

VOLUME XXVI

# THE VIEW

NEWSLETTER OF THE RIDGEVIEW ALUMNI  
ASSOCIATION STEERING COMMITTEE

## FALLING INTO RECOVERY

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### THE ORIGIN OF ELLIE

Ellie represents the idea that "it is easier to teach an elephant to dance than it is to teach an addict not to use."

THE  
RIDGEVIEW  
ALUMNI  
ASSOCIATION  
3995 SOUTH  
COBB DRIVE  
SMYRNA GA  
30080



## UPCOMING EVENTS

RECOVERY MONTH CELEBRATION	4:00PM	THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2012
FIRST FRIDAY SPEAKER MEETINGS	FRIDAY'S @ 7:45PM	RVI- DAY HOSPITAL AUDITORIUM
<i>OCTOBER 5, 2012</i>	<i>JANUARY 4, 2013</i>	<i>APRIL 5, 2013</i>
<i>NOVEMBER 2, 2012</i>	<i>FEBRUARY 1, 2013</i>	<i>MAY 3, 2013</i>
<i>DECEMBER 7, 2012</i>	<i>MARCH 1, 2013</i>	<i>JUNE 7, 2013</i>
GEORGIA PRE-PAID CONVENTION	THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2012	CALLOWAY GARDENS
BOWL-A-THON	10:00AM-SAT., NOVEMBER 3, 2012	BRUNSWICK ZONE-MARIETTA, GA
GRATITUDE DINNER	5:00PM-SUN., NOVEMBER 18, 2012	RVI-GYM
NEW YEARS EVE DANCE	8:00PM, MON., DECEMBER 31, 2012	RVI-GYM
SPRING FLING WEEKEND	MAY 2013	RVI

This issue, as well as archival copies, are available on our website at [www.ridgeviewalumni.com](http://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.

**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

Warren T., [warrenbtaylor@bellsouth.net](mailto:warrenbtaylor@bellsouth.net) or Marcus W., [invinoveritas34@yahoo.com](mailto:invinoveritas34@yahoo.com) using "Newsletter" in the subject line.

Warren Taylor: *Communications Chair*

Dawn B. Liistro: *Chair Emeritus, Newsletter Formatter, & Proofreader*

Barbara Wheeler & Marcus C. Wright: *Editors*

Marcus C. Wright: *Co-chair, Minutes*

Stacey L'Hoste: *Photographer*

Delores DeFreitas and Dorothy Seiden: *Bulletin Boards*

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WORLD OF COCA COLA

ZOO ATLANTA

## GBI ANGLES

SUBMITTED BY: ANONYMOUS

What brought me to Ridgeview and onto the path of Recovery?

When I awoke on July 30, 2009, little did I know that this day would change the rest of my life!

Every morning, I checked the level of my vodka bottle to make sure that I would have enough at 5:00 o'clock. If I didn't drink until 5:00, then I couldn't be an Alcoholic, right? Until 5:00 o'clock, I would smoke pot throughout the day. My drinking and using had not brought much consequence. On a daily basis, I got everything done that needed to be done. I was PTA President, worked out at the gym every morning, got my kids to and from school and activities, and had a good relationship with my husband. When I questioned my amount of partying, I had plenty of people that would tell me, "Look at what all you do, you must have it under control." My husband, however, would tell me that I probably shouldn't make PTA related phone calls after 5:00 o'clock. He also would be annoyed in the morning when I couldn't remember some of our conversations from the night before. Okay, so I needed to slow it down a little, I thought. The problem was that I wasn't slowing it down.

So, back to July 30, 2009: my four year old daughter had a dentist appointment at 9:30 a.m. My husband, mother, and sister had taken my son to Las Vegas to see his favorite play, *Phantom of the Opera*. We were running a little behind schedule and rushed out of the house. I knew that I would want to smoke some pot on the way, so I grabbed my stash. I didn't have any rolling papers, so I grabbed some aluminum foil and made a pipe (one of the many things

I learned in college). We got on the highway, and I loaded the pipe and took a hit. I looked to my left and saw a black car with two men looking at me. Some lights on their dashboard came on and they signaled me to pull over. My heart began to race. The two men in the car were GBI Officers. They were headed to another arrest, but saw me on their way. Lucky me!! They took me out of the car and handcuffed me, searched the car, and told me that they were calling DFCS. Fortunately, after much pleading, they allowed one of my brothers to come get her. I was taken to the hospital for a blood test, and then to Cobb County Jail where I remained for 13 hours until I was released on bond. I was 43 years old, and up until now, had only gotten a speeding ticket, and now here I sat in jail with 7 Felony counts.

*Every morning, I checked the level of my vodka bottle to make sure that I would have enough at 5:00 o'clock.*

The next morning I called my son's therapist and told her that I needed to come see her. She suggested that I go to Ridgeview and get an Assessment. I eagerly agreed. My agreement did not come first from a desire to stop using, but from a desire to do anything I could do to lessen my punishment. After a couple of weeks at Ridgeview with a lot of education about the disease of Alcoholism and Addiction, I realized that I was an Alcoholic and Addict. My desire now shifted to truly wanting to stop drinking and using. Thus, my Recovery began.

After leaving Ridgeview, I began my "90 meetings in 90 days", I got a Sponsor, started working the **12 Steps** of AA and NA, started **After Care** meetings at Ridgeview, and

joined and became active in the Ridgeview **Alumni Steering Committee**, and began service work. After 90 days of being clean and sober, I began volunteering at Ridgeview in the

**Access Center** welcoming patients and their families. At 4 months of Sobriety, I began leading meetings on the Ridgeview campus and at **Cottage C**, the Detox Center. At 6 months, I completed the **12 Steps** with my Sponsor. At 9 months, I myself became a Sponsor. I

still attend meetings five days a week, continue to see my therapist, attend **After Care** meetings at Ridgeview every week, attend the **Alumni Steering Committee** meetings, Chair meetings, and work closely with my Sponsor and Sponsees. I am truly living a life second to none!

Three years into sobriety, I am thankful every day that I was arrested on July 30, 2009, for without that event, I know that I would have not received the help that I needed. So what brought me to Ridgeview and onto the path of recovery? No doubt about it - GBI angels!!

## LOST (CON'T. FROM PG 4)

In the last seven years of Recovery, I've grown so much because of my Higher Power: fear has changed to faith; sadness became joy; doubt turned to trust; my darkness became light; out of despair came hope; and where once I was lost, now I'm found.

