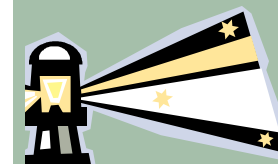


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The Beacon

A publication from Chestnut's Alumni Services



Chestnut Health Systems

January/February 2008

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A Wonderful Journey!

Each issue of The Beacon will feature a testament of hope from an alumni of Chestnut.

This issue's testament comes from Ray M. who has been sober for 3 years.

"Chestnut suggested that I stay away from people and places that I associated with drinking. At first this sounded crazy but as time went on, I saw they were right. Chestnut made me realize that there are people out there who do care. Those at Chestnut are best at what they do and I do believe they saved my life.

"The most important advice I would give to those new in recovery is not to give up. Fight this disease with all your strength, find a God and pray. If you fight this disease with all your strength, it works and I'm living proof!

"My wife, my family and my God keep me sober today with the help of AA and the 12 steps. The serenity prayer is truly words to live by. Another thing that works for me is taking all the energy that I would use to get drunk and turn that energy around to do what it takes to keep me sober. The bottom line to all this is I found out that my will would not work so I gave my will to God and I thank him everyday for what he has done for me. I still pray everyday for those still suffering because there is a better life out there. No one said it was easy. It is work and it can be very trying at times but the rewards you'll get are amazing!"

Would you like to share thoughts about your recovery with us? If so, please send an e-mail to alumni@chestnut.org. Anonymity is guaranteed.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Upcoming events sponsored by Alumni Services

Saturday, January 5, 5:30 PM—Fiesta Ranchera & Parkway Cinemas

Dinner & Movie Night

- Meet at Fiesta Ranchera Restaurant, 2103 N. Veteran's Parkway, Bloomington
- Dinner will be provided, courtesy of Chestnut's Alumni Services
- Movie will then follow (movie cost on your own)

Friday, January 18, 6 PM—Meet at 702 W. Chestnut

Hockey at US Cellular Coliseum

- Meet at Chestnut Health to take the van to US Cellular Coliseum to watch the Bloomington Thunder play the Flint Generals
- Discounted tickets will be available, but tickets must be reserved by **January 14** by contacting Diana Myers @ Chestnut

Friday, February 1, 7 PM—Pepsi Ice Center

Ice Skating Night

- Meet at the Pepsi Ice Center in downtown Bloomington for some ice skating & fellowship
- Prices for admission & skate rental to be announced

Saturday, February 23, 7 PM—Chestnut Health

Luau & Dance

- Come dressed in your favorite Hawaiian garb
- Live DJ, limbo contest & island refreshments
- \$3 per person

RECAP OF ALUMNI EVENTS

Trivia Night

On Saturday, November 20, Alumni Services hosted a trivia night. Participants answered trivia questions from the game "Scene It" in the following categories: television, movies, sports and Marvel comics. Participants played on teams of eight and there were prizes for the winning teams.

Holiday Decorating

More than 40 clients, their families and alumni helped spread holiday cheer by decorating Chestnut for the holidays on Sunday, November 25. Four Christmas trees were trimmed and paper chains were made to decorate the units.

Bowling Night

We had a great turnout for the bowling that was held on Friday, December 7. Participants enjoyed two games of bowling at AMF Circle Lanes, courtesy of Alumni Services.



Alumni and individuals in recovery enjoyed 2 games of bowling at the bowling night

Chestnut Health Systems
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Locations: Bloomington-Normal, Chicago Area, Joliet, Decatur, Granite City, Maryville, Belleville

The Beacon informs readers of news, events and people that can strengthen recovery. The mission of Alumni Services is to provide alumni with the support and guidance needed to ensure a successful recovery.

If your address needs to be updated or removed from the mailing list, please call (309) 827-6026 x3377 or email alumni@chestnut.org.

Post Holiday Letdown Tempered with Time for Yourself

By Diana Myers, reprinted with permission from *The Pantagraph*

The holidays are a time to enjoy family and friends. They are a time we wait for with great anticipation and hope all year.

It is natural for us to feel a sense of disappointment, along with relief, when family members go back home and life returns to a normal routine. This year, as you create your New Year's resolutions, use the tips below to help achieve a feeling of contentment all year long.

Reach out to others

This can be accomplished by performing random acts of kindness and volunteering.

Random acts of kindness can be as simple as sending cards and letters throughout the year. Residents of retirement homes and service members overseas always enjoy receiving a card or letter.

Volunteering is a great way to get involved in our community. There are more than 85 social service agencies in our community that need volunteers, in addition to churches that also use volunteers. Many times, it is difficult to find the time to volunteer with the many demands of daily life. Making volunteering a priority not only helps your community, it also helps to keep the spirit of giving alive all year.

Exercise on a regular basis

Exercise is an important part of maintaining good mental and physical health. Regular aerobic exercise releases natural endorphins which help boost mood. Exercise boosts confidence and improves self-esteem. Exercise also promotes better sleep and combats chronic diseases, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, some types of cancer and type 2 diabetes.

