

RISE & RECONNECT

The Miracle of Recovery in Community

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE
LAZARUS HOUSE AND MARY & MARTHA HOUSE



A Place To Call Home

Youth Services System Inc.'s Lazarus House and Mary & Martha House sober living homes were started by Shelley and the late Bill Rohrig to honor the memory of their son Mark who had struggled with depression and died after a fall. Our homes serve men and women ages 18 and older who are trying to get their lives back on track after treatment for substance use disorder. This is a residential, gender-specific program. It is a place to call home, with as many of the comforts of home as possible within our means and budget.



A Jewish rabbi was once asked what he thought about this Jesus of Nazareth. He spoke of the life of Jesus in words so simple yet so moving: "Jesus shows us that, in the eyes of God, our lives mean something!" We have a purpose in life even if we feel that our lives are like a messy stable. For those who grew up near farms a stable is not a cozy, clean setting; and yet the Christ-Child somehow transforms our ideas of what it means to be at home with God, oneself, and others in the dark and messy stable that our world and our hearts sometimes appear to be. Connections are made, and lives are transformed right here! An unlikely setting!

Was the community that many of us call "Church" ever stronger than when it was this "small", this poor (like Mary and Joseph), with marginalized people (shepherds), and suspicious foreigners (Magi, probably from present-day Iran)? Everyone belongs, even the animals!

When we look around our community and our world at those who don't quite seem to fit in, or don't "get it", do we ever wonder that these are the ones who have great gifts to give to us? I often wonder, in all of my darkness, that there's light somewhere in here – like a star visible only at night. Are we not the outsiders, looking into the stable on Christmas Eve as mere spectators, when truly we belong there together in community, accepting and supporting one another?

The lives of addicted persons, who have had to face darkness, loneliness, and stigma, can reveal to people what perhaps they do not like in their deep selves; that we are all addicted to our fixed ideas and agendas;



A poor stray dog, abandoned by its owners, found a home in the manger, located in the main square of a southern Brazilian town. The townspeople let him stay there, until he was eventually adopted by a loving family. A good lesson! While there may not be room for who we are among the in-crowd "at the inn," there is always room in "The Stable."

to hiding shame-based fear, to control, and to institutions or parties with which we try to hold on to some fragile sense of who we are. The lives of people in recovery from addiction are a gift to me and to you of how we all belong, how we are unconditionally loved, given that second chance after we fall (again and again!), and invited to be at home even in the messiness we sometimes feel in being who we are. God is Immanuel, "God-with-us", in this fragile and beautiful world together. Light is found in the darkness of a "Silent Night". Hospitality is extended from the hand of a tiny child who reveals the big heart of God. We only have to show up just as we are. Peace! ~ Pat Condron

Home for Christmas

I am very grateful to you for bringing me home for Christmas!

My coming to Lazarus House is a gift to me at this festive and spiritual time of the year after doing 8 years at Mount Olive Correctional Center. Many of those years were spent in solitary lock-up. Today I am free, sober, and alive against all odds.

I will not spend time living in my past. We all have one. Let me talk a little about how I got here today. I was born into a broken family, both parents addicts. I quickly learned that if I needed something, then I had to get it,

by any means. I grew up feeling that people respect scary people, and at age 13 I put my alcoholic and abusive father on the floor with one punch. I had watched him beating my mother and then turning on me.

I came to wonder that if life is a gift from God, how was

I so cursed. I never ran from anyone. I even stood up to the police, though I could have run away. Facing my life, I see that all people, even the police, have feelings, they feel pain, and they suffer. I listened to a police officer at my parole hearing, and I listened to his feelings and felt his pain.

At my hearing, Pat said that leaving me in prison would be to no one's benefit, and said he did not believe I was lost. At the parole hearing I felt I was not getting out (of prison). NO WAY! But here I am. Thank you so much. I now hope to be a light for others who deserve a chance. Here is a poem I wrote:



Mike C.

**My whole life I stood in the rain
To disguise my weep, my cry
And the hurt and deceit.
And I will never back down
'Coz I'm not weak, because a man
stands tall
And they never hit the ground even if
they fall.
But, as fate would have it, one day I fell
And I reached my hand out for help,
But it was smacked back down,
Because everyone around me tried to
Smash me back to the ground.
But being who I am
I found the strength to stand
On what felt like broken legs and broken
heart.
But this time it was different because I
got on my knees
And asked God for a new start,
And I did not put my trust in men
Because their loyalties are like the
wind, here today and gone tomorrow.
Also stopped looking for a reason
And blamed myself for the sorrow.
Because it says in the Bible that you
reap what you sow
And the worst sin is when you know
And yet you plow ahead, and when
everything goes wrong
It's not you. You blame God instead!
So for this I am to blame,
For now, Father, I bow my head in
shame.**



Addiction News From Pat

Among the theories related to the causes of addiction, some see it as a moral failure, others as the result of a weak-willed individual. It can be destructive of self and others, and therefore judged by some folks as a sinful behavior to some degree, depending on gravity of damage done and degree of consent involved. It has also been observed as being the result of "just not trying hard enough!" So you may find yourself asking questions like "Whatever happened to him? He was such a nice kid!" Or, "Whatever possessed her to get into this mess? She had a great family and they went to church on Sundays!"

Scientific research has studied changes in the brain chemistry of addicted persons and made some surprising observations. One of these has to do with the part of the brain associated with how we connect with others. Neuroscientist Rachel

Wurzman, who was interviewed recently by Guy Raz on the TED radio show (WV Public Radio, 12/14/19), has researched the brain function of addicted persons for some time. She has studied that part of the brain associ-

Neuroscientist Rachel Wurzman says loneliness is becoming a public health crisis.

ated with connecting to others (the striatum). Mis-wiring in this area affects a chemical (oxytocin) linked to loneliness. This can result in a person being so disconnected and lonely, irritable, and restless, that they will seek relief from anywhere including drugs. She concludes that loneli-

ness is becoming a public health crisis! Many of us in the recovery community see addiction as a disease of disconnection and loneliness. Maybe, one face of addiction is rooted in this phenomenon. Dr. Wurzman concludes that this can lead to the feeling that we are not as good as, or as much as, others; that we are not enough. The task, she states, is to teach people how to communicate while minimizing the shame of feeling they are not enough, creating an environment free of personal judgment.

Communities don't exist like they once did. It seems that we are no longer raised in a culture that connects like it once did. Studies have shown that communities that grew up around industries no longer with us, fragmented and witnessed a rise in addiction. Life thrives in community connection. Recovery happens in community.

Mary & Martha House in the News



Sommer S., house manager at the Mary & Martha House (our home for recovering women), was recently interviewed by WTRF Channel 7's Shelby Davis for "Faces of Recovery." Sommer shared the story of her life and how she came to be where she is today. We are grateful to Channel 7 for their interest in helping spread the news about recovery.

Donations to Lazarus House/Mary & Martha House

Enclosed is my gift for Lazarus House/Mary & Martha House:
___\$100___\$50___\$20___\$10___Other amount

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