

Greenbriar Alumni Newsletter

Summer 2016

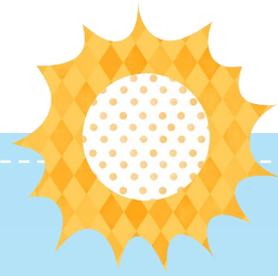
Interim Leadership Committee

The Alumni Association continues to grow and evolve. It is encouraging to see our numbers grow and the enthusiasm remain high. We have also had the privilege of getting all our sites involved and look forward to more Alumni joining and getting involved.

The Interim Leadership Committee continues to discuss the growth and direction of the Alumni Association. There are some new and exciting things happening and we hope that you, the Alumni, will help in making your Alumni Association a success. We continue to visit the Greenbriar outpatient sites and have increased our numbers and it is truly inspiring to see the level of commitment and involvement shown to make your Alumni Association a success. We look forward to working with all of the alumni from all of the sites and to keep you abreast of your Alumni Association.

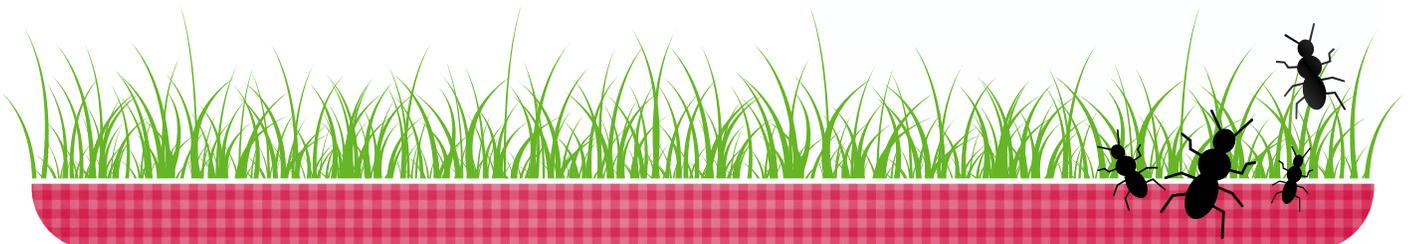
The Executive Committee is pleased to announce that the Treasurer's position has been filled. Dena L., a Washington/Brentwood alumna has assumed the responsibility of working, along with the Executive Committee, with Greenbriar's Planning & Finance departments to ensure the integrity of the Alumni Associations missions and goals. Welcome aboard Dena!

The Executive Committee meets monthly and all alumni are welcome to attend. Check your emails for notices of the meetings or call the Brentwood Office @ 412-885-7180 for meeting dates and times.



Alumni Board

President:	Pat M.
Vice President:	Eldon K.
Treasurer:	Dena L.
Secretary:	Amy J.
Members:	Melvin B. David B. Chris D. Zale L. Jon W.



Interim Leadership Committee Standing Services Projects

Clothing Closet

Thanks for all of your past donations. We are still amazed at your generosity in supporting this service project. You can drop you donations off at the Brentwood Office site (101 Towne Square Way – Suite 221) and we will make sure that your generous donation is transported to our inpatient facility.

Library Collection

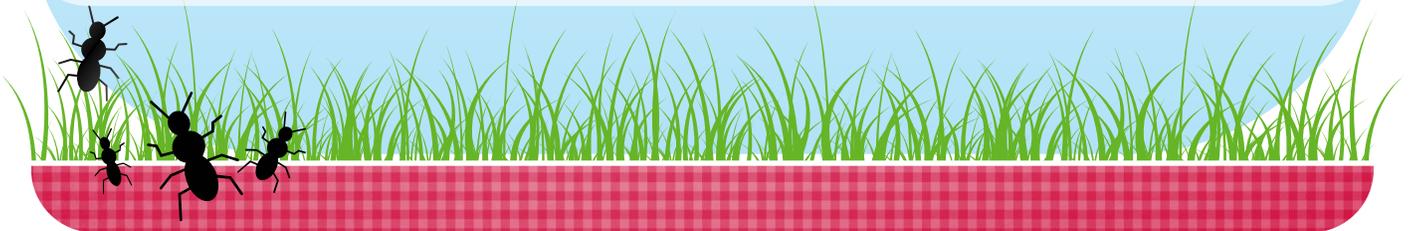
One of the truly successful service projects undertaken by the Alumni Association was the dedication of our lounge area at Greenbriar's inpatient facility as a library/ respite area that allows our inpatient folks a wide range of books, magazines, and puzzles. Donations are ongoing and you may bring your materials to the Brentwood office, or any of our outpatient offices, and we will make sure that the material gets to our inpatient facility. If you are doing some winter house cleaning and trying to make room for new books, magazines, and puzzles we would love to have your discards.