Recovery has allowed me to experience God in a way I never had before. I never knew how much He loved me. I trust in Him. I've experienced miracles in my life, and seen them in the lives of others. I expect to see more.

*Three years into sobriety, I am thankful every day*



## A PROGRAM FOR LIVING

SUBMITTED BY: STEVEN F.

The gift of sobriety has numerous benefits. First and foremost, we no longer have to live in that miserable place that we once endured. The quality of our problems increases immensely. We begin to make life-long friends, and look forward to having their company. Our relationships benefit from our true feelings and become sincere. We begin to live as never before. We look forward to each day and its blessings. We live in the truth, and simplify life as we should.

It almost seemed unreal. Just the other day, a co-worker struck up a conversation with me about how most women can discuss their true feelings. He thought it was awesome that they could hug one another, and not feel strange for doing so. He admired the fact that

they could cry amongst themselves, and grow stronger. I explained to him about a program for living that I try and practice every day. I'm certainly not perfect, but I'm a far cry better than I used to be! I told him about a number of things: things I've learned from working the 12 Steps, my Sponsor, and the fellowship of AA. I told him about what other people think of me being none of my

business. I told him about being in charge of my own happiness. I told him about my God who doesn't check references. I told him about having choices where I thought I had none. I told him about how my feelings aren't "factual" most of the time. I told him about living life to the fullest on a day-to-day basis. Oh, the list could go on, and on. We spoke for about 15 minutes, and not once did I mention the program of **Alcoholics Anonymous**.

I simply spoke to him about the "program for living" that I've come to know. He seemed genuinely intrigued. He had to get to an appointment, but expressed his interest in wanting to continue our conversation when we had more time. I agreed as I watched him drive away. I stood there smiling, thinking

how wonderful it felt to tell another human being about a "program for living", and having not once mentioned its origin was **Alcoholics Anonymous**.

It's no surprise that we live better lives today. We follow a few simple steps, pay attention, help others, and trust in something greater than ourselves. Isn't that how it was when we were children? When life

was simple, and we lived practically worry free? With the exception of a dumb old math test or getting cooties, life was pretty simple! It's when we add alcohol/drugs to the equation, and get a little older, somehow our SMART LITTLE BRAINS come up with some great ideas, and our worlds go to hell in a hand cart. Today, we strive to keep it simple. We have faith in a power greater than ourselves, and we honestly love and support each other, especially when we're incapable of doing it for ourselves. We don't drink nor drug. We go to meetings so we won't forget. We reach out and help the new guy, just like we were helped when we showed up. WOW - A PROGRAM FOR LIVING!!!

Some of you may have noticed, and some of you may have not: I've used the words "WE" and "OUR" quite a bit in the above missive. It's no mistake that we learn to do this deal together. We are no longer alone. Our individual histories should have pointed out to us that "ALONE" didn't work very well for us. SO.... if you're still struggling out there all by yourself, if you want your life to change, and, if you want to feel alive again, check out A PROGRAM FOR LIVING. It works. It really does.

*I explained to him about a program for living*

## LOST AND FOUND

SUBMITTED BY: DELORES D.

When I came to Ridgeview Institute seven years ago, I had little hope of getting better. After all, I had come straight from jail at a Judge's stern recommendation. I had been charged with ten felony counts for prescription forgery.

In my wildest dreams I never thought I'd be an addict, although it is rampant in my DNA. I was the "every time the doors open churchgoer", PTA President, Soccer Mom,

and had even, at one time, worked for the Billy Graham Association. My plan for my life did not include seizures, cardiac arrest, hospitals, institutions and jail.

Some folks said I was bad. Recovery taught me that I was sick. I was lost and hopeless. There wasn't a light at the end of the tunnel for me. I was spiritually bankrupt.

I appeared in court a few months into my Recovery. I had a

wonderful attorney and loving Sponsor who were both Ridgeview Alumni. That day I had a peace that I can't explain. I knew that whatever happened I was in God's hands. The DA was offering Community Service, Probation, and a fine, which all were better than jail. After a lot of dialogue with the Judge, he banged his gavel and said, "Case is dismissed." At that moment, God did for me what I could not do for myself.

# FALLING INTO RECOVERY, STAYING IN RECOVERY

SUBMITTED BY: COREY J.

I don't really know how to start my recovery story. I first started seeing a psychiatrist the summer of 2001. I came home from college and was so depressed that I would spend all day sitting and staring at the wall. My mom is in recovery from depression herself, so she was able to see the signs and was able to convince me to see her psychiatrist. I suppose that was the beginning of my journey towards recovery. After months went by and medications alone were not helping me enough, my doctor suggested I see a therapist. Unfortunately, the therapists at my school were not very good and I continued to

worsen. I was hospitalized two times as an inpatient and attended a partial hospitalization program at the same hospital three times, before obtaining a second opinion from a doctor at Ridgeview, who said that my mental illness was severe enough to need long-term help. By now, even though I was labeled "severely" ill, I was also incredibly motivated to get better. I was going to graduate college no matter what! And so, I took a break from college and attended Skyland Trail, a long-term mental illness and addiction recovery center for eight months in Atlanta. I, of course, had to get worse before getting better and a month into my term at Skyland, I spent two weeks at Ridgeview's Women's Unit, getting help for my eating disorder (restricting) and for suicidal thoughts.

It was at Ridgeview and Skyland Trail that I really got introduced to the concept of living in recovery. I learned that the goal of recovery is not for life to return to how it used to be, not to be free of mental illness or

to ignore it, *but to learn how to live with it*. I learned how to test reality and the importance of support groups. I finally found therapists that I felt I could trust and I met other people with the same diagnosis that I had, which was such a relief. Ridge-

***I learned that the goal of recovery is not for life to return to how it used to be, not to be free of mental illness or to ignore it, but to learn how to live with it.***

view taught me how to eat in a healthy way and introduced me to Anonymous type support groups, specifically Eating Disorders Anonymous. I learned that only eating non-fat foods is unacceptable and I started seeing a nutritionist. I made recovery friends, which has proven to be invaluable to me, as they can understand what I am going through in a way that few people can.

Skyland Trail got me singing and playing the piano again-I had stopped my lifelong musical passions when depression overtook my life- and for that, I will always be grateful.

When I left Skyland Trail in August of 2005, I found a therapist that I could trust - she used to work at the same institution - and with her help, and the help of my other recovery friends, I was able to graduate from Georgia State University with a B.A. in English in December of 2006.

