

# *Oxford House Comes of Age*



## *Commemorative Program*

8<sup>th</sup> Oxford House World Convention

Hyatt Regency Wichita, Kansas

September 21 – 24, 2006

# Oxford House World Convention

## Convention Schedule

	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
7 AM – 8:30 AM	Continental Breakfast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reminder – World Council Nominations Due by Noon</li> </ul>	Continental Breakfast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voting until Noon for World Council By Houses Attending Convention</li> </ul>	Continental Breakfast 7AM – 8:15 AM [General Session Begins at 8:15AM – Closes at 9:45AM]
8:30AM – 9:30AM	<b>First General Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invocation</li> <li>Welcome</li> <li>Convention Theme</li> <li>Election Process</li> </ul>	<b>Third Breakout Panels</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-Efficacy in Oxford</li> <li>Drug Courts &amp; Oxford</li> <li>Treatment &amp; Oxford</li> </ol>	<b>Closing General Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remembrance of Members Who Have Died</li> <li>Tradition Renewal – Alumni and Current Members</li> <li>Conference Summary</li> <li>Closing Remarks</li> </ul>
9:30AM – 10:45AM	<b>First Breakout Panels</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reentry from Jail</li> <li>Oxford House and the Law</li> <li>Oxford &amp; Churches</li> </ol>	<b>Fourth Breakout Panels</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracting Chapters</li> <li>Reaching Minorities</li> <li>Women’s Conference Review</li> </ol>	
11:00AM – 12:15PM	<b>Second Breakout Panels</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oxford and State Agencies</li> <li>Importance of Research</li> <li>FORA Helping Oxford</li> </ol>	<b>Fifth Breakout Panels</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faces &amp; Voices</li> <li>Renting a Suitable House</li> <li>Fundraising: Lessons from Wichita Chapter</li> </ol>	
12:15PM – 2:00PM	Luncheon on Your Own [Petitions for Oxford House World Council election to be turned in by 12:45 PM.]	<b>Third General Session [12-1PM]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keynote: <b>Westley Clark, MD</b></li> <li>Luncheon on Your Own [AA/NA meetings at hotel]</li> <li>Alumni Lunch; Get Tickets</li> </ul>	
2:00 PM – 4:15 PM	<b>Second General Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eligible Nominees give 3 minute speeches</li> <li><b>Riley Regan</b> Speaks About <i>Oxford House Comes of Age</i></li> <li>Veterans Meeting</li> </ul>	<b>Fourth General Session [2:15]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize New World Council Members</li> <li>Future Business Model for OHI</li> <li>Vote on Resolutions</li> </ul>	
Evening	<b>COWTOWN: (6 –9 PM)</b> <i>Barbecue, Entertainment, Awards</i> Buses leave hotel beginning 5 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invocation</li> <li>Board Member Remarks</li> <li>Awards</li> <li>Food and Show</li> </ul>	<b>Banquet at Convention Hotel (6:00 – 8:30)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invocation</li> <li>Dinner</li> <li>AA/NASpeaker</li> <li>Awards</li> <li>Fireworks [8:45 sharp]</li> <li>Dance; 9:30PM – Midnight</li> </ul>	

**Meeting Rooms:** General Sessions: Redbud Ballroom; Panels #1 Cypress; #2 Birch; #3 Cherry

## *Oxford House Comes of Age*

AA and NA Meetings Throughout Convention

Candidates for World Council: Get Petitions In On Time

### Oxford House World Services

1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 400  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Welcome to the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Oxford House World Convention. Oxford House has come a long way since the first self-run, self-supported Oxford House started in 1975. Today there are more than 1,200 houses. The name Oxford House has become a well-known part of successful alcoholism and drug addiction treatment protocol for recovery without relapse. There are a number of reasons Oxford House is now well known but the fundamental reason is that it effectively provides recovering alcoholics and drug addicts with the opportunity to become comfortable enough with sobriety to avoid the use of any alcohol and/or drugs.

Since the first house started October 1, 1975, hundreds – maybe even thousands – of recovering individuals have contributed common sense ideas to the basic concept that a group of recovering individuals can live together in sobriety and help each other avoid relapse. From the first Oxford House in Silver Spring, Maryland to the newest Oxford House in Wyoming, the common goal of staying clean and sober is the glue that ties Oxford individuals together.

The early Oxford House residents [1975] gave later residents a great legacy – the concept and the disciplined democratic system of operation set forth in the Oxford House Manual©. Fourteen years later [1989], another group of residents developed the chapter concept and system of operations to enable individual houses to help each other by sharing their experience, strengths and hopes with each other. Twenty-four years later [1999] another generation of Oxford House members started the Annual World Convention. Along the way, members of Oxford House kept coming up with ideas to improve, share and expand the Oxford House concept and system of operations.

Fifty-one years ago a group of recovering individuals met together in convention in St. Louis to declare "AA Comes of Age."

Today, a group of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts who make up the Oxford House family are meeting in convention in Wichita to declare that "Oxford House Comes of Age."

As we gather in Wichita, Kansas for our 8<sup>th</sup> Annual World Convention, it is a good time to look back at our organization's success, to affirm the aspirations we have for our organization and to honestly measure where we are at this point in our history. Like AA and NA we can sum up many Oxford House milestones with slogans that have meaning because of progress. The first Oxford House World Convention eight years ago in Washington, D.C. asked the simple question: "*If Not Us, Who?*" The next year in Kansas City, Missouri we emphasized "*Recovery Without Relapse.*" In 2001, back in D.C., the theme was "*If Not Now, When?*" Then to Seattle in 2002 where the convention theme was "*Changing the Culture of Recovery.*" Back in DC the next year our group summed up our mission: "*Recovery, Responsibility, Replication.*" In 2004 San Antonio hosted our convention and our focus was "*Back to Basics.*" Last year in Alexandria the theme was "*Family, Fellowship, Freedom.*" All of the past convention themes emphasized various goals, aspirations, character and growth of Oxford Houses. This year is no different but in many ways it reflects a maturity earned by thirty-one years of experience and seven previous annual conventions. It is time to claim "*Oxford House Comes of Age.*" It is also time to acknowledge that Oxford House is what it is today because thousands of residents and alumni have shaped it in thousands of different ways. All residents have left legacies both big and small.

The personal stories of Oxford House residents and alumni included in this program are but a drop in the great reservoir of life experience that has formed Oxford House as we know it today. These stories illustrate the diversity that contributes to the welfare of the organization as a whole, and each story is a testament to the happiness and success that can come from being part of Oxford House. Each of us is part of the story that is Oxford House and it is time to build a library of individual stories. A sampling of stories is included in this program. As more come in Oxford House World Services will publish them in a newsletter or a book.

Let us celebrate recovery at our 8<sup>th</sup> World Convention and may all hereafter remember that in Wichita 2006 the men and women of Oxford House recognized that “Oxford House Comes of Age.”

**Paul Molloy, CEO  
Oxford House, Inc.**

**Ann R., Alcoholic**  
By MAURA J. CASEY

Governor Ann Richards visited two women’s Oxford Houses in Austin several times. Two years ago, she wanted to attend our Oxford House Convention but she had a conflict in her schedule. Ann R. died last week. All of us in recovery will miss her.



Former Gov. Ann Richards of Texas will be remembered for her wit, her one-liners and especially for the keynote speech at the 1988 Democratic Convention, which was, in retrospect, the high point in the party’s dismal campaign for the presidency that year. To intrigued television viewers nationwide, Ms. Richards, with her big hair and big attitude, epitomized the kind of formidable woman that is a hallmark of the Lone Star State. People liked her down-home phrases. When she said, “We’re gonna tell how the cow ate the cabbage,” they believed her. She leavened a plain-spoken manner with wisecracks. Both helped elect her governor two years later.

But her political career eclipsed what Ms. Richards called “one of the great, great stories” of her life: her recovery from alcoholism and her nearly 26 years of sobriety. That triumph deserves to be more than a line in her obituary.

In so many ways, her decision to stop drinking and enter a rehabilitation program in 1980, after a painful intervention by family and friends, was necessary for her continued rise in public life. What made Ms. Richards different was her decision to be forthright about the fact that she was a recovering alcoholic. She didn’t hide it. “I like to tell people that alcoholism is one of my strengths,” she said. She was right. Alcoholics know that seeds of healthy recovery grow from the need to mend their own flaws to stay sober, one day at a time. Ms. Richards faced her imperfections fearlessly, and that enabled others to be fearless, too, if only for a little while.

She never stopped helping people. One well-known author said the first mail she received after enrolling in a rehabilitation program was an encouraging letter from Ms. Richards. A politician who left rehab and wondered how on earth he was going to avoid drinking when he got home well after midnight found Ms. Richards waiting for him when he arrived. As governor, she started treatment programs in Texas prisons. When she visited, she would tell the inmates the simple truth: “My name’s Ann, and I’m an alcoholic.” Her imperfection had become a source of inspiration for others.

Ann Richards was funny, wise and compassionate. At 73, she died too soon. But she died sober.

New York Times September 17, 2006

# PROCLAMATION

of

## The City of Wichita, Kansas

Founded in 1870

**Whereas**, alcohol and drug abuse are among the most pressing health and social issues facing the nation today; and

**Whereas**, Oxford House, Incorporated, is a nonprofit organization with an international network of 1,130 group recovery homes for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts, including 47 in the State of Kansas and 12 in Wichita; and

**Whereas**, the current network of Oxford Houses is providing peer-supportive, democratically-run recovery housing to more than 8,000 individuals; and

**Whereas**, studies from the DePaul University Center for Community Research demonstrates that Oxford House residents attain an abstinence rate of 65 to 87 percent; and

**Whereas**, Oxford House has demonstrated for 31 years that alcoholics and drug addicts can successfully remain sober without relapse;

**Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved**, that I, Carlos Mayans, Mayor of the City of Wichita, Kansas, do hereby proclaim September 22, 2006, as

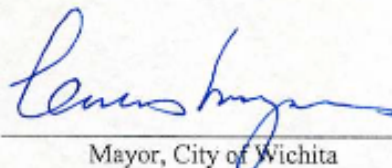
### Oxford House Appreciation Day

and call upon all residents to join me in supporting the aims and goals of this organization and in warmly welcoming participants in the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual World Convention of Oxford Houses to Wichita.

September 19, 2006

Date



  
Mayor, City of Wichita



September 22, 2006

Greetings Friends:

On behalf of the Great State of Kansas, it is my honor to welcome you to the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual World Convention of Oxford Houses.

Since its founding in 1975, Oxford House has made a strong, positive impact on the State of Kansas and all over the country. In our society, substance abuse is an increasingly serious problem, facing people of all ages. I commend Oxford House for creating more than 1,100 homes for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts.

These uniquely self-run houses are truly innovative in their ability to combine a recovery program with the responsibilities of living with others and running a house. Oxford House's service to communities around the world has been remarkable.

Again, welcome to the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual World Convention of Oxford Houses. I hope you enjoy your time in Wichita. Best wishes for a successful and enjoyable event.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Sebelius  
Governor of the State of Kansas

KGS:lp

PAT ROBERTS  
KANSAS  
100 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1000  
202-224-4774  
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## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1605

September 19, 2006

COMMITTEES  
ARMED SERVICES  
AGRICULTURE  
ETHICS  
HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS  
CHAIRMAN  
INTELLIGENCE

Oxford House World Convention  
Hyatt Regency Wichita  
400 West Waterman  
Wichita, Kansas 67202

Dear Oxford House Residents and Alumni:

Welcome to Kansas! Oxford House has special meaning for me because I have such wonderful memories of my late colleague in the House of Representatives, Ed Madigan of Illinois. We both served on the House Agriculture Committee and were good friends. Ed was a practical and effective legislator. He insisted on putting a provision in the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 that set up a small start-up loan fund for recovery homes based on the Oxford House model. That provision served as a catalyst for the 47 Oxford Houses we have in Kansas and more than a thousand throughout the country.