Have an idea for the Alumni Association?

The Interim Committee is **VERY INTERESTED** in hearing from you ... the Alumni. If you have a service projects or idea for promoting the Alumni Association and keeping it moving forward, please see one of the above members or, as always, give Romaine @ Brentwood a call (412-885-7180). The success of any endeavor is a reflection of its members **SO GET INVOLVED**.

Getting Involved in the Greenbriar Alumni Association

Getting active and involved is easy. If you are reading this newsletter you may already be a member and are on our Alumni email list. Or you may have received a copy in the mail. You may have pilfered a copy from one of our outpatient site! (Just kidding – the newsletters are free) It does not matter – **WE WANT YOU!** If you are not a member of the Alumni Association, joining is easy. Please fill out the application included in this newsletter and bring it with you to Continuing Care. If you are already a member and know of someone who may not have seen our Newsletter in print or on our website, why not encourage them to join too. It is a fun and exciting way to pass on what you have received and to meet new people.



Alumni Association Holiday Celebration

The Greenbriar Alumni sponsored Christmas Party was held on Friday, December 11, 2015. **WOW - WOW – and WOW** – that about sums up the evening’s festivities! If you missed this year’s holiday celebration, you missed a wonderful holiday celebration!

As the number of attendees has grown throughout the years for this family friendly celebration, the event was again held at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church across the street from the Brentwood outpatient offices. The Executive Committee and alumni members worked diligently behind the scenes to make sure that this year’s event was a success. All their hard work paid off! This year’s event was again a huge success.

Andy M. and Robert O. were on top of their game in making sure that the space was ready – from setting up tables and chairs to holiday lighting and music – for everyone to eat, socialize, sing, and enjoy the holiday spirit. The children in attendance were surprised in the array of stuffed animals donated by Donna for their special holiday gift from the friends of the alumni. And the food – never forget the food!! This year’s main course selection was catered by Frisch’s Catering and they were there to make sure that everything was hot and plentiful. A special thank you too Signature Desserts for the delicious cakes!

The Holiday Celebration Committee went over and above to solicit 32 door prizes! With the support of several local establishments – The Carnegie Museum, Gianna Via’s Restaurant, Target, Starbucks, Pastries a-la-Carte, Turner Dairies, North Park Lounge, Sarris Candy – and Committee gift card donations for such establishments as Subway, Domino’s Pizza, Dick’s Sporting Goods, Shop and Save – the door prizes were rounded off with donations of various baskets of goodies including Designer Vera Bradley accessories! This has become a yearly tradition and was very much anticipated and appreciated.

In keeping with the spirit and meaning of the Alumni Association as a service organization this year’s raffle was to again benefit the residents of Greenbriar’s Lighthouse for Men Dental Fund. This year the

Holiday Celebration Committee went out of their way and were able to have donated four fantastic prizes: An Autographed Charlie Batch Football, 2 tickets to a Penguin Hockey Game, \$50 Gift Certificate to Local Restaurants, and another 2 tickets to a Penguin Hockey Game. Tickets for this raffle went on sale in December and were still being purchased the night of the celebration. Through the assistance of Dena L., GAA Treasurer, a surprise raffle prize – announced at the event and the winner needed to be present – an Autographed Marc-Andre Fleury jersey and Certificate of Authenticity was also included in purchased raffle tickets. Way to go Dena!

A special thank you needs to be given to the Executive Committee of the Alumni Association in addition to alumni who donated their time and energy

in planning, organizing and coordinating to make sure that this year’s holiday celebration was a rousing success. Thank you goes out too to Steve Roman, Greenbriar’s Chief Planning Officer and Rachel Burdette of Greenbriar’s Marketing Team who, as always, have been there to assist and help the Alumni Association effectuate its missions and goals.