I immediately left Atlanta for Milledgeville to get a degree in music therapy after graduation. Unfortunately, without my support network in place, I relapsed into my eating disorder in order to cope with the stress of school. I went back to Ridgeview's Women's Unit for another two weeks and this time I worked harder at learning new skills and surrendering the eating disorder to my Higher Power than I had before. When I got back to Milledge-

ville, I continued to work hard in recovery, but it was too difficult in that unstructured environment and so I decided to return home, so that I could work on my recovery full-time.

Since then, I have worked part-time "recovery" jobs and spent the other times, focusing on Recovery with a capital "R." I renewed some of my recovery friendships, which ended up leading me to discover Ridgeview's alumni and after-care programs. At Sam's suggestion, I found a sponsor and started working the twelve steps. Despite all of this, I ended up going to Cottage C and the day hospital several times last year, but I did not consider myself out of recovery. I did not relapse into my eating disorder, but needed more intense help for my depression and anxiety.

My mental illness and my addiction are not cured and most likely never will be, but I now have a solid recovery net that I can lean upon for comfort and support. I have

***...now have a solid recovery net that I can lean upon for comfort and support***

upped my meetings, I go to individual and group therapy, and I am reworking the twelve steps. I convinced my family to do family therapy as needed. To get outside of myself, I volunteer every other week at Woodland Ridge, playing and singing for the folks that live there. I am willing to do whatever it takes to stay in

recovery and to make my life better. I may have sort of blindly fallen into Recovery, but it is a space I am determined to stay.



## FALLING INTO AA

SUBMITTED BY: JASON T.

I fell into AA pretty hard, but not on my own accord even though I was well aware of my problem. My wife and mother of my four children were fed up with all the negative attributes of my alcoholism and forcibly coerced me to enter Ridgeview. She had been through the ringer for four years and endured more hardship than any wife should have too. I made an appointment at Ridgeview for a Wednesday the first week of November 2011. I decided on Thursday night the last week of October that I should not wait until Wednesday. I had my interview and lied to the lady about my drug use and half way through the appointment I asked if they were going to keep me. She replied "no" and I was ecstatic. I told my wife they said I wasn't crazy and could come home. The next morning my wife called Sam Anders. About two hours later I was in Cottage C.

Cottage C was entertaining to me and foreshadowed the friends I would make in recovery. The camaraderie and friendships began almost immediately reminding me of the fellowship of alcoholics anonymous. I immediately felt at home surrounded by other drunks and junkies. We bonded quickly and had lots of stories to share with each other of how we had got there and why. There was no doubt I needed to be in rehab and the time away from the worries of the world was welcomed. I was referred to the half way house after 5 days in Cottage C. I stayed at the half way house for 2 weeks and met some men that I clicked with and could relate to on a deeper level. The late night conversations about our failures and struggles created deep bonds with men I would not have normally associated with. During this time life remained in the

back of my mind. I was reminded often by my subconscious of my wife and children and how they were dealing with life and the head of the house being in rehab and emotionally unavailable. I was told that I needed to focus on my sobriety and that was the only way my family and I would begin the road to recovery, so I did.

I started the Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP) at the same time I was in the half way house. My case worker, psychiatrist, and class were all very helpful during this time. They were stern and called me on my bulls\*\*t. It was exactly what I needed. I was prescribed a rubber band for my wrist to control my fast, excited, rambling rants which was one of the most beneficial things I learned at rehab. I was reminded to only use my rubber band as a hint and not a way to hurt myself. This gave me more insight to the depths of this disease and how it had warped so many of us. I remained in PHP for four weeks. After 2 weeks in the half way house my wallet forced me to move in with my mother-in-laws for the remainder of the PHP; my wife was not ready to have me at home yet due to

***I immediately felt at home surrounded by other drunks and junkies.***

the hate and discontent that I caused there. This was a stark reminder that my wife would make it with or without me and that I had to get better for me to prove to her that I would be there for her and the family. I remained at my mother-in-laws until I completed rehab. I left rehab with a written life story, a time line, some phone numbers, and more hope than I had for many years.

When my wife picked me up I was scared to death; leaving the safety of Ridgeview and trusting in God to do for me what I could not do for myself.

It was suggested I do 90 meetings in 90 days and I did.

Slowly my life began to change. I threw myself into AA. I got a sponsor who listened to me whine and told me "you're sober; you've got half a chance." I did steps one, two, and three, then began a written fourth step. I got 2 phone numbers from every meeting I went to and my sponsor made me call five alco-

holics a day. It was tough at first then it became easier. I began to make friends in the program. Not acquaintances like the so called friends I had before recovery, but friends I could count on and talk too honestly about my feelings. My life at home began to change slowly. I discovered that two of my grosser handicaps are sarcasm and antagonizing. Though these two defects bring much personal amusement, they harm others and detract from personal relationships. I continually work on them both daily, asking God to help me. Constantly remembering that the less I struggle the easier it is.

Thanks to God, my family, and Ridgeview for today because it's all I have.

***I left rehab with a written life story, a time line, some phone numbers, and more hope than I had for many years.***



## STRANGE PLACES: BACK DECKS, CLOSETS, AND BEDROOM CORNERS

SUBMITTED BY: DOUG F.

How did I get here? At The Ridgeview Institute (RVI) that is?

Well, it's a long story, but for the sake of a little brevity, I will just give you the end game. You see I've been an Addict and an Alcoholic for over thirty years. I am in Recovery now, but that certainly was not always the case.

In the weeks leading up to my taking up residence at RVI, I progressed into a despair that only fellow users can really appreciate. My mood changers had at last won; they took complete control, and carried me across that last line I swore I would never cross. The events leading up to the decision were scary and desperate, a man out of control, willing to sacrifice all for his ability to check out and not feel.

Around two weeks before that faithful Monday, I consumed so much Xanax, Seroquel, Klonopin, and Vodka, that I had lost the ability to form words and speak. My husband was very concerned, but I attempted to try and convince him that I had a bad cold, and the Theraflu was causing this reaction. He knew better. Stumbling up the stairs, I tripped several times on the way to the bedroom, and in the attempt to remove my clothes passed out in the closet. Later that night, still heavily under the influence, I got up and walked to the bedroom corner and relived myself thinking I was in the bathroom. Sometime the next afternoon, after I became somewhat sober again, he told me the whole story. I was deeply ashamed and begged forgiveness, which he gave.

The next weekend, the weekend that would forever change my relationship with him and the rest of the world, I went back to the same

mix of drugs, this time warmed together with a packet of Theraflu for good measure. This resulted in falling asleep on the back deck floor where he left me for the 20 hours or so it took to get through it. Late Sunday, I climbed into our bed to find myself all alone as he was sleeping in another bedroom with the door locked. He had reached his end.