As you meet in Wichita, I know you will remember Congressman Madigan. Those of us now in Congress applaud your work. You know first hand the importance of what you are doing. You are providing thousands afflicted by the terrible diseases of alcoholism and drug addiction with an opportunity to regain personal freedom and lead productive lives.

Thank you and keep up the good work.

With every best wish,

Sincerely,



Pat Roberts



**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**  
**OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY**  
Washington, D.C. 20503

September 19, 2006

Oxford House World Convention  
Hyatt Regency  
400 West Waterman  
Wichita, KS 67202

Dear Oxford House Residents and Alumni:

Congratulations on the 31st Anniversary of Oxford House and your 8th World Convention. You can take great pride in the work that goes on each and every day in more than 1,200 Oxford Houses throughout the country. I share your goal of increasing the number of houses, and will continue to use every available opportunity to spread the good news about the success of Oxford House. Your theme of this year's convention – Oxford House Comes of Age – says it all.

For thirty one years now, thousands of individuals – with the help of Oxford House living – have shown that recovery from drug addiction works. I know that Oxford House provides the time, peer support and discipline for individuals to become comfortable in abstinence without relapse. The example you set can help all of those suffering loss of individual freedom because of drug addiction to have a realistic hope of recovery.

As you know, President Bush fully understands the challenges you face. In his 2006 National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month proclamation he “urges all Americans to help prevent alcohol and drug abuse and to promote treatment and recovery options.”

The success of the Oxford House experience is truly a remarkable story that must be told over and over again to audiences from coast to coast. A DePaul University study affirms that 65 percent of participants in Oxford Houses had refrained from substance use as compared to only 31 percent of participants living elsewhere. I commend each and every one of you for your work in reducing the demand for drugs, and for being courageous examples of those able to achieve recovery without relapse.

Keep up the good work and have a wonderful and productive annual convention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John P. Walters".

John P. Walters  
Director



# 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Oxford House Convention

Hyatt Regency

Wichita, Kansas

September 21 – 24, 2006

Thursday, September 21<sup>st</sup>

Annual Oxford House Golf Tournament

Tee Time 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

This is the Eighth Annual Oxford House Golf Tournament. It is held in conjunction with the annual world convention both for the enjoyment of the participants and to underscore the fact that recovery without relapse enables all recovering individuals to enjoy all aspects of life. This year's four-man scramble tournament is held at the Sims Park – a public golf course in Wichita.

Registration

1:30 PM – 8:00 PM

Upper Gallery

Women's Pre-convention Conference

3:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Eagle Ballroom

World Council Meeting

9:30 PM – 10:00 PM

Board Room

AA Meeting

9:30 PM – 10:30 PM

Cedar Room

NA Meeting

9:30 PM – 10:30 PM

Maple Room

Candidates for World Council should pick up nominating petitions at Registration Desk. **Nominating petitions must be turned in by noon on Friday.** Resident member candidates need signatures from residents representing five different houses. Alumni candidates need signatures from five alumni members.

Friday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>

Continental Breakfast 7:00 AM – 8:00 AM  
Redbud Foyer

Opening General Session 8:15 AM – 9:20 AM  
Redbud Ballroom

Invocation by Father Dale Autrey, Chaplain at Valley Hope Treatment Facility will officially open the 8<sup>th</sup> Oxford House World Convention. Welcome from Sharon Fearey, City Council Member, Wichita. Paul Molloy will provide an overview of the convention and set the convention theme: "Oxford House Comes of Age". James McClain welcomes the delegates on behalf of Oxford House, Inc. Board of Directors and describes the process for the election of World Council Members.

First Breakout Panels 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM  
Re-Entry from Jail  
Cypress Room  
Oxford Houses and The Law  
Birch Room  
Oxford House and Churches  
Cherry Room

Second Breakout Panels 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM  
Oxford and State Agencies  
Cypress Room  
Importance of Research  
Birch Room  
FORA Helping Oxford House  
Cherry Room

Lunch and AA/NA Meetings 12:15 PM – 1:45 PM  
Lunches available for purchase in Lobby  
AA in Cedar Room                      NA Maple Room

Second General Session 2:00 PM – 4:15 PM  
Redbud Ballroom  
World Council Nominee Speeches  
Riley Regan ; "Oxford House Comes of Age"

Friday Evening BBQ Dinner, Awards and Entertainment 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM  
Invocation Father Dale Autrey • Welcome Ben Sciortino, Chairman Sedgwich County  
Food • Entertainment  
Buses begin leaving hotel at 5:00 PM to Cowtown • Return a little after 9:00 PM

## Saturday September 23<sup>rd</sup>

**Continental Breakfast** 7:00 AM – 8:00 AM  
 Redbud Foyer

**Third Breakout Panels** 8:00 AM – 9:15 AM  
 Self-Efficacy in Oxford House  
     Cypress Room  
 Drug Courts and Recovery  
     Birch Room  
 Treatment Provider Utilization of Oxford House  
     Cherry Room

**Fourth Breakout Panels** 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM  
 Attracting Chapter Participation  
     Cypress Room  
 Reaching Minorities  
     Birch Room  
 Review of Women's Conference  
     Cherry Room

**Fifth Breakout Panels** 11:00 AM – 11:45 AM  
 Reaching Out With Faces and Voices of Recovery  
     Cypress Room  
 Renting a Suitable House  
     Birch Room  
 Oxford House and Fund Raising  
     Cherry Room

**Third General Session** 12:00 Noon – 1:00 PM  
 Redbud Ballroom

- ◆ Keynote Speaker: Westley Clark, M.D., JD, M.P.H., CAS, FASAM
  - Director Center on Substance Abuse Treatment

Dr. Clark, Director of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment [CSAT] in Washington, D.C., is making his fourth presentation to an Oxford House World Convention. An expert in the field and an exciting speaker, he has gone to great lengths to fit in his first visit to Wichita to speak at the convention.



**Lunch** 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM  
 AA in Cedar      NA in Maple  
 Alumni Luncheon in the Cypress B [Tickets at Registration Desk: \$20 per person]

Fourth General Session 2:15 PM – 4:30 PM

Redbud Ballroom

Report of World Council

Introduction of New World Council Members

Presentation on Future Business Model by Debbie Dungee

Vote on Convention Resolutions

Veterans Committee Meeting immediately following General Session

Saturday Evening

Banquet 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM

- ◆ Invocation
- ◆ Tom Fellows Award
- ◆ Founders Award
- ◆ AA Speaker Roger W.

Fireworks Display Outside Hotel Promptly at 8:45 PM

Dance 9:15 PM to 12:00 PM

Sunday Morning

Continental Breakfast 7:00 AM – 8:15 AM

Closing Session 8:15 AM – 9:45 AM

Plaza Ballroom West

Remembering Oxford House family members who died during the last year

Lessons learned at the Convention for Oxford House

Group recitation of Oxford House Traditions

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A more detailed summary of the fifteen breakout panels follows. Then residents and alumni of Oxford Houses around the country share their stories. The stories describe the terrible price that addiction extracts from the individual, their families and the community. As Oxford House comes of age it is important that all of us share our stories to motivate communities across the land to establish Oxford Houses so that many more recovering individuals are given an opportunity to master recovery without relapse.

We hope that these initial stories will prompt everyone in Oxford House to share their story. Send the stories to Oxford House World Services and we will publish them. Please include your full name; however, in the AA/NA tradition we are publishing stories with only the first name and initial. Nevertheless, many of us will recognize each other because we are family.

Oxford House Comes of Age

Wichita 2006

## Summary of Breakout Sessions

Friday Breakouts: First Breakout

### Re-entry from Jail

#### Cypress

9:30 AM – 10:45 AM

Panelists:	Tony Perkins	World Council, State Committee, Vancouver, WA
	Kurtis Taylor	OHI Prison Outreach in North Carolina
	Kent Sisson	Kansas Regional Parole Director, Southern Region
	Wendell Howell	Executive Director Delaware Addictions Coalition
	Kari McFarland	Oxford House –Drummond, Dallas, Texas

Tony Perkins and Kurtis Taylor specialize in convincing and helping those in recovery getting out of prison to get into an Oxford House. Kent Session has worked with recovering individuals on probation or parole. Wendell Howell is Executive Director of the Delaware Addictions Coalition and a strong supporter of Oxford Houses for re-entry from jail. Kari McFarland got initial treatment in Texas prison system after about eleven and half years in and out of prison. She has about six years clean and is a leader of the Texas Oxford House Association. Three themes will highlight this panel: [1] the great need for post-incarceration recovery opportunity; [2] the value of Oxford House as a transitional residence; [3] practical ways to motivate returning prisoners to get into Oxford House and [4] practical ways to integrate post-incarceration and Oxford House admission practices.

### Oxford House and the Law

#### Birch

9:30 AM – 10:45 AM

Panelists:	Scott Moore	Former Senior Trial Attorney, U.S. Department of Justice Baird Holm Attorneys, Omaha, NE
	Paul Molloy	CEO, Oxford House, Inc.
	Riley Regan	Expert Witness and Former State Director MD, NJ, NH
	Joe Page	Alumnus, Missouri

Scott was with the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice and presently represents Oxford House in zoning cases throughout the country. Paul is an attorney and co-founder of Oxford House. He has been involved in a number of zoning cases and other discrimination cases against recovering alcoholics and drug addicts. Riley Regan has been an expert witness in a number of cases under both the Federal Fair Housing Act [FFHA] and the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]. The panel will discuss legal problems that have confronted Oxford Houses. Both the outcomes of cases and the steps recovering individuals establishing Oxford House should take to avoid litigation will be discussed.

### Oxford House and Churches

#### Cherry

9:30 AM – 10:45 AM

Panelists:	Fr. Dale Autrey	Chaplain, Valley Hope Priest, St. George Antiochian Orthodox Christian Cathedral
	Rev. Jerry Vogt	Chapel Hill Fellowship Church, Wichita
	Anna Jones	Oxford House World Services
	Shirley Robinson	OHI Outreach Worker in Virginia

The panel will focus on ways and means that religious organizations can help alcoholics and drug addicts to achieve recovery without relapse. Specifically, they will discuss various ways that Oxford Houses and faith-based organization can work together. Can more churches or their congregations buy houses to become friendly landlords? What can Oxford House residents and outreach workers do to encourage greater synergy between faith-based organizations and Oxford House? Does working with churches lessen the risk of NIMBY problems?

## Friday Breakouts: Second Session

## Oxford House and State Agencies

**Cypress**

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM

Panelists:	Riley Regan	Private Practice - Former Agency Head MD, NJ, NH
	Kay Watson	Louisiana Alcohol and Drug Agency
	Patty Paterson	Oklahoma Alcohol and Drug Agency
	Charles Bartlett	Kansas Alcohol and Drug Agency
	Gino Pugliese	OHI State Coordinator for Washington

This panel will discuss the ways that a close working relationship between Oxford House World Services and a state's alcohol and drug agency can help to develop a meaningful network of Oxford Houses within a state. The benefits and barriers of working with a state agency will be examined. Specific focus will be on ways and means to encourage more states to foster development of Oxford Houses. Louisiana and Oklahoma have contracts with OHI, Kansas has a contract with FORA. Gino Pugliese is an OHI outreach worker under a contract between OHI and Washington State. Riley Regan has dealt with OHI as a state administrator in three states. The panel will address the overall need for Oxford Houses to improve treatment outcomes and the ways state agencies can work with OHI.