Take a little time for yourself

Plan relaxation and meditation into your day. Even if it is only for a few minutes, relaxation and meditation can help reduce stress levels and make you more productive throughout the day.

There are many methods you can use to relax and meditate, including tai chi, reiki, aromatherapy and yoga. Practicing relaxation techniques can improve how you physically respond to stress by slowing heart rate, lowering blood pressure, slowing breathing rate and reducing muscle tension.

Take time to savor the moment

Life can go by in a blur if we aren't careful to live in the moment and enjoy the time we have with family and friends. Plan activities that allow you to interact with others, such as:

- Going out to dinner or a movie
- Exercising or joining a gym with a family member, friend or colleague
- Taking a painting, dancing or foreign language class. Local park districts and community colleges offer a wide range of such classes.
- Attending a sporting event, concert or performing arts event
- Enjoying a relaxing evening at home. Plan a home-cooked meal, followed by a card or board game.

Spend a little time outside

Some people suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), more commonly known as the winter blues. The decrease in sunlight during shorter winter days causes those affected to feel depressed. Spending at least 15 to 20 minutes a day in outdoor sunlight can help combat these feelings. You can combine exercise with outdoor time in the sunlight by taking a brisk walk or jog.

Ask the Expert— New Year's Resolutions

Diane Burnett, BSW CADC,
Men's Unit Coordinator



What should one focus on when making New Year's resolutions?

Set achievable goals that you feel good about and can truly visualize. Make sure your goals are goals that you feel good about, not things you feel guilty about. Making changes because of negative emotions are harder to stick to than a change you can get passionate about. Visualizing change you are excited about comes much easier too.

How do I incorporate achievable goals into my resolutions?

When setting goals, be realistic and honest with your self. Don't think about large resolutions, instead make smaller goals that lead you to your larger resolution. For example, if you, like millions of Americans, choose weight loss for a goal visualize yourself taking the smaller steps you need to take to make your goal. Small steps may be substituting veggies for chips or ground turkey for ground beef. These may seem insignificant but smaller changes are easier to incorporate into daily life and when added together they have a significant impact. Once a small goal is a regular routine start on the next one until you have reached your main goal.

Is there anything one should avoid when making resolutions?

Don't make resolutions that are either unrealistic or so big that you set yourself up for failure. Avoid setting expectations for yourself that are too high or impossible for you to visualize. If you can visualize it, you can achieve it!

I R e s o l v e . . .

goal's and resolutions from individuals in recovery

My new year's goal is to quit smoking.

- Jeff W., 17 months

I want to work on being accepting of people; taking special care of myself; listen to my needs, not my wants; stay positive in the day.

- JoAnn T., 20 months

My goals for the new year are to make it back from Iraq alive and well and to be the best friend and husband to my wife, Diana.

- Ray M., 3 years

This year, I want to focus more on practicing prayer and meditation throughout the entire day, instead of just at night before I go to bed.

- Diana M., 5 years

I am going to work on being more of a giver.

- Marsha W., 6 years

This year I resolve to be kinder, more gentle and more patient. I resolve to get out of the bondage of self so I can listen more and focus on the people and opportunities that God has blessed me with.

- Joan H., 24 years

Opportunities for Service

Chestnut has many volunteer opportunities. Service work is an important part of recovery. By volunteering for Chestnut, you are enriching yourself as well as the lives of others who are in recovery.

At the present time, we are looking for volunteers for the following positions:

Volunteer Recovery Coach/Mentor

- Provide one-on-one coaching/mentoring, serving as positive role model for clients in treatment
- Make follow-up calls after clients are discharged from residential treatment and/or once they complete their outpatient treatment/aftercare

Volunteer Transporter

- Transport clients to and from church, medical or legal appointments, meetings or other appointments or activities

Check out more at:
www.chestnut.org/volunteers

I ' m B o r e d !

Are you bored or stuck inside with the cold winter weather? Check out these fun alcohol-free activities in the Bloomington-Normal community:

Parks & Recreation

Both Bloomington and Normal Parks & Recreation offer open gym for volleyball and basketball. Details are provided below.

Volleyball - Sundays, 7–9 PM at Pepper Ridge School (\$2 per visit)

Basketball - Mondays, 7–9 PM at Irving School & Wednesdays 7–9 PM at Chiddix Jr. High (\$2 per visit)

- Both Parks & Recreation departments also offer a wide variety of classes that one can register for
- Types of classes include fitness, art and dance
- Fee assistance/scholarships are available for those who are unable to pay registration fees for classes
- For more information, contact Bloomington Parks & Rec at 434 - 2260 and Normal Parks & Rec at 454 - 9540.

Public Libraries

Both Bloomington and Normal public libraries offer free internet access to residents. They are open seven days a week. For more information, contact the Bloomington Public Library at 828 - 6091 and the Normal Public Library at 452 - 5312

ISU Bowling & Billiards Center

The Bowling & Billiards Center at Illinois State University offers bowling and pool at affordable prices. They are open every day until 12 or 1 AM. For more information, call 438 - 2555.