We are pleased to announce that the Men’s Lighthouse will be presented with \$502 to be used exclusively for the dental needs of the residents. In addition, this year’s celebration also included a 50 / 50 raffle to benefit the Alumni Association General Fund - \$182 was generated and split.

If you were unable to attend this year’s Holiday Celebration, we were sure you were there in SPIRIT. Hopefully you will be able to attend next year’s celebration.



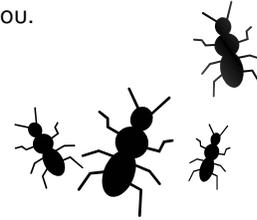
Speaker Forum

The Greenbriar Alumni Association continues to work with our Inpatient Facility to provide speakers for the residents on the second Saturday of every month. Since taking on this service commitment, the Alumni provided our inpatient residents with some great speakers and everyone who was asked to speak gladly took up the service request. The speakers continue to exceed expectations with respect to sharing their experience, strength and hope and if you are interested in participating in this rewarding project, please contact Pat M.

This is a perfect opportunity for you, the Alumni, to get active and involved and share your experience, strength and hope with someone who may be struggling and unsure of learning to live life on life's terms.

An Executive Committee member will be available to go with you to our inpatient facility if you agree to speak and would like someone to attend and introduce you to our inpatient staff and residents. As we have all learned, in order to keep your sobriety you have to give it away and this is a fun and exciting way to show that recovery does work ... if **you** work it!

If you are willing to be a speaker, please contact Pat M. of the Alumni Association's Interim Committee and they will make sure that you are included on the speaker's list and will be contacted for a date that works for you.



Where are you?

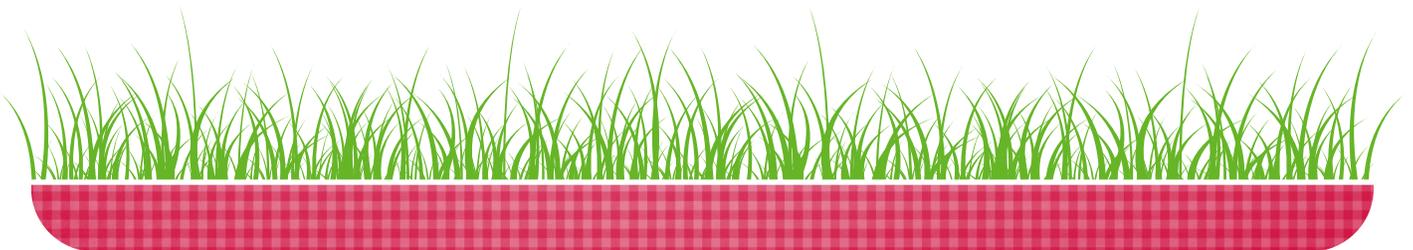
Some of you may remember the old sitcom "Car 54, Where Are You?" that was broadcast from 1961 to 1963. I am sure some of you nostalgia buffs can goggle it and watch some of the clips that were filmed only in black and white. The show followed the adventures of New York Police Department officers assigned to Patrol Car 54 in a fictional precinct of The Bronx. I was reminded of the show at the Alumni Association's annual holiday celebration. Numerous people that I had run into during the months preceding the event told me that they would see me at the Christmas party. But they did not attend.

One of the issues that the Executive Committee and the administration tackle over and over is how to get the alumni involved. Everyone agrees that the number of alumni should ensure an active and involved constituency yet the number remains low. So, my question is: "Where Are You?"

I find it ironic that once people get clean and sober their lives improve – job performance seems to get better as does attendance; family relationships tend to improve and are strengthened; things lost to addiction are found – we can easily forget to be grateful to and thankful for another chance. Life takes over and we 'forget' the pain of addiction, how we prayed for a reprieve, how we vowed that we would never do it again. All empty promises until one day it all clicks into place and we start putting together a few 24 hours. So ... where are you – we are looking for quite a few good men and women to step up and get active involved.

I know, I know. I have heard it before and, in fact, I may have said it myself. I'm busy. I have things to do and promises to keep. However, without my recovery I would have NOTHING.