## Importance of Research

**Birch**

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM

Panelists:	John Majer, PhD	Faculty, Richard Daley College, and Chicago, Illinois
	Greg Meissen, PhD	Director Self-Help Network Center for Community Support and Research Professor of Psychology, Wichita State University
	Leon Venable	Alumnus, Oxford House Research Project DePaul
	Makeba Casey	Alumnus, Oxford House Research Project DePaul

This panel takes a look at the value of research as a tool to better understand recovery from addiction to alcohol and drugs and to better understand the dynamics of self-help. Ever since the late William Spillaine, PhD tracked down about 1,200 residents during the first ten years of Oxford House existence, the empirical evidence suggested that Oxford House living made a big difference in treatment outcome for alcoholics and drug addicts. Dr. Spillaine had found that about 80% of those who had moved into one of the first 13 Oxford Houses had managed to stay clean and sober. The NIDA and NIAAA studies took place more than a decade later and within a much larger universe. When Spillaine studied Oxford House there were only 13 houses and all were in the DC area. The NIAAA DePaul Study tracked 897 recovering individuals living in 219 Oxford Houses across the county. The NIDA DePaul study randomly selected 150 individual getting out of formal treatment and randomly selected half to go to Oxford Houses and half to go to where they would normally go following treatment. At the end of two years, the Oxford House group did about twice as well as the control group in staying clean and sober without relapse. What do these studies mean and what other research is needed to help Oxford House improve and help society to integrate Oxford House into the best practice treatment protocols?

## FORA Helping Oxford House

**Cherry**

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM

Panelists:	Kitty Wright [Overland Park]	Director, Friends of Recovery FORA
	Lester Gibson [Kansas City]	FORA Board Member
	Dallas Uhrich [Halstead]	Administrator, Valley Hope Treatment
	Fr. Dale Autrey [Wichita]	FORA Board Member

The Friends of Recovery Association [FORA] was formed in 1990 by a number of church groups in the Kansas City, Kansas area. Rev. Ed Stephenson, along with lay members Harold and Ruth Keeling [winners of the 2000 Tom Fellows Award for service to Oxford House], began a nonprofit organization to encourage the development of a network of Oxford Houses across Kansas. Today there are 47 Oxford Houses in the state and many have FORA landlords friendly to Oxford House development. FORA administers the state recovery home revolving loan fund and employs outreach workers to provide the technical service necessary to open Oxford Houses where there are no chapters. This panel will describe the success of the FORA organization in helping Oxford House to grow.

## Saturday Breakouts: Third Session

## Self-Efficacy in Oxford House

**Cypress**

8:00 AM – 9:15 AM

Panelists: John Majer, PhD Faculty, Richard Daley College, Chicago, Illinois  
 Makeba Casey Research on DePaul University Project  
 Paul Stevens OHI Outreach Virginia  
 Kelly Neve Counselor, Valley Hope Treatment  
 Dallas Uhrich [Halstead] Administrator, Valley Hope Treatment

This panel will look behind the overall outcomes of both the NIDA and NIAAA DePaul studies and examine specific findings related to self-efficacy, women in Oxford House, ex-offenders in Oxford House and how length of time in an Oxford House relates to sobriety without relapse. In addition, the panel will discuss co-morbidity among Oxford House residents and how different problems affect successful Oxford House residency.

## Drug Courts and Recovery

**Birch**

8:00 AM – 9:15 AM

Panelists: Joe Chavez OHI Outreach, Hawaii  
 Antonio Russell OHI Outreach, North Carolina  
 Joe Page Alumnus, Missouri

This panel will look at how drug courts and Oxford Houses can work together to promote recovery without relapse for individuals who participate in a drug court program. Joe Chavez in Hawaii and Antonio Russell in North Carolina have both worked with drug courts to facilitate utilization of Oxford Houses. Joe Page, now a lawyer in Missouri, started as a resident of Oxford House, then an outreach worker in Missouri, and then became a lawyer. Specific emphasis will be on ways to improve utilization of Oxford Houses for drug court participants.

## Treatment Provider Utilization of Oxford House to Improve Outcomes

**Cherry**

8:00 AM – 9:15 AM

Panelists: Riley Regan Therapist and Former State Director  
 Charles Moose Counselor, Parllax Treatment Programs  
 Linda Traylor Counselor, Valley Hope Treatment  
 Diane Briggs Counselor, South Central Mental Health, Wichita  
 Kirstin Hallberg Counselor and Outreach, Omaha, NE

About 47% of Oxford House residents attend weekly counseling in addition to AA/NA meetings. It appears that a number of treatment facilities realize that Oxford Houses provide an opportunity to gain sobriety without relapse. This panel will explore the benefits of using Oxford House following detoxification and formal treatment. The panel will also discuss the barriers that keep more treatment facilities from actively encouraging the establishment of Oxford House and the difficulties counselors have in getting clients into an Oxford House on a timely basis.

## Saturday Breakouts: Fourth Session

## Attracting Chapter Participation

**Cypress**

9:30 AM – 10:45 AM

Panelists:	Mike Zalusky Charles Netz Lori Guerrero Kathleen Gibson Chris Metcalf	OHI Outreach, New Jersey OHI Outreach, Oklahoma State Chair Oregon OHI State Coordinator, North Carolina Chair, Wichita Chapter
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This panel will examine the role that chapters play in the expansion, education and monitoring of networks of Oxford Houses. The chapter is a key link in the Oxford House expansion efforts, and in many states they have acted as the key player in expanding the number of Oxford Houses and keeping existing houses on track. Too often chapter meetings are viewed exclusively as “bad news” events. Problem houses become the focal point and many find monthly chapter meeting depressing gatherings. In some states chapters are active and the backbone of expansion and sharing the joys of sobriety. There is no mandate that any house must belong to a chapter. However, there are lots of things chapters in an area can do to make it desirable for every house to participate. The panel will consider how to make a chapter exciting and fun to participate in rather than making it a drag.

## Reaching Minorities

**Birch**

9:30 AM – 10:45 AM

Panelists:	Wendell Howell Sarah Binkley Antonio Russell Chris Hall Joe Chavez	Director, Delaware Addictions Coalition OHI Outreach, Wyoming OHI Outreach, North Carolina Friends of Recovery Association [FORA] OHI Outreach, Hawaii
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This panel will look at how members of Oxford Houses, chapters and outreach workers can extend the benefits of Oxford House to the “forgotten” recovering individuals. Within every community there are individuals who either are outside the normal social strata or discriminated against because of background or status. The incarcerated recovering individual is an example of a forgotten class. In some communities this includes Native Americans, Hispanics and recent immigrants.

## Review of Women's Conference

**Cherry**

9:30 AM – 10:45 AM

Panelists:	Myrna Brown Terri Martin Judy Maxwell Paula Harrington Robin Breckenridge	Alumnus and Emeritus Member of World Council Oxford House, Houston, Texas Outreach, Washington State Alumnus, Outreach, North Carolina Alumnus, Oregon
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On Thursday, just prior to the opening of the Oxford House convention, women held a conference from 3 PM to 9 PM and worked on a number of problems, opportunities and challenges unique to Oxford Houses for women and for women and children. This panel will share the contents of the Oxford Women's Conference. This overview will cover both the similarities and differences between Oxford Houses for men and Oxford Houses for women.



## Saturday Breakouts Fifth Session

## Reaching Out With Faces and Voices of Recovery

**Cypress**

11:00 AM – 11:45 AM

Panelists:	Jim Russell	Faces and Voices of Recovery - Oklahoma
	James McClain	OHI Alumnus and Board Member
	Tony Perkins	World Council, State Committee, Vancouver, WA
	Marty Walker	OHI Outreach – Louisiana
	Myrna Brown	Alumnus and Emeritus Member of World Council

The purpose of Faces and Voices of Recovery is to encourage ways and means for individuals in recovery to share their strength, experience and hope with their communities in order to foster more opportunities and understanding by the community-at-large of treatment and recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction. Every September is Recovery Month and across the United States folks in recovery stand up to be counted. The stigma of alcoholism and drug addiction should not exist for those addicted who make the decision to regain personal freedom and choice by learning how to enjoy comfortable sobriety without relapse.

## Renting a Suitable House

**Birch**

11:00 AM – 11:45 AM

Panelists:	Rich Christensen	OHI Outreach Worker – Wyoming
	Larry Bengé	Leader and Landlord –Oklahoma
	David Taylor	Alumnus and Landlord – Wichita
	John Fox	OHI Outreach Worker – North Carolina
	Norman Sanders	Oxford House World Council –North Carolina

Oxford Houses work because each group behaves as an ordinary family and rents a single-family house. The availability of appropriate rental stock varies depending upon the area of the country and the economy. The four participants on this panel all have the same goal – finding a good house in a good neighborhood that is available *and* suitable to be an Oxford House. This panel will focus on the physical requirements for a suitable house, the amount of rent a group can pay; location vis-à-vis jobs and transportation; and obstacles to being a good neighbor [for example, knowing from the start that there is no place to park cars without greatly inconveniencing neighbors].

## Oxford House and Fundraising

**Cherry**

11:00 AM – 11:45 AM

Panelists:	Ron Powers	Ash House – Wichita Chapter
	Dave Taylor	Alumnus – Wichita Chapter
	Genny Caulk	Oliver House – Wichita Chapter
	Chris Metcalf	Ash House – Wichita Chapter
	Victor Fitz	Alumnus – Wichita Chapter

The hard work of the men and women in Oxford Houses in Wichita made the 2006 Oxford House World Convention possible. The purpose of this panel is to share with the rest of the Oxford House family the things that make their chapter strong. Part of the strength arises from the fact that active residents and alumni work together to help make Oxford House a vital part of recovery in Wichita. Some of their activities involve raising money – an effort that not only help expand houses but can also bring people together to enjoy the fruits of sobriety.

## Oxford House Stories

*This segment of the program contains a selection of autobiographical sketches by current and former residents of Oxford Houses. These recovering individuals are sharing their stories in order to help others afflicted by alcoholism and drug addiction to understand the hope afforded by Oxford House. Many readers will be struck by the devastating damage associated with alcoholism and drug addiction. There is no pill or magic bullet that can produce a cure for addiction. The only path to recovery is total abstinence from alcohol and addictive drugs. Few are able to master such behavior change alone. Together with the 12-Step programs, Oxford House offers its residents the opportunity and time to use peer support, a safe living environment and a disciplined system of operation to achieve the behavior changes necessary to avoid a return to the use of alcohol and addictive drugs.*

*The thousands of individuals who have found a path to recovery by living in an Oxford House know that Oxford House has come of age. All members of the Oxford House family hope that by sharing these personal stories of hard-won recovery, they will contribute to the growth of the Oxford House network, guide those not yet in recovery toward an effective program, and foster the understanding and support of the broader community.*

### James M.

My name is James M. and I was born on April 4, 1937 in Nashville Tennessee, the youngest of four children. I attended Nashville Public Schools and three years of college at Tennessee State University.

In 1957, at age 20, I got married and my wife and I had one daughter. In 1959, I began working at the Nashville Post Office as a Railway Postal Clerk and in January 1967 I was given a choice by the Post Office to stay in Nashville in another position or move to another city and remain in my current job. In February 1967, I decided to move to Washington DC. I thought I could do better financially in the big city.