Monday morning I found myself downstairs to be confronted by him with a choice; it is me or your drugs. Even that was not enough, for I was so in despair that without thinking I told him I choose the drugs and alcohol over you. He looked a bit stunned, and left for work. I sat down on the floor and cried. The one thing I had sworn was to never betray the commitment I had given at our ceremony, the eleven years we had spent building a life. I just tossed it out the door for my need to be buzzed and unfeeling. I cried great tears and knew the bottom had been reached.

Somehow I got him on the phone, and told him I was on my way to RVI as I just could no longer do this. I wanted to die because of the action of my abandonment of us. To gain the courage, I got messed up again but I made it there, and got checked in.

I spent eight weeks at Ridgeview, weeks of tearing down and rebuilding myself, learning to live, and gaining the tools to handle life as she presents herself. Four years later, I am still on that journey, a journey that will take my lifetime to fulfill.

Daryl, my former husband, is not in the picture today as the damage I did that day and many others destroyed the foundations that a

marriage is built on. He stayed with me through the hell of those eight weeks, and for nine months after.

*I learned how to remove the regrets, and face the consequences ...*

When he felt I was strong enough, he told me he had to leave as the rip in our life was too much to repair.

I learned at Ridgeview how to process the divorce, and fold it into my life. I learned how to remove the regrets, and face the consequences that my actions brought

upon myself.

I discovered how to forgive myself.

Today, he and I are great friends, and both of us have moved on, and found new loves. Recovery brought this to both of us and without the Program and Ridgeview, he and I would be very broken men.

*I consumed so much Xanax, Seroquel, Klonopin, and Vodka, that I had lost the ability to form words and speak.*





## ATTACK OF THE HUMMINGBIRD

SUBMITTED BY: LYNN N.

My Husband, Mr. GQ, has been spending a lot of time outside on our deck.

He works from home. He sits outside and makes calls, works on the computer, and does very important business stuff. While working last week, a hummingbird buzzed his head. He felt it! Then the hummingbird turns around and looks at him like he did something wrong.

I have been married to Mr. GQ for 27 years. He is charming, handsome and dashing, like Cary Grant. Maybe I should call him CG, but I will stick with the magazine I think he writes, GQ.

Anyway, to say we have been through a lot during those 27 years is an understatement. We have been through good, bad, alcoholism, recovery, and the death of parents.

In July we were faced with a medical crisis, decisions about his job, decisions about me continuing my own business or seeking a comfortable full time position, buying a business, and a possible relocation. July was a tough month!

So I have been sitting with him on the deck talking things through. Yesterday the hummingbird came by for a visit. When it saw me it turned and left. I laughed, but Mr. GQ said it is not funny, that bird does not like me! Apparently the bird has been visiting each day and getting all up in his face.

I called my Mom last night and told her about the bird. She said the bird is mad at Mr. GQ because he is not giving it any nectar. I laughed and laughed! I will go get it some nectar today and surprise Mr. GQ when he comes back from his business trip.

There is a life lesson for us from the hummingbird. All it wants is nectar, something good and nourish-

ing.

During this horrible month, I have been putting all of the tools in my toolbox to use! My toolbox is the 6 simple steps from the RVI Saturday Ladies meeting:

1. Please prayers each morning
  2. Read 2 pages of the Big Book and an inspirational book
  3. Call 3 friends daily that are sober women (or men for men, you know)
  4. Call your Sponsor
  5. Go to a meeting
  6. Thank you prayers at night
- I say the Third Step Prayer everyday:

"God, I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may bet-

ter do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!" And I add, please be a footlight to my path.

I am sharing this with Mr. GQ, and he is using some of the tools as well. Together using this program we are able to maintain our sobriety and make it through this difficult time! It really works! Like Nectar!

Then I go to a Big Book meeting and the reading is page 60 – 63. Remember the story about the alcoholic being the director of the play? Well, on page 63 it says:

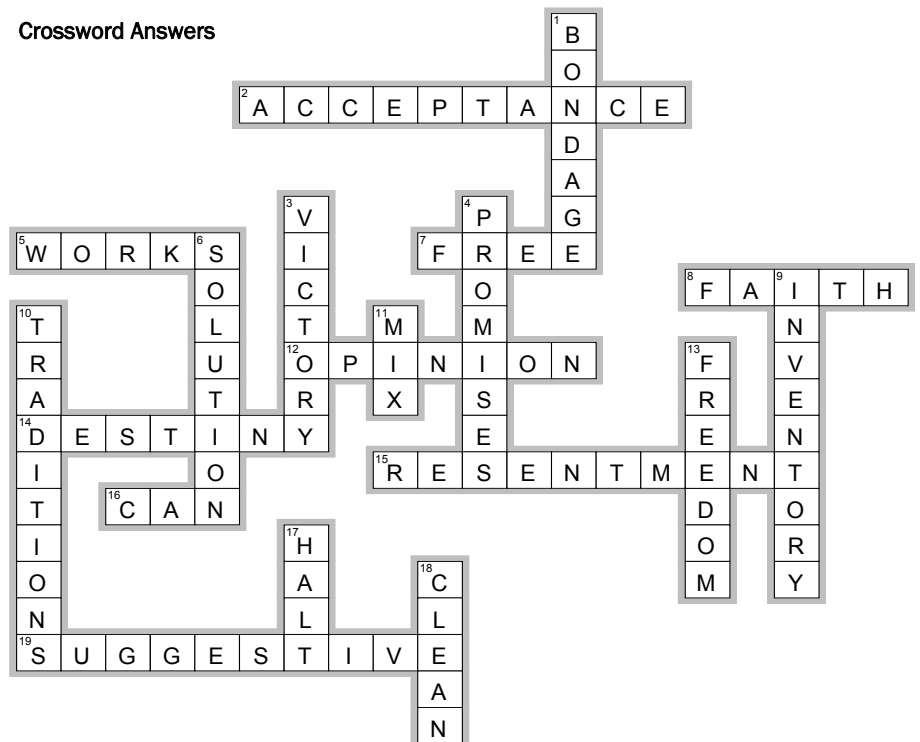
*"Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be the director."*

And there is the answer to everything. God is large and in charge! We just need to do the next right thing and eat the nourishing nectar.

Mr. GQ – Don't let the hummingbird spoil your serenity! I will go to The Home Depot and get him some nectar.

Peace and Love to you my friend.