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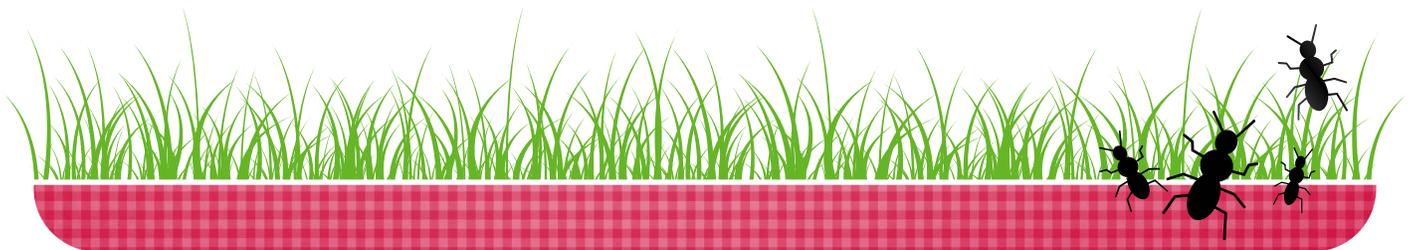
Where are you?

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I can hear it now:

- I'm right here ... behind a better life because I am clean and sober.
- Right behind you – hiding in your shadow.
- Down the block – things to do, places to go.
- Around the corner – perpetually.
- Waiting.
- Reading about service work.
- Forgetting how I struggled early on and everyone else showed me patience.
- Looking for Mr. / Ms. Right.
- Congratulating myself on how far I have come.
- Daydreaming.
- Sleeping through the night with no using dreams.
- Driving the car ... legally.
- Running the marathon (and not running from the police!).
- Testing the waters.
- Eating in a fancy restaurant and not dumpster diving behind it.
- Paying bills ... on time.
- Letting others take the lead.
- Walking the other way.
- Mending a broken heart.
- Fighting with the dry cleaner.
- Laying low.
- Lawyering up.
- Shaving while looking in the mirror.
- Making excuses.
- Asking someone else how they worked their 4th Step.
- Drying my hair.
- Putting a few dollars in the NA collection basket.
- Making a long overdue amends.
- Finding gratitude in just being.
- Avoiding risky people, places, and things.
- Enjoying an ice cream cone in the middle of winter.
- Making hot cocoa for the kids (really for myself but 'for the kids' sounded better!).
- Shoveling the snow without complaint.
- Pumping up the tires on my bicycle in anticipation of spring and summer.
- Skipping pebbles.
- Paying it forward.
- Ripping up old IOU's.
- Burning off my fingertips.
- Irritating the dog.
- Counting change and rolling pennies.
- Reaching out to shake the newcomer's hand.
- How about being right next to me and getting active and involved in YOUR ALUMNI ASSOCIATION!

—Dave R.



God Winks

Author Squire Rushnell coined the term "God Winks" to describe those times when you receive "what some call coincidence or an answered prayer, as a direct and personal message of reassurance from God to you" (p. 3). An alumni member shared with me Mr. Rushnell's book "When God Winks at You" and shared her personal God Winks story and this section has become a favorite of many of our readers. You can check it out past God Winks in our earlier newsletters by visiting our website (www.greenbriar.net) and click on the ALUMNI tab). Inspired, other alumni continue to share their personal God Winks story.

Enjoy this edition's "God Winks" -

My God Wink

I am always reminiscent around the holidays and last year was no different. However, last year was remarkable. Let me explain –

I am the oldest of three children and growing up my family was tight. Our parents worked hard to provide for us the latest fads – within reason – and were very big into education. I can remember that we always had dinner together as a family and there were no distractions like I see today. No one left the table until everyone finished eating. My brothers and I had chores to do and though we may have grumbled from time to time none of us said "no." I believe this taught me discipline and a sense of accomplishment.

After dinner was homework – like clockwork ... no television until it was done and done correctly. Neither of my parents had a college education but that in no way diminished the knowledge they had accumulated through experience. We all did well in school and getting a college education was just assumed. All of us did graduate from college and entered into the professional ranks. Both of my brothers are accountants and I am a kindergarten teacher. Nothing flashy but we all seemed to settle into 'normal' routines.

As we all dispersed from the family home we kept in touch via telephone and holiday celebrations still held at our parents' house. Marriages and divorces, child custody cases won and lost, geographical moves notwithstanding we all came home for Christmas. Until 1997.