In Washington DC, away from friends and family, I began suffering from depression and was prescribed Valium. I became addicted to Valium, which led to an addiction to more drugs. I still functioned at my job with the Washington DC Postal Service and received promotions to supervisory positions but my private life was a haze of smoking crack cocaine, divorce, and despair. I thought I had it all because I had a good business selling drugs – until I became my own best customer.

On November 17, 1981, I was urged by friends to get addiction treatment and entered the Arlington Treatment Program in Arlington VA. I came out and promptly relapsed. On May 1982 I stopped using again but did not know how long I could stay clean without help. In August of 1982, I applied to live in Northampton Oxford House in Washington DC. I was sure they would not accept me. All the residents were white and the house was in the best section of town. I went back to my sponsor and hoped to talk him into putting me up. Then I got a call. I had been accepted.

Immediately upon moving in, I felt fortunate to have discovered this new family – even though it took a few weeks before some of the guys felt comfortable around me. I studied the Oxford House manual from cover to cover. Soon every meeting was a place where other guys would ask me whether we were conducting the meeting the way we were supposed to. I was elected to one house office after another. I stayed in Oxford House – Northampton for more than twelve years. My new family taught me what was important in life. After a few months in the Northampton House, I decided to devote my life to helping other addicts and alcoholics to find what I had found – a housing situation that provided support for recovery while also teaching the residents how to live responsibly.

I have been fortunate. I married a wonderful woman. That was why I moved out of Oxford House. She has put up with me traveling around the country – from Hawaii to Texas – to help others establish Oxford Houses. Years ago I convinced my brother Milton to get some houses going in my old hometown, Nashville. Today I am a proud member of the Board of Oxford House, Inc. and am thankful every day that I found Oxford House, AA and NA.

### Myrna B.

Quit drinking forever...did that mean I couldn't even have a glass of wine with dinner? I knew my social life would be non-existent and how would I function without a cocktail? What would I do without my drinking 'friends'? I knew I drank like a lady.

The reality was I was totally dependent on alcohol and failing in all aspects of my life. My one-year alcoholic marriage was a disaster. I had alienated my family; I pretty much abdicated my responsibility as a mother; I quit my job (it took too much effort and interfered with my drinking); my social life was one continual drinking spree; and my spiritual life consisted of bargaining prayers during a hangover. As one of my acquaintances put it, I didn't drink like 'a' lady, I drank like 10 ladies. It was after one of my marital drinking rows that my children put me in treatment.

I had been in treatment before, in 1980, but it was an aversion type treatment. You know, like Pavlov's dog. The attendants would pour a drink down me and give me a shot to make me throw up. This lasted for ten days and even the smell of alcohol triggered a nauseated reaction. Can you imagine? I couldn't even use hair spray. This lasted for about a year but the only support or outside assistance I had was that I could go back to the treatment facility and throw up for a weekend. Well, my alcoholic mind told me I could still drink and throw up and have some fun. Controlled drinking worked for a time but eventually I hit my bottom. So, when treatment was pushed on me, I accepted gladly. The program at this facility was entirely based on the AA 12 steps.

It was here I learned about the 24-hour program and it began to work. There were people just like me, suffering from the addiction of alcohol and all the *crazy* things that go along with it. *Crazy?* When I read that second step about the insanity, I was highly indignant. I wasn't insane. I just drank too much and did some really stupid things. Like marrying a fellow abusive alcoholic I met in a bar, which, in reality, was one of the minor sins I committed. My counselor suggested I reread my first step and then decide if my behavior wasn't insane. Thus I started on my journey of physical, mental and spiritual recovery.

When it came time to leave, fear set in. I didn't want to go back to that disastrous alcoholic marriage and I needed an opportunity to start a new life. I asked my counselor if there were any group homes for recovering women. I heard a lot about places for guys. She said she had heard that a woman in the AA program was going to open a house to women but it hadn't got going yet. I met with the lady who was going to manage it and decided to move in. I had to close out my other home and put my 'stuff' in storage, so I didn't move in until a month after I completed treatment in March. One other woman was now there. I came in there with no self-esteem, and both my spirit and physical body were broken and bruised.

About 2 weeks after I moved in, the manager handed me a booklet and said I could read it and see what I thought. It was the Oxford House Manual. I read it and had the other resident woman read it too. She said it sounded good, but we would need 10 years of sobriety to start something like this. Being the controlling addict I was, I decided to call the '800' number in the book. A life-saving angel named Mollie Brown answered the call. She filled me in on the real concept and told me there were no houses in Washington, but 3 men's houses had started in Oregon. She also explained that there was a start-up loan in the works and I should contact the State Offices and the Oregon men. I believed her and took action. I probably drove her crazy calling almost daily.

The owner of the home lived out of state, but decided to visit the house and look into this Oxford idea. She met with the Oregon people, released her manager and said, "Go for it." I spend many hours on the phone with Mollie and our state DASA contact. In May, 1990, we (4) applied for the Charter of the Chalet Oxford House, joined the Oregon folks in a Chapter, furnished our 10-bed home, started making presentations, and became the first Oxford House in Washington. I wish I could say I did this as a service project but it was out of my need. Today I know that this was all part of God's plan for me. I gained so much in my recovery by sharing with these women and taking on responsibility again.

In the meantime I found a home group in AA, or they found me, and developed a support group both in AA and in the Oxford House. I now had 3 months of sobriety. The early feelings of insecurity, fear and shame plagued me but my Oxford roommates and my AA support group carried me through and encouraged me to start a men's house in our area. My thought was that I wasn't going to need this much longer and would move back to my old area. This obviously wasn't God's plan. With the help of a fellow in AA, we searched for a couple of months to find a landlord – any landlord – willing to believe that a bunch of alcoholics and addicts would be good tenants. We

finally found a landlord and 5 months later opened the men's Lincoln house. This landlord was another blessing who ended up owning 8 of our houses.

Oxford Inc. had sent an outreach worker to Seattle to fulfill a contract with the State of Washington. After opening a couple of houses in that area he was sent to another state. A women's house with children had opened in the suburbs of Seattle and was failing. I received a call from Paul M. and Mark S. asking me if I would go there to help them out. Fear and apprehension gripped my total being. Seattle was a *'really'* big city that I knew little about. I had been there to visit a few times, but to go up there by myself! I had graduated from no self-esteem to low self-esteem, but that wasn't enough. It was one of the women in my house and my AA support folks who convinced me that I should go and put God in my pocket. I was 10 months sober.

I knew one of the first things I needed to do was to find an AA meeting. I celebrated my one-year at a podium meeting of about 200 people. Again, AA let me know I was a part of a larger family. We eventually closed the house. It couldn't even be turned into a men's house because of its inaccessibility to bus service and shopping. My 3 months turned into a year and more years and more houses. What a blessing! I stayed sober and truly had begun a new way of living. I lived in various Oxford Houses for 4 years until I moved to the Olympia area, our State capital. Again my first priority was to find an AA home group and continue to open new Oxford Houses. This continued on for 14 years.

The combination of Oxford House and the people and the program of AA have given me a life of peace and, most of the time, serenity. My family and I have renewed our relationships and added 9 grandchildren. I retired as a fulltime Oxford employee a few years ago. I am exceedingly grateful to God, to AA and to Paul M. and the founders for the Oxford concepts, Mollie B. and the staff of Oxford, Inc., the State of Washington DASA, the hundreds of other people who have supported me personally including my sponsors, and the Oxford Houses and my sponsees.

Recovery hasn't always been easy. I have experienced a divorce, death of a family member, serious health problems and the day-to-day frustrations of my job and life in general. Things that I have learned through AA and Oxford House are an *attitude of gratitude*, acceptance, love, forgiveness, compassion, and the willingness to take that next step. With each of these comes action. Oxford House gave me the opportunity to practice the principles and action. Today, I try to 'walk my talk.' It is through my continued participation in AA that I can apply the '24-hour program' and the principles in all aspects of my life.

#### **Stan T.**

My name is Stan; I'm an Alcoholic. When I had my first taste of alcohol, I enjoyed the flavor and the idea of stealing it from my parents. Pretty soon I was cutting the booze with water so my dad wouldn't know. I moved on to being a weekend warrior. I'd just drink on weekends. I didn't drink to just get high; I would drink until I passed out. I'd brag to my friends how much I drank and how much fun I had, even though I couldn't remember a thing that happened that night. Worse yet, if I did remember, I wouldn't want to share the fact that I wet my pants, or got sick or was a complete ass.

At the old age of 18 I was in the service and drinking like a man – straight whiskey, beer back. I was gung-ho and drank until I dropped every night. One night I got drunk, got into a fight, woke up in the hospital. I had a completely disarranged right knee and I missed my flight to Vietnam. When I found out about the deaths of some of my friends in my squad, I threw a two-week drunk. When I was discharged from the service I was drinking all day every day. I hadn't seen my family for two years. My mom told me to quit feeling sorry for myself and get home.

I settled down for a while, found a wife, and life was good. I don't know why, but my life seemed to be missing something – alcohol. The next 20 years of my life I would spend drinking and drugging. I lost everything I worked so hard for – house, truck, boat and a wonderful wife. Drinking wasn't fun; it was something I needed to get to the next day. It's what I thought about when I got up in the morning, until I passed out. Something finally hit me; I was tired of the loneliness and self-pity of this addiction. I asked for help. I entered LakeSide-Milam on September 14, 2002. I thought if I could just keep away from the booze for a couple of weeks I'd have it made. While they were repairing my body with food and rest, they gave me a book to read and tried to explain what makes us addicts – not the booze or the drugs but the disease. I was always tired; I couldn't stay awake. I admitted that I was powerless and my life unmanageable. I wanted to surrender. That's when I knew there was a power greater than ourselves. The next two weeks I had the chance to really look at myself; they gave me ways to control the anger and pain that I was feeling. I learned to share my feelings with others. I attended AA meetings and found out

I was not the only one who asked for help. My 28 days were up. I gave up my room at the house I was staying at with 5 other alcoholics. I couldn't go back; I made a decision to stop using. I was told about Oxford House.

"My name is Sam; I'm a hot tar roofer and an Alcoholic." That's all I had to say to get an interview at Brockman Oxford House. I explained that I just got out of treatment 2 hours ago and needed a safe place to stay. I had enough money to pay a weeks' rent, or a couple days at a hotel. They heard my story and gave me a ride to the locker to get my things. I was accepted. I just had to follow the rules, get along with everyone, and work on my recovery. I've been living at Brockman House for almost 4 years now. It took me awhile to get used to being with a group of guys like myself. But together we have learned to manage and maintain the house and interact as a family. I've had the honor to hold all House officer positions and pass that training on. The last couple of years I've assisted Chapter 23 as Chapter Vice Chair and Chapter Chair. This year I was elected Chairman of the Washington State Association of Oxford House. I would like to show the community that recovery works, that we are good people, that we can be successful.

### **Mike Z.**

My name is Mike Z. and I AM an alcoholic. I grew up in the Chicago suburbs. Mom and Dad always had cocktail hour at 4pm each day. I couldn't WAIT to be like them. My first hint I might be an alcoholic should have been when my friends and I found a bottle of Peppermint Schnapps. I told them to meet me later. I ditched them, then I drank the whole bottle. I was 14 years old.