## Crossword Answers



EclipseCrossword.com



## FALLING FORWARD INTO THE RIDGEVIEW REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY: DONALD R.

I think Bill Wilson calls it a "kick upstairs." I have over ten years sober now, yet not accumulative. I have enhanced my story with: five white, aluminum, red, yellow, green, and blue Chips; three 2 year Medallions, three 3 year Medallions; and, a one 4 year Medallion. This makes me the perfect candidate for our Fall 2012 Newsletter theme. A seat on the Thursday night **Communication Committee** via the **Alumni Steering Committee** enables me a little input amongst the strongest control freaks - (just kidding!). I met the *most caring people* of all the **Committees**, and an article which will not make much sense after the Editors hack my story to pieces - (not really!). I do hope you

have a good editing session with this one, Marcus!

I love and hate Sam Anders with equal distribution. Never has someone praised and humiliated me in front of so many sick people. My feelings (as if Sam gives a damn), and ideas (Sam says, "*Why bother!*") have been my version of Disneyland in Hades. Yet, through all my falling, the Ridgeview **Alumni** has been my freeing source going forward. I keep coming back, and they still love me. For this, I am the most grateful drunk with a 5 year Medallion on the horizon, and a place of serenity and peace every time I enter **Sam Anders Auditorium** sober, spiritual (at least a few people think so), and free. When

I tell anyone "keep coming back," I damn well mean it with every fiber of my being. You, the **Alumni** and especially Sam, inspire me because I have the most empathy, and deepest admiration toward anyone wanting a "forward falling." As an old timer used to say, "*I am so thankful today finds me sober, I sure would hate to miss one.*"

Please pause, look at my story for a moment, let Sam share the miracle of me, and know there is hope for you too! Never give up the fight toward "forward falling" into the Ridgeview **Alumni's** embracing and loving arms. I am a perfect example that there is hope for you too!

## THE DRIVE OF MY LIFE

SUBMITTED BY: RENE H.

Of all my days in recovery, my drive to Ridgeview was one of the most fearful days that I can remember. My wife was driving and I had just come off a night of heavy drinking. My body was telling me it was not a good idea to do so. I had to stop the car three times and breathe into a bag in order to keep the little bit of food down that I had consumed earlier.

We arrived for my 1:00 pm evaluation. After I filled out a TON of paperwork, we started to go over my situation. It must have taken a good two hours to make me see that staying here was going to be a good idea. Of course, I did not want any part of that IDEA! I came up with some good reasons why I could not stay. I had NO clothes with me. Then, my wife informed me that she had packed a suitcase for me, while I was taking my shower that morning. By 3:00 pm, I was sitting on my bed in Cottage "B" (back in 1996 that was where they put the people suffering

from Alcoholism, not in Cottage "C").

My first seven days went by without any problems. I was so confused that I did whatever they told me to do. I then went to the "Halfway House" for a total of eight weeks. During that time, I got a Temporary Sponsor and started working "The Steps". It took a while for me to come out of my Fog. When my mind started to clear up, I actually started to enjoy going to meetings, but I was very impatient. I wanted ten years of Sobriety in TEN DAYS. As we all know that is not going to happen.

The Promises started coming true for me. The first "Spiritual Awakening" that I had was the fact that I could actually keep food down on a regular basis; it may not seem like much to some people, but to me it was the world. Prior to that I was eating less than a "kid's meal" from McDonalds, for a whole week.

I had Dr. Lynn while I was at Ridgeview. I would meet with him once a week and he would give me

"homework" to complete. Working with my Sponsor and Dr. Lynn did wonders for my sobriety and life in general. Then the BIG day came, the day I was to leave Ridgeview and go back to work. That was a very frightful moment in time. My Sponsor kept telling me to do this program "*One Day at a Time*" and I would be "OK". I stayed around Ridgeview. I joined the Alumni Group (which happens to be FREE, the only thing that is). We'd meet every Thursday and I went to the "Crossroads AA meeting" every Sunday, in addition to working at the Access Center and chairing meetings at Cottage "C" every month for the last fifteen and a-half years. It works, it really does.

Doing "*One Day at a Time*" is the only way I have found for me to stay Sober and keep my life in some sort of manageable peace of mind and to survive that "Drive of My Life" that started this Journey...

## FALLING INTO RECOVERY

SUBMITTED BY: TOM S.

I didn't really fall into Recovery; but, I did fall down drunk, bust my head open, woke up in the hospital, spent five days IV detox, discharged into Ridgeview Institute, did what I was told to do, and have been in Recovery ever since. So, I guess in a way I did fall into Recovery.

The important thing is that I became willing to change the way I was existing to a new way of living, and I kept com-

*I became willing to change the way I was existing*

ing back. Life keeps happening, but how I deal with it is totally different. The book *Alcoholics Anonymous* is my guide book on how to be a better person; I use it every day.

**A little filler blip:**

I have heard in meetings that "Whoever got up the earliest this morning is the most sober because all we have is today." I think "Whoever got up the earliest this morning is the tiredest

this evening." Granted, we only have today but we "do not shut the door" on the past. In early Recovery, I was in the habit of wanting a drink to change the way I felt. After being in AA for a while, I am now in the habit of calling another Alcoholic, saying a little prayer, practicing some of the Principles that we are taught; in other words, I am in the habit of Recovery, and that does not happen on the first day, or the first week.

## PURPOSE DRIVEN RECOVERY

SUBMITTED BY: MARIA E.

Recovery for me began on February 2, 2012, the day I began my stay at Ridgeview. All I knew at that point was how my drinking and use of pills had gotten completely out of control. I quickly gained my new label "Alcoholic and Addict". Though it was difficult to say aloud, I soon took pride in finally having an understanding of who I am and why I do the things I do. My rehabilitation consisted of recovering from addictions, and learning to live my life with a purpose.

Before my stay at Ridgeview, I'd spent my life making choices and spontaneous decisions based primarily on what others might think. My purpose was driven by instant gratification, never considering the negative long term effects that would follow. The first decision I remember making with deep consideration for the future was to dial 911, and have my then husband arrested after hitting me for the last time. I

*I'd spent my life making choices and spontaneous decisions based primarily on what others might think.*

had decided that I would put a stop to his physical, emotional, and psychological abuse. Amazingly, relief set in after being hit this time because I could now make a definitive move toward a life without him. I knew the only way to get out was with help from the police. However, the confusion and hostility that comes with divorce resulted in a downfall into periods of deep depression and bad decision making.

*God led me to give them space and time for us to rebuild*

My purpose became to find any quick fix that would eliminate my feelings of fear, anxiety, and guilt. By feeding my depression with addiction I was unable to understand or even recognize that I have a purpose in life. I desperately needed help to recover and fulfill this purpose.