My parents were travelling from Harrisburg back to Pittsburgh when their automobile was crushed against a guard rail by a tractor trailer. Witnesses said that the tractor trailer dragged their car for quite a while and the truck was "all over the road." When all was said and done, my parents

were crushed inside their vehicle that resembled a car that has gone through a compactor. The tractor trailer itself came to rest after descending a hillside, end over end until it rested on its side. The driver of the tractor trailer was dead. The accident was investigated by several agencies and it was determined that the driver suffered a heart attack and was "probably dead" before the truck came to rest.

We buried our parents at St. Michael's on a bright sunny day in June. Everyone cried. Everyone laughed. Everyone vowed to keep in better touch. None of us really did. We talked initially and as the months went by so did the telephone calls, so did the plans to get together. Holidays were no open season. One year my one brother travelled to Europe to "bum around." One year I went to Hawaii to "forget." Holidays were just days – not memory catchers.

I would visit my parents' gravesite several times throughout the year. I was not sure that my brothers did or not. However, I thought one or both of them must be visiting as every time I visited the grass was neatly cut without a weed in sight, a vigil candle placed firmly in the ground and lit, the headstone free of bird poop.

As we approached last Christmas (2014), we the years tumbling by, I asked my brothers and their families to join me for the holidays. Much to my surprise, everyone agreed and I hoped for a pleasant reunion. During the week that we visited, my brothers and I took a visit to the cemetery. I commented on their maintenance of the plot and both of them indicated no knowledge of the upkeep of our parents' cemetery plot. I explained to them how it is always in pristine condition and assumed one or both of them had taken it upon themselves to keep the area looking nice. Both of them stated that, as a matter of fact, that this was the first time they even visited the gravesite.

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God Winks

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After the start of the New Year (2015), I contacted the cemetery office and inquired about the maintenance. They informed me that they do cut the grass but do not have the manpower or the time to work on individual graves. That is someone else's responsibility. So who was the guardian angel that was doing the upkeep?

The more I thought about it, the more I came to the conclusion that it should have been me, alone or with my brothers, that did the maintenance. Didn't we owe it to our parents to keep their 'place' looking nice? Would my parents have let my final resting place grow over because they were too busy to do the necessary upkeep?

As the anniversary of my parents' death approached, I vowed I would go to the cemetery and start to take care of the plot. I got my bucket and yard tools and drove to the cemetery. I parked my car and got my stuff out of the trunk and began to walk down the slope to the gravesite. Lo and behold I saw a young woman – her own bucket and tools nearby – on her knees digging out some weeds around my parents' headstone. I had no idea who she was and why she seemed to be taking pleasure in her work. I coughed loud enough to get her attention and she looked at me, with a beaming smile, and said she was hoping that

someday I would come by.

I was dumbfounded and my first inclination was to bark out something rude. Thank God I didn't. Caren it turns out is the daughter of the tractor trailer driver who died with my parents. She was to have started kindergarten that September – in my class! – but moved with her mother after her father's untimely death to her mother's parents' home in Altoona. Caren came back to Pittsburgh to attend the University and was unable to locate me (twice divorced so the last name has been changed several times!). She found, through a records search, where my parents were buried. She apologized and said that she thought the cemetery maintenance was "very poor" and took it upon herself to keep the area clean.

I contacted my brothers and told them what happened and, as only the eldest can, told them that we would again be celebrating the Christmas holiday as a family – regardless. Last year we had new family to welcome, Caren and her mom. They too lost a family that June day.

Never let go of those who are important to you. Keep them close, in your heart and your thoughts, and remember none of us know what the future holds.

—Libby K.

If anyone would like to submit your own God Winks story, please contact Romaine (412-885-7180) and we will make sure that your God Winks story appears in an upcoming issue of the Alumni Newsletter.