The police were kind enough to stop me 4 times in a 2-year period after I turned 21, each resulted in a DUI. I was sent to treatment in lieu of jail in 1986. I found out then that I was an alcoholic. They said it was my parent's fault, and that was JUST what I wanted to hear. Being young, I was in no way ready to give up the lifestyle I had become accustomed to, which was drinking every chance I got.

Years went by, my drinking cost me my driver's license, my job I had for 8.5 years, and countless relationships. It's funny how (now it is) I knew my drinking was the cause of my problems, but chose alcohol over everything, and did not care about the consequences. I used to go to nightclubs; now I went to low-end bars. Soon enough though, I ended up drinking out in the woods by myself, I did not like to share my bottle with ANYONE.

I had 2 seizures in 2001, the first one in February. They asked me if I drank a lot. I said of course I don't. They said maybe I had diabetes. I was happy to hear that because if they said it was alcohol, that would mean I have a drinking problem, even though I was well aware that I was an alcoholic (thanks to treatment in '86). The 2<sup>nd</sup> seizure in Nov. '01 was without a doubt, and I fessed up to it, caused by lack of alcohol. I was in the hospital for 7 days. They sent me to a halfway house in the ghettos of Chicago. I drank and used drugs while there.

My sister, who lives in Washington State, called me in Jan. 02 and asked me if I wanted to stop the madness. I told her yes. She offered to buy me a 1-way ticket to Washington to try and help me. I took her up on that and arrived in Washington Feb. 7, 2002. I was taken to an AA meeting there, and found all these people smiling and welcoming me with open arms. I hated it. I didn't want to stop, and sure as heck didn't have the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tradition, the desire to stop drinking at all!! But, to keep my sister happy and a room over my head, I went every Tuesday, made it my home group, and had a friend who knew me all too well. He later became my sponsor. My sister found my liquor. I told her, and I absolutely believed, that there was no hope for me. I would NEVER, NEVER, NEVER be able to live any kind of life without drinking. They prayed for me and said if I had faith, there is a way. I didn't buy it. I went to detox in April of '02. Because I was from Chicago, I couldn't get into treatment. I was mad, and I showed them by going directly to the liquor store upon my departure from detox and got drunk. I was in that detox for 16 days. Two weeks later, my sister and brother-in-law went to Chicago for a wedding, and left me alone. On May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002, I wrote my sister a letter thanking her for all the help. I was convinced I could drink normally and be okay. I told her not to worry and don't come looking for me.

I got on a bus with the intent on going down to San Diego, CA to crash my brother's place and live on his couch for a while. Normal, huh!!! I didn't make it 5 miles, and I was looking for a liquor store, saw one, got off the bus, went and got a hotel room. Now this is where GOD comes in. I was intent on getting this room for the night; go have dinner in a restaurant, have a 'cocktail' before dinner, eat and then go back to the room, and get ready for the next days travels. Normal stuff, right? I never made it out of the room. I immediately made one of my drinks, got drunk, and did what I always did. Then, while sitting on my hotel bed, I looked in the mirror, and that is when I KNEW that YES, I AM an alcoholic and can't even manage one night, let alone my life. I asked GOD for

help. I totally surrendered to my disease and prayed hard. This was IT!! I'M DONE, AND NOW I HAVE THE DESIRE TO STOP DRINKING.

I called the same detox center I was in the previous month, knowing they were full up. My first miracle, they had a bed, and if I could get there the next day by 9am I was in. Well, I made it. I thank GOD for this, HE removed my obsession for alcohol and I never wanted to drink again. Of course, I would only have to change EVERYTHING ABOUT ME. I was Okay with that, because I, in my present state, was not the person I could be. So for me, changing everything was pretty easy.

The detox center suggested I call an Oxford House (never heard of 'em). I was willing to do WHATEVER IT TAKES to stay sober so I did. I interviewed, got rejected, went to the Oxford House-Lloyd in Mountlake Terrace, WA and got in. I was thrust into House Officer positions from the get-go. I loved what I was seeing and decided I was going to learn everything there is to know to live comfortably in this House if it was going to be my home. I continued to go to my home group, S.O.S. (Sober On the Sound). That guy I mentioned earlier became my sponsor and I began working the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous to the best of my ability. I have since done so, and continue to practice these principles in ALL my affairs on a daily basis.

I then moved into the Oxford House-Evergreen Terrace, in Everett, WA. I became very involved with my chapter, Chapter One, in Snohomish County. I was first elected Chapter Secretary, then Housing Services Chair, and in my last year and a half in WA, I was Chapter chair. I have tried to give back to Oxford House all that I can. I believe if I can help someone, somewhere, find clean and sober living, and then be able to be there for support to share the experience, strength, and hope with, it's a win-win situation no matter what!! I cannot lose if I stay involved in both my program of recovery and my Oxford House family.

I lived in WA State for 3 and half years of my sobriety. I have a great passion and gratefulness for Oxford House and I mentioned to Gino P., an Outreach Consultant in WA, that I would love to have the honor to work for Oxford House. Well, that dream came true in November of '05. Paul M. asked me to come aboard, and I have since moved to New Jersey where I hope I am doing justice for my chance to be a part of the best Organization I can imagine. For this I am truly grateful. Keep coming back. I will!!! GOD BLESS.

### **Shirley R.**

My name is Shirley R. and on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006 I will have 5 years clean and sober. Before coming to Oxford House I was a woman looking for love in all the wrong places, and I simply did not want to deal with the reality of life.

I started using crack cocaine at the age of 30, all because of a relationship that did not go my way. You see, I had the habit of taking care of needy men. I endured verbal, sexual and emotional abuse. I did not care. I just did not want to be alone. After that relationship ended I was introduced to the world of drugs. I had found something to take my pain away. Needless to say, I got more than what I bargained for.

The world of drugs also got me doing things as a woman I never thought I would do and along with that it got me plenty of time behind bars. Even all of that was not enough to stop me from using. Until I met a probation officer who cared more about me than I did myself and he decided to send me to treatment. I went to treatment for 90 days and finally surrendered to my addiction and began to start loving and caring for myself.

While I was in treatment, it was suggested that I move to an Oxford House because it would be a safe and sober place and that I could learn how to live on life's terms. I was scared at first but the women I lived with showed me how to live and to accept things and to be honest. I became very involved in Oxford House my first month living in the house, both in my house and with the Chapter we belonged to. I became President of my house and Chairperson of my Chapter. Then, at the 2003 World Convention, I was elected to the Oxford House World Council.

I called Paul M. and asked him if I could open houses and he allowed me to that. I did this because of my gratitude to Oxford House and in order to help other people just like me live. I did this without pay. I was blessed when the opportunity came for the job of Outreach Worker and by God's grace I was hired. I now travel throughout the state of Virginia, opening houses and doing presentations and meeting wonderful people. I feel that God gave me this calling and this job was chosen for me. I will be going to school to become a substance abuse counselor in the fall. All of this is due to Oxford House. I would have never thought I would be here at this point in my life.

I was also blessed to get married to a man who also lived in an Oxford House and things just keep getting better. I try to show others that miracles do happen and if they just do the footwork, more blessings will come. It takes time and patience and a willingness to keep trying. Oxford House is a true blessing for those that really want recovery and I am forever grateful.

#### **Kurtis T.**

I became addicted to alcohol at the age of 12. I became addicted to crack at the age of 16. I spent 10 long hard years in the streets – homeless for the most part, unemployable, and completely hopeless. I found Oxford House in 1996 and fell in love with the concept. It worked for me and I became involved. I served as Housing Chair, Chapter Chair, and I was the first NC State Board Chair. I helped to open houses and did service work whenever I could. I got married in 1999 and moved out of Oxford House. Nine months later I suffered a 21-day relapse. I managed to stay clean for another 9 months and relapsed again, for 30 days this time. I came back and stayed clean for 6 months then relapsed again. I just couldn't get back into the swing of recovery. The shame and the guilt were killing me. I came back and stayed clean for 18 months and relapsed again on 6-1-02. This was the mother of all relapses. I lost my wife, my home, my car, my mind – everything.

Two days before Christmas in 2002, I was either going to kill myself or surrender to God's will. By God's grace, I surrendered myself completely to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I turned myself in to the authorities for some crimes I had committed and served 17 months in the NC Department of Corrections. Upon release, I thought I was going to a homeless shelter and I was going with an attitude of gratitude. However, my good friends Keith and Kathleen G. decided to take me into their home for a few days. They set up an interview at an Oxford House for me, gave me clothes to wear, food to eat, and plenty of Love.

Since then, Jesus has put my marriage back together. I am a father to my children. He has blessed me with my own Carpet and Vinyl Installation Business. I am Criminal Justice Outreach for NC State Oxford Houses. I'm a Den Leader for the Cub Scouts. I teach Children's Church and serve on the Usher Board. When I came home from prison, I didn't even get a chance to fill out a job application before I was blessed with a fulltime job. Since the day that I surrendered to Christ, I have been delivered from Cigarettes and so many other self-destructive habits. I place all my faith and confidence in Him. I have found satisfaction and peace in Him. The answer for me is Jesus.

#### **Lori G.**

When I was first asked to write my Oxford House story by our founder Paul M., a person that I truly honor...my reaction was typical of most addicts. I don't have a story...why would anyone care to know my experience...I do not have any profound reflections on life. That was the addict in my head, but the woman in recovery that I have become through the support and love of my Oxford family knows that is a LIE! I do have a story...people do call upon my experience...and I am a miracle.

I moved into the Oxford House – Asera in October 2002, *broken* by my addiction, not knowing how to be honest with others or myself and too afraid to be open-minded, but I had become willing. I came from a place that many of us have faced and over time became survivors instead of victims of. I was living with sexual incest until I left home at 16, running into the arms of a man surrounded with drugs and alcohol, finding myself again with another man and I became trapped in the cycle of violence, and then again in another marriage and was introduced to new drugs and new ways to do them. After 26 years of using, my disease had progressed and very quickly the ground I stood on slipped away from me as if turning into sand below my feet. I lost my career, the car was repossessed, my children taken by the state, I lost my freedom as I went into treatment and while I was there I lost my home to a house fire and my husband went to prison. So *'broken' is the word I will use to describe myself the day I walked into an Oxford house interview.*

The process of producing a miracle began immediately. When I interviewed while transitioning from residential treatment I was terrified to try LIFE! I knew that I had failed at being a daughter, a mother, a wife, a friend and had become unemployable. But the moment I was accepted into an Oxford House I felt wanted and needed and the healing process began. I will be forever grateful to that small group of women who did not know me but saw that I wanted a new way of life and blew on that tiny ember of self-esteem that was deep inside me to spark my flame of life into existence again.

Immediately after moving into Oxford House my children began to transition back to me and after a few short months they were returned home. I was very fearful of moving out on my own and would visit my house for

continued support often. I had gotten involved with service work for Oxford House and had a position in the chapter as secretary. When my term came up I was again full of fear to lose the accountability I had in place. My Oxford family recognized my need to stay involved and created an Alumni representative position in their chapter for me to hold. As every door closed another was opened to me, and with every opportunity my peers supported me into my self-esteem grew. The following year I was voted into a position as State Secretary and was blessed with the opportunity to come to my first Oxford House World Convention in Washington DC and also to participate in the Women's Conference. There I realized the true impact that Oxford House has made all around the world.

I have grown to become so many things today because of my experiences and service to Oxford House. I now am a loving daughter, a caring parent, a sponsor, a sponsee, a friend, a responsible member of society and employable. Today I work for the state with the woman that removed my children and the one that returned them helping other parents find recovery and always encouraging the opportunities that are available by choosing to live in Oxford House.