My sobriety date is March 14, 2012. I continue to have struggles in my Recovery, and I don't foresee it to be an easy road ahead. But having identified my

purpose, to carry out God's will the best I can, I am better able to make decisions that will lead to positive results. Recovery has helped me simplify my life, and focus my energy on what's important.

I put my complete trust in God this summer by asking for His guidance in how to handle a situation with my daughters. Since telling them the truth about my addiction and having been in treatment, they've chosen to stay with their dad most of the time. I was scared that our relationship would be strained forever. God led me to give them space and time for us to rebuild slowly. My girls and I have been able to spend quality time together for a day at a time, allowing them to see the changes I've made and learn to trust me again. I feel closer to my girls now than I have in a long time, and am hopeful that we will grow into having a more healthy relationship. My purpose is clearly to give control over to God and let His will be done in this and all situations.

## FALLING INTO RECOVERY

SUBMITTED BY: MARY M.

For me, falling into Recovery meant falling out of Recovery. After 27 years in Recovery, I became complacent and stopped using all the tools in my recovery "tool kit". I thought by that point "I had it". Well, I had "it", but like any muscle - if you don't use it, it becomes sluggish and isn't there to help you when you need it. So, here came Recovery year 28 - personal crisis hits - and WHAM! That first

***I became complacent and stopped using all the tools in my recovery "tool-kit".***

into my system and I was off to the races. To be honest, I was in a dry drunk the previous two years, my defenses were down, and three months of active drinking took over like a cobra curled for action. When I came to my fuzzy senses, I was off to Ridgeview for help. Ridgeview has always been there for me, a Health Care Professional and a recovering Alcoholic. Little did I believe that after that first drink after so many years that I would end up on the "Mind Bender of Relapse". Four admissions to Ridgeview in one year,

and five Sponsors later - and I now have some sober time under my belt.

My Home Group, my daily meetings, and my Sponsor have been a life saver for me, but what has really helped me fall back into Recovery has been our Alumni Support Group with Sam Anders, and his caring group of merry men and women that meet weekly to encourage all of us to "carry on bravely".

Wherever you are in your Recovery, be it 30 days or 30 years, don't take this disease for granted. It is "cunning, baffling"...and DEADLY. It is just waiting below the surface to take us out.

## FALLING INTO RECOVERY

SUBMITTED BY: AARON C.

Alcohol was very present in our family. We had family parties and gatherings and it always included heavy drinking. We took trips....there was drinking, holidays....more drinking. Even though as children we were allowed to drink, I did not at first; that all changed my sophomore year in high school.

My sophomore year in High School, I made the Varsity football team. My older sister was a senior at the time so the upperclassmen on the team immediately took me in as one of their own. I was suddenly invited to all of the big parties and hang out spots. At my first party, I had my first drink of alcohol. I didn't like the taste of it, but I was at a party with upperclassmen and was going to fit in. Then I had vodka and orange juice (didn't know why they kept calling them screwdrivers). Then I felt my first buzz.....I was amazed at

***I eventually passed out and woke up the next morning with my first hangover. I swore I would never touch alcohol again***

how I felt. We drank all night long and I had a blast. I eventually passed out and woke up the next morning with my first hangover. I swore I would never touch alcohol again and felt horrible about what I had done the night before. Well, it was the first lie to myself.....I began drinking on weekends all through my sophomore year. I loved the way it made me feel.

After that I began drinking regularly on weekends. Life had become one big party before college. It was acceptable at family functions, at parties or my friend's houses. This continued all through college as well. I was dating the love of my life, getting good grades and just got hired to move back to Atlanta upon graduation to work for a large corporation. I graduated and even though my girlfriend had one more year of school we

had been talking marriage. She would finish up school and meet me in Atlanta.

***This was the first time that I could remember that I specifically set out to drink my sorrows away...***

In 1999 I was 22 when I started with that company and immediately did very well. My bosses promoted me through the ranks pretty quickly; I had a huge sense of pride in my new career. I was drinking almost every night, but usually only a couple of beers and the occasional blow out happy hour. My relationship with my girlfriend was falling apart due to the distance and being at different places in our lives.

So I was single again in Atlanta and making a good living. I enjoyed every minute of it. I was traveling up and down the east coast for work and drank heavily with customers and at events. In June of 2000, I lost a multi-million dollar deal that I had invested six months on, so I decided to stop by the liquor store and grab a bottle and drink alone at my apart-



## SO MUCH MORE THAN SOBER

SUBMITTED BY: TERRI L'H.

I sat down so many times to try and write this article, only to be faced with continuous mental roadblocks of my own making. It wasn't that I didn't want to contribute. I just felt that articulating how I came to be in Recovery would just turn into some kind of ridiculously pitiful "drunk-a-log" that I had no interest in telling. Don't worry; I haven't forgotten where I came from. It's just that these days, I much prefer to concentrate on the positives of how this program has truly changed my life.

I think I probably got here about the same way everyone else did, anyway. I had a lot of fun for a pretty good while, and then it just wasn't fun anymore. It turned into a nightmarish living hell that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy, and I simply couldn't take it for one more minute. It was "get help or die". But once I accepted a life in Recovery, everything changed. I wasn't just sober; I was becoming a whole new person. I was becoming someone I actually liked! Who knew?!

These days, things are so much different for me. I wake up in the morning and spend time reading, meditating, and praying. I attend meetings, I keep in touch with my Sponsor, and I help those around me along with people in Recovery as often as I can. If I happen to race out of the door without sharing time with God, slack up on meetings and contacting my Sponsor, or helping others, my days (nor anyone else's I encounter) doesn't seem to go quite as well.

You see, taking the time to work my program, along with centering myself each morning, allows me to accept that person who might cut

me off in traffic for who they are. I simply think that she must need to get somewhere much faster than I do, and I let it go. I usually have a smile on my face all day long. I say "Good Morning" to the people I pass, and my level of patience is extremely high. I really am one of those sickeningly happy people most of the time! I actually look up at the sky each day and think how absolutely beautiful it is, even

when it's raining, and then thank God for it. Who does that?!

Before this program and my AA meetings, I woke up a sick, shaky, headache ridden grouch, and pretty much felt like the whole world was out to get me. I am still shocked by just how self-absorbed I truly was. Why on earth would the "whole world" care anything about me? I do still

find it amazing that thinking of others instead of only thinking of me actually makes me and my life so much happier.