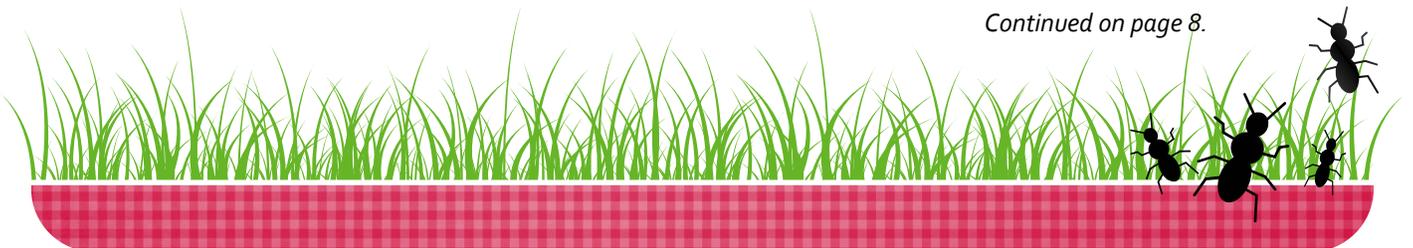
Alumni to Alumni

My Experience with R E H A B . . .

Recently, I completed rehab through *Greenbriar Treatment Center*. I've been sober for almost three months now and oh how my life has changed. Let me take you back to the beginning, when the sun never shined, birds ceased to chirp, flowers no longer smelled sweet, warm breezes never blew, when life was over and death was lurking around the corner. I lived to die. Life had just become unmanageable and too difficult to live. I didn't want to pay the monthly bills for that would require me to be financially organized, I couldn't check my voice mail for it may require me to take a responsible action and return a phone call. Doing laundry and cleaning the house would require too much energy. God forbid I go shopping at a mall that would require me to bath and change my clothes. While drinking, all I wanted to do was isolate myself and numb any sensory motor skills I had acquired throughout life.

After many attempts on my own in trying to get sober my daughters and my friends sat me down and told me it was time to check in somewhere. I sobbed and fought the thought of a treatment facility.

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Alumni to Alumni

Continued from page 7.

Not me, I wasn't one of those junkies who can't gain control of their own life. By the way, wasn't everybody else falling asleep with a bottle of vodka under their pillow at night? Surely, everybody knew the location of 22 different liquor stores in the Pittsburgh area? In addition, don't we all have favorite hiding spots for our bottles? Didn't we all write ourselves notes before we begin to drink to remind ourselves where we had hidden our booze for the night? Me an alcoholic, no way.....

On June 22nd, 2015 I entered the *Greenbriar Treatment Center* in Squirrel Hill. Climbing the steps, the door closing behind me, I felt like "dead man walking". There, I was sitting in a room full of total strangers. Some with ankle bracelets, some with no teeth, some in a coat and tie, some dripping in gold jewelry, some black, some Asian some white, some women, some men, some young, some old, some homeless and some about to lose it all. When it was time to introduce myself all I could do was cry. I don't know if I was crying about the shame I had caused my parents, about the pain that I had put my children through, about the humility for all of the embarrassing things I had done while drinking, about the fact that someone was about to take my bottle away or about the joy for I was going to be rescued. Nevertheless, I was there!

Getting myself to Greenbriar was the most important step in my recovery. It didn't matter what the reason was for me being there, the fact was that I was there meant that I was ready to change. I was scared shitless. When I was asked to introduce myself and tell the group a little bit about my past I just sobbed. By the end of the first night, weather it was from the buckets of tears I wept or just merely talking with people who had experienced the same things I had gone through, I felt the weight of the world removed from my shoulders. Oh sure, I cried through each meeting for about the first two weeks but little did I know that was the norm and it was my body healing itself.

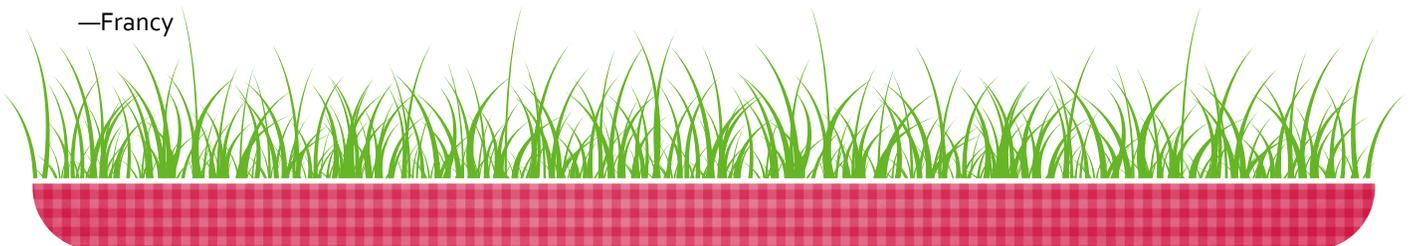
The group would meet for three hours, four nights a week. Our group on an average consisted of about 8-10 people. By the end of the first week, I was amazed at how a room full of total strangers could share such deep feelings with one another and receive so much empathy in return. I shared more with these strangers than I had ever shared with my family and friends. Before I knew it, we were texting each other outside of group meetings for support, we were socializing after group sessions together, we were planning weekend activities together, we were attending AA meetings together and most uniquely of all, we were becoming our own little family.

