES

GOLD—\$1000 (Limited to 5): The Gold sponsor receives tournament entry for a 4-person team, a hole sponsorship and four Supertickets. The Supertickets include four mulligans, a free hybrid club or wedge, a chance to win a three-day vacation and entry into a drawing for the chance to win a \$25,000 shootout following the tournament. The sponsor also receives their company logo on all flyers and tournament documents and recognition in the RVAA semi-annual publication “The View”. That publication reaches about 4,000 addresses across the USA. The Gold sponsor may also hang a company banner on the clubhouse, and will receive verbal recognition during pre-tournament announcements.

SILVER—\$700: The Silver sponsor receives entry for a 4-person team, a hole sponsorship, banner for the clubhouse, and verbal recognition.

BRONZE—\$350: The Bronze sponsor receives a hole sponsorship, banner for the clubhouse, and verbal recognition.

INDIVIDUAL HOLE SPONSORSHIP—\$250: Company name and logo will appear on a sign at one of the 18 tee boxes.

Contact Stan Dixon: 404.210.1740 or Eddie Chinal: 470.606.2071 for information

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



Ridgeview Alumni Association Serenity Garden Brick Order Form

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(Line 3) _____

Please fill out name and contact number, even if you wish to contribute anonymously, so we may contact you in case any questions arise about the inscription.

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Love & Service,
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