The program of AA is still a selfish program because I do have to be sure that doing what I need to do to stay sober is the most important thing in my life. But that is only so that I can spend the rest of my time giving to others. And it's not just Addicts and Alcoholics that could use this program. If the whole world worked along these same guidelines, we would all be in a much better place! How wonderful would it be if everyone had a Sponsor to bounce bad ideas off of before acting on them? A best friend is great, but most of the time they will simply tell you what you want to hear. A Sponsor tells you the truth. We could all use a Sponsor, whether you're an Alcoholic or not.

I don't spend all of my time thinking about drinking (or not drinking

for that matter) anymore. I now spend my time considering where "the other person" is coming from and how I might best help them. I spend my time thinking about how incredibly grateful I am to have all that I have. I spend my time being grateful that I'm an Alcoholic because without AA I wouldn't know just how good life can be! I don't think I even knew how to love another human being before AA.

These days my program has so little to do with trying to stay sober and so much more to do with working to be a better person by helping those around me. I do it because this is what is keeping me happy. And I don't know about you, but I think happy is a pretty great place to be!

*Before this program and my AA meetings, I woke up a sick, shaky, headache ridden grouch*

*I haven't forgotten where I came from. It's just that these days, I much prefer to concentrate on the positives ...*



## FALLING (CON'T. FROM PAGE 11)

SUBMITTED BY: AARON C.

ment. This was the first time that I could remember that I specifically set out to drink my sorrows away and more importantly....do it alone. This was a pattern of behavior that continued to snow ball as bad things happened to or around me in life. I was no longer just drinking to have fun, I was also using alcohol to self medicate my early symptoms of depression and anxiety.

I still maintained my high performance at work and hid my drinking from my family, friends and girlfriend. I bought a house at the age of 24 and proposed to my girlfriend because I wanted to start a family. My depression and drinking continued, but I hid it well from everyone. Around this time I began

drinking more and more, but hiding it from my now wife. I had places around the house I would hide it and would stay up after she went to bed to drink after she was asleep. It continued to get worse and I was becoming more depressed about my life. Although my drinking was progressing again, I did my best to hide it. I suffered my first major panic attack at this time and they were becoming more frequent. In July of 2006, we filed for divorce and it was final in September of 2006. My drinking became public or social again. The economy was tanking and for the first time I was struggling at work with my performance. I was transferred under a new boss that year and my drinking quickly progressed to the levels I had done before. I started becoming depressed again and stuffed it down like I had done before by drinking. I began having panic attacks every day. It began to affect my performance at work. My drinking and isolation began affecting my relationships. I lied about the

reasons, but the alcohol was a wedge in all of my relationships. In January of 2010 I was laid off from the company I started with out of college. I hit rock bottom. I lay in my house with the lights off and began drinking as soon as I woke up. I completely shut out all of my friends and family. I did this for about a month. It was the first time in my life that I actually started having thoughts of suicide, though I never had a plan or acted on it. I began falling behind on

**...for the first time I was struggling at work with my performance.**

my responsibilities financially, personally and eventually even with my son. I had no joy in one facet of my life. I would make the occasional family or social appearance to please folks that I thought were worried about me. I stopped taking care of myself physically. I

would go days without showering, shaving or even leaving the house other than to go get more alcohol. Remarkably, I had an old friend hear about me not working and he offered me a job that February. My heart wasn't in life much less a job, but I took it anyway. I was miserable. I

was having panic attacks daily and the only thing that would make them temporarily stop was to drink more. My job as an outside sales rep. plus working from home allowed me to drink around the clock. I continued to struggle financially and emotionally. My family would intervene from time to time but I continued to fight it off and convince them that I was just in a low point but I would

would bounce back. No one knew the level to which my drinking had gotten. My performance at my new job struggled. I didn't care.....looking back on it I was stealing money from them

because I did very little work. I filed bankruptcy that summer and was barely hanging on to my house. I was a complete failure in my mind. How could I have become this person that I could not stand to look at in the mirror? In November of 2010, my company shut down their Atlanta Branch and I was again out of a job. A couple months later I was losing my house to foreclosure. My life was in shambles. I was humiliated and paralyzed. Even the smallest task seemed impossible. My family showed up at my house in January of 2011. They helped me pack my belongings and furniture in a truck and then into storage. I had lost my house at 34 that I bought when I was 24. I moved in with my sister and she tried to help me get back on my feet. I was unemployed, no hope and no idea about how to get better. My Dad intervened on me at his house and offered to pay for me to go to inpatient therapy and I immediately balked at it. I convinced everyone that I was fine again and that I was determined to turn this around. I was at my sister's house for a couple months while looking for a job, I continued drinking secretly

**My Dad intervened on me at his house and offered to pay for me to go to inpatient therapy and I immediately balked at it.**

and sleeping throughout the day. I would have good days and bad days but I still felt paralyzed and unable to do small tasks. Several of my friends began coming forward talking about how worried they were about me. I opened up somewhat to them, but not completely. I was still lying to them and my family.

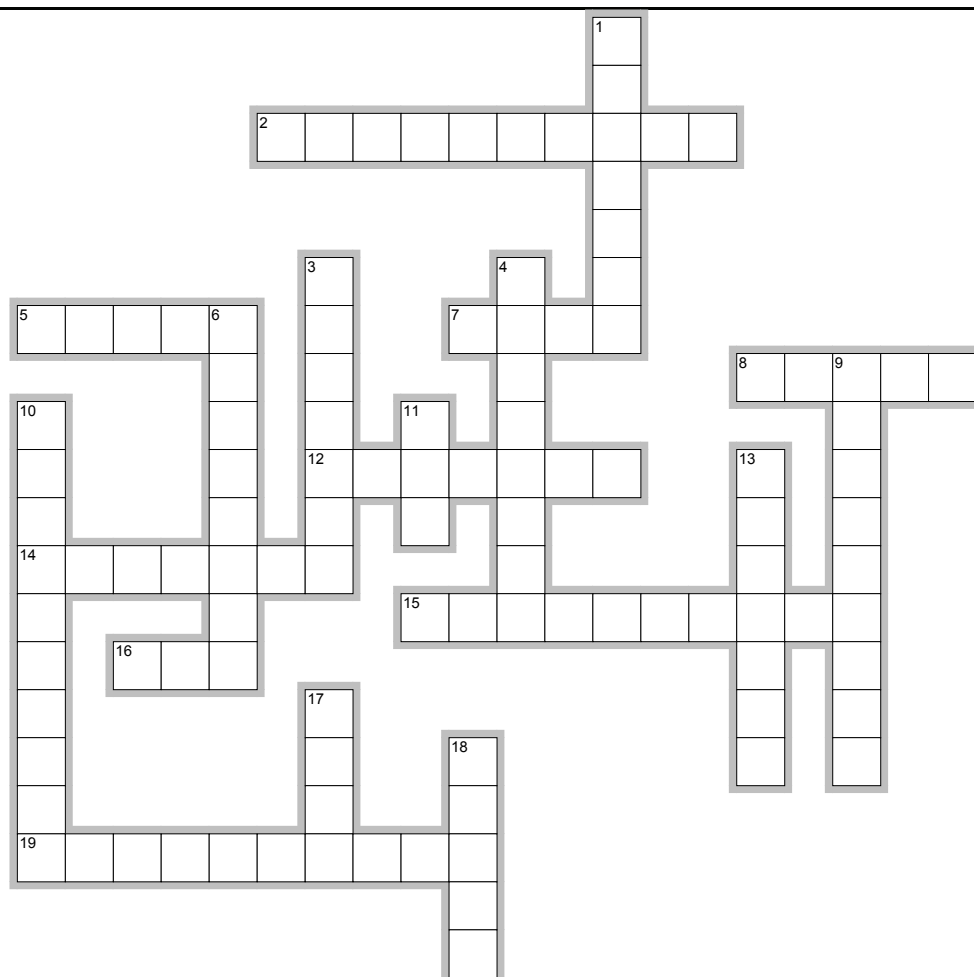
Most of all I was still drinking and lying about it to my sister while living with her.