A family of close tight knit supportive individuals who had the same aspirations as myself, to get sober. People who had experienced the same experiences, symptoms, thoughts and self-pity, I had once experienced. We were the same with the respect of turning toward a substance for a form of escape from this life.

As to why we use, I don't know. I'm not quite sure I know what caused my addiction. I liked to drink at parties, during the holidays, to be social, on vacation, at sporting events or pretty much anytime. Though eventually, my favorite time to drink was when I was alone in my house with nobody around to disturb me. But I do know that I understand that my addiction is a progressive brain disease, just as being bi-polar is a progressive brain disease. Without treatment, as with any disease, it will progress to the point of no return. I thank God for the staff at *Greenbriar Treatment Center*. For they have saved my life.

Now, I look forward to each day. I don't look beyond the day at hand. I continue to live in the present for that is the only thing I have control over. Let's face it, there is enough going on in 24 hours to overwhelm my little pea brain yet alone to worry about things a week, month, or year from now. Those are things out of my control and may never even occur. So, I choose to save my energy and focus on the things at hand. My intentions are to continue the development of my mind, body and soul. I turned my mind over to *Greenbriar Treatment Center* to receive the education necessary to deal with the disease of alcoholism, my body spends time at *Chris Anthony Fitness* and my soul attends AA meetings where I continue to turn my life over to my higher power and remain forever grateful for my sobriety. I hope this blog assists me in paying it forward and helps a fellow addict who continues to suffer to seek treatment immediately.

—Francy



Alumni Association Briefs

HELP: We are experiencing some confusion with respect to alumni receiving, in a timely fashion, notices of upcoming events, copies of the newsletter, etc. and we need to make sure our information on you is current. Confirm your email and / or home address in our database by contacting Romaine 412-885-7180. If you are reading this, please pass it on to those alumni who were are trying to reach. Hopefully we will be in a position soon to contact all registered alumni and update our records.

LOOKING TO GET INVOLVED: We are currently working with the folks at our inpatient facility to help book speakers for the weekends. If you are interested in participating in this service project, please contact Pat M., President of the Alumni Association or Romaine at Brentwood (412-885-7180). We have agreed to one weekend day each month (second Saturday of a particular month) wherein the Alumni Association would be responsible to provide speaker(s). Any questions you have can be directed to Pat or Romaine and we are excited about this opportunity and hope to get the schedule full.

See **S**peakers **F**orum.

Check it Out: Greenbriar Treatment Center's Information Technology group has created a link to our home page on the Internet for the Alumni Association. So that more Alumni will have access to our Newsletter, and find that belonging to the Alumni Association is an easy way of giving back, it is now posted on Greenbriar Treatment Center's website. Pass the word @ www.greenbriar.net

We are still looking for contributions to the Newsletter from you - the Alumni Association. Please feel free to provide poems, stories, pictures, jokes (keep it clean!), thoughts, whatever you want to provide.

We are looking for new members to the Alumni Association. If you know of someone who would like to participate in the Alumni Association, please let us and them know!!

In addition to the Alumni Association's link on Greenbriar's website, we also now on Facebook. Facebook is a great way to keep in touch with friends and Greenbriar itself. You can 'friend' us and will be able to get updates on Alumni Association service projects and upcoming events prior to the Newsletter publication. It has all the same bells and whistles that you are probably familiar with and we hope you will take advantage of another means of keeping in touch and giving back.



Character: Doing the right thing when no one is watching.

(Be a Character)