Today I no longer feel that I do not have a direction or purpose. I am part of a huge family that I am dedicated to. I have a direction to continue to assist in cultivating new houses for any addict seeking a new way of life. I have a purpose to preserve the Oxford House principles and traditions. Today I have come of AGE!

### **Paul S.**

I was destined to become an addict long before I ever picked up my first drug. So in that sense, I started on a road that was unavoidably leading me to Oxford House twenty years before I had even heard of it. As a child, I knew I wanted to have as many life experiences as I could and for me, part of that intention meant I was planning to try every mind-altering substance there was to try. You don't find too many ten-year-olds that will tell you they plan to do heroin someday. Between what I then thought of as an adventurous attitude (but would later realize was a self-sabotaging one), and the fact that there was a lot of alcoholism in my family, I was a disaster waiting to happen. But I was ambitious and managed to get through high school and into a prestigious university before really starting to self-destruct. I was naïve too. I knew that there were alcoholics in my family and by then my mother had gotten sober through the help of a twelve-step program. I thought if I just avoided alcohol, I could use other drugs and avoid any negative consequences. That was one of many lies I told myself in order to rationalize my addiction.

Another lie I told myself was that I chose to do drugs because I wanted to try things most people were afraid to do. In actuality, I was the one who was afraid – afraid of living life on its terms like the rest of the world and afraid of being me. I was uncomfortable in my own skin and when I started doing drugs, I thought I had found that answer to all that. I wasn't running to drugs as much as I was running away from life and my own feelings. As soon as I went off to school, I became a hard-core stoner, and experimentation with lots of other drugs followed. It took me a few extra years to graduate because of my drug use and the depression that followed. By the time I did, I had tried heroin. Again, I was so naïve, and I really thought I could use this highly addictive drug and avoid the terrible fate of all the other junkies out there. I thought I was better than all of them. Of course I wasn't. I had the disease of addiction as bad as anyone else I knew and eventually I was shooting heroin and cocaine, unable to keep a job, and wearing out my welcome with family and friends everywhere I went. I was starting to see the worst consequences of addiction happening to the people around me, including finding my girlfriend dead from an overdose, but that still wasn't enough to stop me. I ended up going to jail in Virginia for possession. I had fallen a long way from the guy who was voted "Most Likely to Become President" in his high school senior class. Even then, I was unwilling to admit my own powerlessness over drugs and I still thought I could figure out how to manage my using if I just tried harder. I was on probation and randomly drug-tested. I was drinking all the time and even started to think I could outsmart the probation office. I was wrong again and they sent me back to jail. This time the reality of my situation finally hit me. I never thought I'd be back in jail again. I had abandoned someone I really cared about. I had lost everything and I was totally helpless to do anything about it. And I didn't have the slightest idea what to do about any of it. I had really hit rock bottom.

I was sent to a treatment unit inside the jail and fortunately, was finally miserable enough to approach the ideas of addiction and recovery with an appropriate level of open-mindedness and willingness. I was still skeptical, but I decided to give it a chance. It was here, as I approached my release that I first heard about Oxford House. At first, I just wanted to find an alternative to them sending me to more residential treatment once I got out. I had been clean and sober for almost a year and I was anxious to start trying to live a life again. The judge really didn't want to let me go and only by agreeing to move into an Oxford House was I released. I found an Oxford House in Richmond that had an opening and was willing to accept me.



Right from the start, I was impressed with the Oxford House system. I remember thinking whoever came up with this must be a genius. The idea that you could set up an environment structured in a way that screw-up addicts and alcoholics like me could run the place themselves was unbelievable. But there I was, seeing it happen for myself. The inmates were really running the asylum. And they were doing a great job of it, too. We paid our bills on time, the house stayed clean, we treated each other respectfully (most of the time), and people were staying sober. And the ones that didn't were evicted immediately. I was really excited about what a wonderful thing Oxford House was. The most important thing Oxford House was and still continues to be is the reason that I'm here today with over five years clean and sober, and not back in jail or dead. I know that I couldn't have done that if I hadn't come to live in an Oxford House. Even though I was released from jail with almost a year clean, I still wasn't ready to live on my own and navigate life sober without the kind of support that Oxford House provided. I owe so much to my 12-step recovery program but I remember there were many days in my first few months in Oxford House, when I was shaky, and probably the only thing that kept my unwell mind from going to the idea of using, was knowing that the house wasn't going to tolerate it, and I'd be out on the street within a day. Soon though, the threat of negative consequences gave way to the power of service work as one of my main motivators for staying clean. Sometimes I think sobriety became a habit for me in spite of myself. Getting involved in being of service in my own house and then the local chapter was a way I sometimes say I tricked myself into staying clean. There were many times when I was neglecting my recovery program, maybe not doing enough step work or may not going to enough meetings. But on those days when I hardly felt like getting out of bed, let alone working on bettering myself, I usually had something to do for Oxford House. And sometimes, just showing up is enough. Knowing another addict was counting on me and getting outside of myself in that way has really been what has kept me clean and that's all because of Oxford House. After two and a half years of living in Oxford house, I left with a strong foundation of recovery, ready to take all the different things I had learned there and apply them in the rest of my life.

But the blessings Oxford House has brought to me didn't end with my residency. Oxford House gave me a sense of belonging to something greater than myself. Unlike most of what I did during my active addiction, this was something it felt good to be a part of. I began attending chapter and state workshops and conventions. I'll never forget the first time I met Paul M., the founder of Oxford House. It felt like I was meeting Bill W., the founder of AA. When I attended my first world convention, in Seattle, I truly realized I was a part of an amazing thing that was growing worldwide. I continued attending world conventions and learning more and more about Oxford House every time. Then, a few months after I became an alumnus of Oxford House, I was hired to be the state coordinator for Virginia. I never thought I would have the honor of working for Oxford House. Now I travel around the state opening new houses, making presentations, and training residents. The hours are crazy and sometimes there's so much to do, it can be overwhelming, but I always feel very lucky to have been given this opportunity. I have so much gratitude for how Oxford House saved my life. Now I'm able to express that gratitude all the time in being of service to Oxford House and all the alcoholics and addicts that are fortunate enough to find one. And there are so many more suffering alcoholics and addicts that need Oxford house, so it's nice to be a part of expanding this great program. I have never done anything in my life so rewarding, where I new I was really helping people and I could see the results every day. I have returned to school and hope to earn a graduate degree in sociology. I don't know what lies in store after that or whether I will continue to work for Oxford House. I do know that I will always be a part of Oxford House and whatever good things are coming in my life, I have Oxford House to thank for all of it.

#### **Leann W.**

My name is Leann and I am an alcoholic and addict. My first meeting was in November 1984 and I just celebrated my 5<sup>th</sup> year clean in July 2006. It took me 17 years to get one year of SOBRIETY. I always knew I was an alcoholic. My first drink was at 13 years old and I wanted more immediately. It took the pain away. It suddenly made me feel O.K. I was no longer that little girl on the outside looking in. I can honestly remember having low self-esteem in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade; that's 7 years old! Needless to say, once I could escape and numb those feelings – I had found my calling.

I had tried every drug, every way at least once by the time I was 19 years old. I got addicted to crystal meth (we used to call it crank then) at 21 years old. I had found my drugs of choice – alcohol and ANY kind of amphetamine I could find. This included over the counter drugs, anything at all. I would be “UP” all day and then come down at night with alcohol. I could never face a day at work without speed. I really can't remember ever being “speed free” at work except during my two pregnancies. They were such miserable days too.

At 30 years old I went into my 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> rehab. Immediately coming out – I met my “husband to be”. We were “in love.” (I think he had about 4 months). We got married 11 months later (DO NOT DO THIS!) About a

year after our son was born in 1993 we decided to drink together. (I had been eating speed the whole year after my son was born though- but I was functional, so it was OK!) Well from 1994 until 2001 it was the blind leading the blind in our house. My marriage was a joke, but we enabled each other – it was PERFECT! We would drink every night and continue to live like everything was OK. After my daughter was born in 1999 I found a diet center that gave you as many pills as you needed every two weeks for \$60.00. All you had to do was tell them you were still hungry and they slowly increased your daily dosage. Toward the end of my using I was eating about 15-20 pills (37.5 mg each) of phentermine a day and drinking about ½ gallon of vodka in two days. I was crazy! I was paranoid and psychotic. I was the meanest, most emotional woman ever. I was hallucinating. All I was doing was running around in circles every day. I wouldn't go to sleep for 4 of 5 days at a time. When I would run out of pills then life stopped and I crashed for a couple days – but I was up and ready to go when I could go back and get more pills. (You couldn't go back before the two weeks were up)

To make a long story short, in July 2001 I went into my last rehab to date. When I walked out of Warwick Manor – something changed. I suddenly realized that I couldn't blame anyone for my problems – it was all me. It took me 9 months to withdraw from the speed. It's an emotional withdrawal and I cried and cried at a moments notice. By this time I was a single parent trying to cope with it. The cravings were gone – but the hard part was living! I felt less then and simply didn't want to be a parent to a 7 year old and a 1 year old. But GOD got me through it!

When I was three months clean I applied for an accounting job listed in the paper for a “non-profit in Silver Spring Maryland”. They called me after receiving my resume and told me that the organization was Oxford House, Inc. (I had lived in a house for about 3 days in 1991 but had totally forgotten about this until about 3 years ago. I was so toxic.) I explained that I knew what an Oxford House was and they asked me if I was in the program. The rest you could say is history. I've been working for Oxford House for five years now and not found it necessary to use. GOD opened this door for me and I feel like the luckiest woman in the world. I am truly blessed. During this past 5 years – I have turned my life around. Today I have a great relationship with GOD, working the steps every day, sponsor people, but I still have a lot to learn. Thank goodness this is a journey. Today I can look at people in the eye and not feel ashamed. I'm a good mother and my ex and I get along fairly well today. (He is also clean!) What a blessing! There is no question in my mind that if I didn't get this job at OHI, I probably would be dead now. For five years I have asked GOD to come into heart and give me more and more faith in HIM. He has answered my prayers. You see I always “believed” in GOD but today I TRUST HIM. There is a difference. I am teaching my children to TRUST HIM. I do not take credit for this. This is all HIS doing. I have so much more to learn about myself and I look forward to doing the steps all over again. I want to stay green and remember the pain. You see I never really lived in an Oxford House but Oxford House saved my life.

#### **Judy M.**

I started using drugs at a very early age, around 14. I was married and had my first child at 16, my second child at 20. I drank and smoked pot through both pregnancies and continued to introduce myself to more and more different drugs throughout my life. I tried just about everything but heroin. As my children grew up, it was “normal” to see mom doing lines, drinking, and smoking pot constantly. It was also “normal” to see pot plants growing in between the tomato plants, the spare bedroom to have a clothes line in it with pot hanging and drying, and a constant flow of “friends” coming and going at all hours of the day and night. When we went anywhere in the car, the bong pipe was right there between the seats. When I did sleep, the bong was right there on the headboard, loaded and ready to go for my first bong hit of the day before I even rolled out of bed. I did manage to work at a job where I could take my small brown bottle of cocaine to work with me. The hours were perfect for me as I stocked the bakery department of the local chain store from 1:00 AM to 6:00 AM. That gave me most of the day to rest in the sun after getting the kids off to school and gear up for an evening of partying, more cocaine, then off to work again.