I knew the GM of a company here in Atlanta and he offered me a job last summer. About this time my

Continued on Back Cover



## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



EclipseCrossword.com

## Across

2. ... is the solution to all my problems.
5. Chapter 5, How it \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Happy, joyous and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. This is dead without works.
12. The Doctor's \_\_\_\_\_.
14. ... you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Number one offender
16. I Can't, We \_\_\_\_\_.
19. What the Big Book is meant only to be.

## Down

1. Relieve me of the \_\_\_\_\_ of self, that I may better do they will.
3. We would go to any lengths for \_\_\_\_\_ over alcohol.
4. Are these extravagant \_\_\_\_\_.
6. There is one.
9. What we take in Step 4.
10. The 12 Steps and 12 ...
11. We are people who normally would not \_\_\_\_\_.
13. We will know a new \_\_\_\_\_ and a new happiness.
17. Acronym for hungry, angry, lonely, tired.
18. Trust in God and \_\_\_\_\_ house.



*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.*

*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, housing and all the while life continues to go on outside without us. As active members of the Ridgeview Alumni Association our fund raising goal is an endowment fund that will one day be able to help financially that person currently in treatment. Whether it's more time in treatment, another couple of days in a halfway house, medications, daycare so the patient can make it to the program that week, the needs can be overwhelming at times. We all know how powerful a helping hand at that critical moment can make or break a spirit.*

*Our goal for the Endowment Fund has to be set high if we are to be able to generate any kind of meaningful income. To date we have raised \$60,000. towards our first \$500,000. Every single dollar raised goes into an asset management account over which the Alumni Steering Committee has sole control.*

*When the day comes, and it will, that we are in a financial position to begin offering grants to patients, a review committee will be established. This group will be comprised of active Steering Committee members who have demonstrated a record of service, and a representative from the hospital. The committee will review the requests and make grants based on need, the patient's participation in their own recovery, and the patient's treatment team's input.*

*Obviously we are a ways down the road from making any grants. The next several years are about increasing awareness of our project, raising and investing the donations that come our way. Today, you can make a difference in the life of that person who is still out there.*

*Won't you make a commitment to be someone's angel, just for today? We have.*

### Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund Campaign

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**YES,** I want to contribute to the Alumni Endowment Fund. I've been in Recovery \_\_\_\_\_ years and would like to give back \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

**YES,** I am not an Alumni; however, I wish to contribute to the Endowment Fund. As a family member, friend, business owner or corporate representative/sponsor. Here is my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

**Make checks payable to:** Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund

**Mail to:** Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, GA 30080-6397

### Serenity Garden—Memorial Brick Order Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Message to be engraved on brick: (2 Lines/14 characters per line) Cost \$30.00

(Line 1) \_\_\_\_\_

(Line 2) \_\_\_\_\_

\* Please fill out name and contact number, even if you wish this to be an anonymous contribution, so we may contact you in case any questions arise about the inscription.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

**Make checks payable to:** Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund

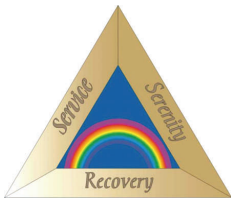
**Mail to:** Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, GA 30080-6397

# THE VIEW

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## FALLING (CON'T. FROM PAGE 13)

SUBMITTED BY: AARON C.

friend offered me an opportunity to move in with him so I could be back over in Smyrna. I did both and for a while I was doing better. I again though had good days, but mostly bad. But as far as my family and friends knew I was getting better. I was working and operating as if I was okay. However, I was still drinking and in fact I had come up with new and creative ways to get my alcohol. I was drinking everyday on the way home from work and hung out with folks that would not call me out for my drinking. I would come home and hide my drinking from my roommate and really hit it hard after he had gone to bed. This continued over the past nine months. My drinking was back to more than a 1/5 of vodka a night; then on April 30<sup>th</sup> I

**...April 30<sup>th</sup> I  
was pulled  
over and  
arrested for  
a DUI.**

was pulled over and arrested for a DUI. I was brought to Cobb County Jail and was unable to get in touch with anyone that night. I was transferred to a prison cell that morning (now May 1<sup>st</sup>). By the time I was able to get in touch with my roommate and family and then get bailed out it was 6pm on the first. My sister drove me up to her house where she told me to stay until we could figure out what was going on. I haven't had a drink since the 30<sup>th</sup>. I was still staying at my sisters and sober for ten days when she asked me to come in from her back porch because someone was here to see me.....when I walked in it was my family and roommate / friend. It

was an intervention and this time I was relieved. This was my bottom and I was ready to do whatever it took to find myself again and to be happy.

That night, I was checked into Cottage C at the Ridgeview Institute. I have been sober now for four months. I attend meetings daily, work with my sponsor and have found a sense of spirituality that I have not had in my entire life. My life is still not perfect. All of my wounds and the ones that I have caused to others are healing slowly. I was powerless and lost before I walked into Ridgeview. Now I wake up every day sober with the power to make the decision to stay that way.

**It was an  
intervention  
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this time I  
was re-  
lieved.**