I had a few moments of clarity after visiting my sister who lived here in Washington (my home was in California) and thought it would be good for me to move my kids and myself up here to Washington and change my ways. I did make the move but I didn't change my ways! In fact, things got worse. I was a chronic cokehead and was introduced to something new called "METH." It was a lot stronger than coke and it took a lot less of it to keep me "up" for days on end! I had found my new love. The same friends who introduced me to this new drug also taught me how to make it. For years I traveled around with this group with our "portable lab" renting nice vacation homes in remote areas of California, Nevada, Oregon and Washington State to set up shop and "cook." I would send the kids down to California to visit their dad and grandmother there during Spring break, Christmas vacation

and summer break. Sometimes they had to stay longer if I wasn't able to get back to town or my sister would take care of them for me. After the other people decided to go back to California to carry on their business, I was of course, going to find a way to carry on the business here so I shared the "recipe" with a family member and it was off to the races again!!! I was living with my family and cooking up a storm at their remote Battleground home. Eventually the SWAT team interrupted our sessions and some of the family had to go to prison for a while. I lucked out that time and my brother in-law took the rap for us all.

I moved around from house to house and from boyfriend to boyfriend. Eventually I found myself a real nice boyfriend (David) and, as a bonus, his family liked to get high just like me! By this time my kids were getting high right along with me because I introduced them to drugs. An addict's mind doesn't work anywhere near normal and I told myself it was better to have my kids at home getting high with me because they were going to do it anyway! So, as my addiction progressed so did theirs. Eventually they found mates of their own and we were one big happy addicted family! We had moved out of David's family's house and were staying in a trailer in the driveway of a friend's house. Both the kids had lives of their own and were on their way to making me a grandma!

I had gotten very sick with blood poisoning and was in the hospital for 2 weeks and with only 2 visits from David during that time, I knew we were over. For 2 weeks the hospital put me through every test in the book and couldn't find out why I was sick. They had given up any hope of finding a cure for my blood poisoning, I should have died from it but someone up there had a plan for me. I had very badly decayed back teeth from all the meth I had been doing and my sister and brother-in-law told the doctors to check my teeth. They did, and the dentist pulled 9 back teeth and I was released from the hospital the next day! No fever and no more bugs in my blood! I had actually prayed to get better and promised I wouldn't do any more drugs if I got better. Well, I got better but didn't keep my promise. It was all because David had left me shortly after I got out of the hospital. He was always totally against IV drug users so, my sick mind decided to punish him by starting to use the needle to consume my meth.

My daughter Heather, who was ready to give birth at any moment, took me in and I made her life a living hell. She was trying to be a good clean new mommy and I was doing more and more drugs in her house than was imaginable. I tried to stop but couldn't; the needle had a hold on me. That was the beginning of the end! Eventually I was banned from my daughter's house and was living in a car someone had given to me. The guy I was with at that time drove the car to a remote place in Yacolt and we passed out. Next thing I knew we were getting woke up by the police! The car was mine and all the drugs and paraphernalia they found in it were mine too. And of course all the needle marks on me were a sure sign of me being an addict. So, off to jail I went. This was my first time in jail and after spending 15 days there I got out and went right back to the drugs. Only I had decided to quit using the needle and start smoking it because that was the way David liked to do it and I was trying very hard to get him back in my life. He started to supply me with all the meth I needed to help me pay off my court costs and fines. I avoided the courts and my probation officer as long as I could but, they caught up with me one night riding in a friend's car with bad tabs and lots of glass ware, pipes, pot, and a lot of little and big baggies of meth all broken up and ready to be sold. I gave the police a false name; I told them my name was Amanda Kay Ayers (AKA). After about an hour trying to figure out who I really was as I sat handcuffed in the back seat of their car, I finally told them. All that time my friend, who was driving, was in her car parked behind the police car. The police searched her car after they found out who I was and found all of the drugs and other stuff in there. She had not been in trouble with the police before so they let her go, and off to jail I went again! I was looking at some mighty stiff sentences because of what I got caught with. Again, I prayed and promised to stop doing drugs if I didn't go to prison, and again someone had a plan for me. I went to court a couple of days after I got put in jail, expecting to be sentenced for all kinds of stuff and instead I was exonerated of all charges because the police had left my friend in her car alone while they interrogated me. So my new case got thrown out of court. BUT, I still had to answer to the DOC for not complying with the court orders from my first charges so; I stayed in jail for 9 months. During that time my daughter brought my granddaughter Ashlynn into the jail to visit me and it just about killed me when she asked why I was there and why she couldn't hug me?! I told myself at that time it was time to grow up and be a grandmother to my grandkids. But, of course when I did get out of jail, I went right back to smoking the meth. I had to comply with DOC this time or else so I stopped smoking pot because someone told me I could still do the meth and cover it up when I had to go UA. The cover-ups didn't work and I kept getting dirty UA's when I did show up for them.

I finally had it with all the headaches of trying to cover up my meth use and went in to see my probation officer and told him "I need help!" I told him I had given up everything but the meth and I needed help or to be locked up forever to keep me away from it. He gave me the option of going back to jail or going to inpatient treatment for 30 days, then to John Owens recovery house for 60 days, then he wanted me to move into this place

called "Oxford House" for as long as it took to keep me clean. I agreed and was going to jump through his hoops to keep myself out of jail. I even told my brother-in-law to bury some of the last batch we made so I could have some good stuff to do when I got out of treatment. But, something happened about 3 weeks into my treatment program; it was like a light bulb had just come on in my sick little brain! I understood some about the disease I had and didn't want to have it anymore! I made a conscious decision to really try to stay away from the drugs and anyone who used them (which was just about all of my family!).

So, I went to the recovery house and then moved in to the Lavina Oxford house in early July 1997. The women there really cared about me and supported me in every way they possibly could. I was voted in as house Secretary right away and started to feel good about myself. There was this woman who everyone in Oxford House was always talking about; her name was Myrna B. I felt like I had known her forever when I did get to meet her. She came by the house looking for volunteers for putting on a workshop and dance and of course we all know how Myrna likes to pull in the newcomers right away and get them doing service work right off the bat! So, off I went and the rest is history! I was hooked on Oxford House and what it did for so many people and what it was doing for me. I got involved in Chapter when I became house President and from there I got involved at the State level. I had a good job, found a boyfriend in Oxford House and decided to move out together. I stayed very involved at the State level as the Board made a position for me as Alumni Coordinator.

When the time came for Myrna to retire I applied for the position of an Outreach Representative. I was second choice but I am still here today in my 7<sup>th</sup> year of spreading the word of Oxford House and finding houses to open so everyone who has suffered from the disease of addiction can have a safe place to call home. I would not be clean and sober today if it weren't for Oxford House and I know that in my heart. I touched so many lives throughout my life in such a negative way by doing, making and selling drugs. Oxford House is in my heart and soul and has provided me with the opportunity to touch so many lives in such a positive way. I had to live through the Hell of addiction so I could understand what people are going through with their own addictions and remember where I came from. I truly believe this is the plan God had for me!

#### **Joe C.**

"You're accepted Congratulations!" Those words rang dear to me that day more than 14 years ago and they still do today. I had made a life-changing decision by interviewing at an Oxford House and I didn't even know it. My time at a long-term residential treatment program for substance abuse had ended. After years of abusing myself with alcohol and drugs (specifically Crystal Methamphetamine), a failed marriage, losing countless jobs, dodging creditors, alienating friends, family, and all those close to me, I had finally found a place I would come to call home; Oxford House Salt Lake. I never would have guessed an organization that allowed self admitted alcoholics and drug addicts to manage the day-to-day operations of a clean and sober house could have such a powerful influence on my life.

The house I was moving into wasn't spectacular by any means. It was painted green with brown shutters and was very unassuming in a residential neighborhood known as Foster Village. The house was just a few minutes drive to the back gate of Pearl Harbor; something that made my roommate very happy as he was an active duty sailor pulling shore duty. He was also the house coordinator, which made our weekly house meetings very interesting as he would use his military bearing to point out the smallest infraction of the household chores. One of the other housemates was a gentleman named Kelly P. He is the man who not only helped move me out of the residential treatment and into Oxford House Salt Lake, but he also loaned me money for my rent and deposit. I had just started working and was unable to pay my rent much less the required deposit. Kelly loaned me the money and good-humoredly said "don't worry, I know where you live." I believe there is a special place in heaven for Kelly P.

I stayed at Oxford House Salt Lake for about nine months before moving to Oxford House-Lusitana. It was a new house for men, but it had been a struggling female house in the preceding months before my arrival. With the help of the Housing Service Committee, and the local Oxford House Chapter, the new male house thrived. We had lived at that location for nearly a year when the landlord told us she was moving back into the property and we would have 45 days to vacate the premises! This was a significant challenge for me as I was previously able to move into two existing Oxford Houses but I had never sought to open a brand new house. I remember feeling scared and overwhelmed when I called the Oxford House Corporate office to seek guidance. I was given a pep talk and was assured that I could do this. The key advice from the Corp. Office was to "remember you are part of a family." I wrote down what information I could remember so I could share with my housemates. Later that evening the 8 of us sat in our house meeting. I retold of my phone call to Oxford House Inc. Then we began to talk and talk and share

and then agreed that rather than go our separate ways, we would pull together and find a house. Our decision reenergized all of us. With a 45-day notice to move looming over our head we began to meet each evening to discuss our progress on locating a new property. It seemed our biggest stumbling block was convincing a landlord that allowing 8 adult men in recovery from alcohol, and other illicit substances, would have a positive pay-off for them. We began rehearsing our lines for prospective landlords and honing our salesmanship skills. We felt confident that as long as we conveyed the Oxford House concept and assured the prospective landlords that Oxford Houses pay their bills on time, we would be successful. We even added a touch of soft-soap and pointed out that each new Oxford House helps society deal effectively with people who are new to substance abuse recovery.

Our teamwork paid big dividends as we secured a house in Kapahulu near Diamond Head. It was a five-minute walk to the local community college, a ten-minute walk to Waikiki beach, and 2 blocks away a Church held AA meetings three times a week. We moved into our new house and named it Oxford House Iwalani that in Hawaiian means bird from heaven.

Oxford House Iwalani was my home for nearly six years. The house rarely had a vacancy. While the location was ideal, it was not the only draw. The house had a solid reputation of being a serious house for recovery. The seriousness of the house was always on display at the weekly house meeting. The members knew the house was able to function best when there was good communication amongst the house members. The meeting always opened with a thirty-minute smoking rule. We never allowed smoking in the common area, but on meeting night we could smoke thirty minutes after the meeting started, and could smoke thirty minutes after the meeting ended. This allowed us to get down to business right a way and then allowed us time after the meeting to relax and to share stories and catch up after a busy week.

I lived with many different people from many walks of life at that location. At Iwalani at one time or another we had roommates who were a teacher, a fireman, lawyer, actor, former pro golfer, taxi driver and countless individuals who were getting re-started with their lives. We also had people from every ethnic background imaginable. We had local Hawaiian folks, people from the mainland, a couple of guys from South Korea and a gentleman from as far away as Kenya. However, my two favorite roommates were a pair of taxi drivers. One was from Iran and the other was from Chicago. One was Muslim and the other Jewish. They became fast friends. They would go to 12-step meetings together, play cards, watch TV, have meals together and occasionally one would affectionately call the other the Great Satan – much to the delight of the rest of us. Those two men taught the rest of us that in recovery all things are possible.

I moved out of Oxford House-Iwalani in December 2000. My stay was an experience I will always cherish. It opened my eyes to a world in which one alcoholic indeed helps another alcoholic live a clean and sober life. I learned that giving a hand up is more effective than giving a handout but at Oxford House Iwalani we did both. My stay at Oxford House helped me to grow in all areas of my life. For the first time in my life I was gainfully employed at a job that was both challenging and fulfilling. I paid my bills on time, no longer dodging creditors. I worked my recovery program, took some college night classes, became involved in service work at Oxford House and I even had the good fortune to attend the July 1993 Oxford House Chapter Meeting where I met a woman who would later become my wife. All these things were possible because I was clean and sober.

Today I approach my 17th year of sobriety. If I reflect on the trying times of my first few years in recovery, the divorce of my first marriage, the constant search for a meaningful job, my distrust of most people, my whole discontent and unhappiness – I realize that Oxford House and the people who lived there helped get me through some of the toughest periods in my life. My foundation for recovery was created in Oxford House. I firmly believe were it not for Oxford House, I would not have the successes I have today. With Oxford House, learning to live a fulfilling drug and alcohol-free life in recovery is possible and in recovery all things are possible.

#### **Kari M.**

Where to begin? A little about me. I am an ex-offender, addict and recovering prostitute. Before coming to Oxford I was using the prison system as a revolving door (11½ years). I went to SAFP (treatment behind the walls) 3 times before I really wanted to change. On Nov. 18, 2000 I was once again arrested for stealing another car and I knew that day that I was either going to die or go to jail. My God saw fit for me to live not die, and I made a vow to do things different from that point on. So when I got into Dallas Co. jail, I started writing to go into the substance abuse program there. I was accepted in January of 2001, and started working on Kari. I then went to court and the D.A. wanted me to get 25 years minimum or LIFE. Why? Because I had 6 felonies in the state of

Texas and 2 in Ohio. I prayed and went open plea before my judge (Judge Cruetzot). He told me the problem was that I could do time and I needed to learn how to live life on life's terms. So he sent me to SAFP for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time and put me on 5 years probation on top of my parole. While at SAFP I did just that, I worked hard on myself. I worked on my abuse issues and learned a lot about Kari and how my behaviors played into my lifestyle I continued to live in. Also, I am dually diagnosed (bipolar).

After leaving SAFP I went to a TCC (transitional treatment center) for 60-90 days. I did that and my counselor brought up Oxford Houses to me. They had told me about it the last time but of course I wasn't ready and you see where I ended up once again. This time I wanted my life to be different, so I called Oxford House Catalpa and set up an interview. On the night of the interview I told them everything about me and I just knew they wouldn't want someone like me in their nice house. When I got off the bus at the Salvation Army I had like 15 minutes before I had to be in, so I called back to the house and Laurie (now an alumni in GA.) told me I had a home to come to. I sat down on the ground and cried because I couldn't believe they actually wanted me there after hearing what a bad person I was. I then prayed all the way in the building because I know that was my God working in my life. I moved in and my life has been one blessing after another. I was determined to do things totally different than before so I began to get involved. I started with becoming an officer in my house, working with housing committee, then becoming chapter chair. And later I became one of the members to help start the Texas State Association (state board). I now will have 6 years drug and crime-free on Nov. 19, 2006. Who would have thought? To all the newcomers, no one can work harder for your recovery than you. I have a saying, "How Bad Do You Want It?"

Get active in your recovery. My house will tell you that my biggest pet peeve in Oxford is how some people just live in a house and don't participate and become active. For me, it's not me just living in a house, when I did my 12 steps I learned the true meaning to the saying, "You have to give it away in order to keep it." I have to give back what was so freely given to me!!!! So a challenge is to see how many members will get active in recovery, and within your house, chapter and state level.

#### **Debbie D.**

My journey to Oxford House started with 30 years of insanity. I am from Baltimore and had a wonderful childhood until the sudden death of my father. His suicide left a hole in my heart and soul that I tried to fill with alcohol, drugs, men, money and whatever made me not feel the pain of his death. During the early years of my using, I was able to go to college, buy a home, maintain good paying jobs and live a comfortable life. But my disease progressed to the point where I lost the home and the good paying jobs. Jail and institutions became my home throughout my journey to Oxford House. To avoid ridicule from my family, I would admit myself to inpatient drug treatment. To avoid possible suspension from work, I would admit myself to outpatient treatment. I continued to avoid other things like paying taxes, car notes, rent, family and friends. The shame and guilt of the kind of person I had become forced me into a world of not just using drugs but also using people. I didn't know how to live without drugs. And just like my father who self-destructed, I was well on my way.

Drug dealing then became what I thought was a good idea. That just ended up with me having my house raided and getting charged with 5 felonies and being detained for weeks in jail. I was facing 25 years in prison but received three years probation. What a relief! I then picked up where I left off – using and abusing. My 30 year run finally came to an end when I found myself evicted again but this time with nowhere to go. There seemed to be a moment of clarity as I watched what little I had out on the curb in front of my apartment house. I finally realized that something needed to change. And that something was me.

My family was not receptive to letting me move in with them but they would get me help. It was suggested that I get into treatment again – which I did. This time I was more than willing to get help and stop using. While in treatment, Narcotics Anonymous would bring meetings in for us. It was then that I heard about Oxford House. But, of course, I thought I knew what was best for me and wanted to go into transitional housing that was available through the treatment center. However, they did not have any beds open and it was suggested that I interview with the area Oxford House. I was reluctant since I thought I needed more structure. The bottom line was that I was scared – scared of leaving treatment, scared that I couldn't live somewhere without strict supervision, just scared to live life without drugs. My counselors kept telling me that I needed to have faith. Well, faith and much gratitude got me through my interview and acceptance into the Emack Oxford House.

Living in an Oxford House reinforced and reestablished a lot of things that I was not able to do or unwilling to do when I was using. Things like paying rent and working. Things like learning how to live without using drugs.

Things like becoming a responsible person. Things like developing healthy friendships and relationships. While I resided at Emack Oxford House, I started working for Oxford House Inc. What a blessing! As a result of living in Emack and working for OHI, I was willing to help open more Oxford Houses especially for women.

The 30-year-old hole in my heart has been filled with much love. Now I have my biological family back in my life and I have been blessed with my new family – My Oxford Family. GOD has been with me throughout this journey to Oxford House and I am so grateful. My life is good. I have been able to keep a job, buy and pay off a car note, pay taxes, complete and receive my Master's degree and, most important, stay clean and serene for over 5 ½ years. With God's help, I pray and have faith that my life will only get better. I have Oxford House living and my Oxford House family to thank for helping me start and being a part of this new journey.

### **Tony P. – Oxford House Retread**

I started drinking at an early age. By the time I was in high school, I was getting drunk on a regular basis and experimenting with many drugs. It wasn't until I was married and divorced with two children that I took a hard look at my addictions. I had gotten numerous Driving While Intoxicated, Hit and Runs, and other misdemeanor charges throughout the years. A bartender at one of my drinking holes would later in life tell me stories of my drinking and how one day, after 30 double whiskey and cokes, I would still walk around and talk like I hadn't had a drink all day. I had been in and out of a number of treatment centers, both inpatient and outpatient. One day I was driving after being up for 36 hours on one of my drinking binges and smashed my pickup into the back of a UPS truck. The next day I asked one of my co-workers to take me to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.

I would get a week clean and relapse. Then I would get three weeks and then relapse, 30 days and relapse and on and on. After about six months of in and out of sobriety my sponsor and I had a serious talk and he mentioned he had helped Myrna B. open the first women's Oxford House in the state and that Oxford House might be a good thing for me. I didn't like the idea. It sounded so much like a treatment center or "halfway" house. But with my sponsor's suggestion, I called the phone number and went for an interview.

I was accepted into the Silver Star Oxford House and things started changing immediately. I stated working with my sponsor and the 12 steps. For the first six months, I was on that "Pink Cloud" everyone talks about. I got involved with Oxford House and AA. After six months sobriety, I got a job working with computers, which was something I had wanted to do for a long time. I started dating my ex-wife and resumed my relationship with my children. After a year with Silver Star, I was so impressed with the Oxford House Concept and thankful, I helped open the Laurelwood Oxford House. Then after two years, my ex-wife asked me to come home and I got a government job with an office and a view as a Computer Systems Analyst. Things were really looking up. I had everything I wanted. Everything I needed. And it just wasn't enough.

I wish I could say that life has been wonderful but after a year back with my ex-wife, I stopped working the steps, I stopped calling my sponsor, working with others and stopped all my service work. Work and Family life had demanded more of my time. Up to this point I had primarily been a drunk. I wanted an escape but it wasn't alcohol I wanted. The Big Book tells us "Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stems all forms of spiritual disease." Hindsight is always 20/20. I got resentments over someone in the program and I became bitter. I only ended up hurting myself and the ones I loved around me. As I was driving home one day from work, I saw a drug deal go down and I pulled my car over and bought whatever it was he was selling. It was Crack Cocaine and I was instantly hooked.

In eight short months after the first hit of Crack, I lost my job, my ex-wife booted me out again, and I had lost all the material possessions to the dealer or pawn shop. I was homeless, penniless and desperate. I slept in a storage room 3' by 6'. I kept telling myself that I had been down here before and I could pull myself up again. But I couldn't, every \$20 I earned I had the best intentions for the money but it ultimately went to the dealer. I remember everyone talking about the "yets". This is something that hasn't happened to us "Yet" and that our drinking and using hadn't brought us to that "Yet". I wish I had heeded those wonderful clichés from AA. They say bad things come in threes and this is what happened to me. First I was arrested for a possession charge downtown and sentenced to drug court. Second, in desperation for the drug, I stole from a friend of mine and she rightfully pressed felony theft charges. And last, I was driving home with my brother. I had been drinking and smoking crack earlier that day. Although I had a license I did not have insurance. I should not have been on the road. I was in a crash that killed an 11-year old boy. Had it not been for the testimonies of the drivers behind me, I would still be in prison today for vehicular manslaughter.

It was then I decided to take my own life. There was no way I should live while others die because of my choices. One night I took all the pills I had and became sick and hospitalized for about a week. Isolation was my only friend. I didn't want to get clean. I didn't want to keep using. I just wanted all the pain to end. The outpatient treatment center and my counselor kept encouraging me to keep moving forward but it wasn't until the Judge from drug court gave me an ultimatum that I really started to try. He said either get and stay clean or go to jail for a year. I went back to my counselor and we came up with a plan. I would get 30 days clean again and apply at an Oxford House. It seemed so simple. It was the missing key.

I was accepted back into the house I had helped open up five years previously. They didn't have a bed available but I convinced them to let me sleep on the couch until one was available. I slept on the couch and floor for over a month while paying my fair share and I was happy to be there. I started working the steps again, got involved and was going to meeting after meeting.

It hasn't been easy this time around. Things haven't come my way as easily and as fast as they did the first time. I made a deal with myself. I would give it two years and if things did not get better then I could always go back to being miserable. There were a number of times I wanted to give in and finish the job. But, every day, every month I could look back and see that things were getting better little by little. I became involved. I helped open a number of houses in my area. Over the last five years we have gone from 13 houses to 26. I have held every house position, chapter position and was the state chairman for a year. I currently sit on the world council.

For me there was a combination of things that had to take place in order for me to get and stay clean. AA, NA, CA and Oxford House are the biggest parts of me staying sober. My ex-wife and I are dating again. I see my kids' everyday. I no longer value material things the way I used to. I help wherever I can and sometimes I do too much. I'm still trying to find that balance in life. I go to meetings all the time, AA CA and NA alike. I still live in the Oxford House I helped open three years ago. My friends kid around about how I use Oxford House for the cheap rent. Not true. I would pay double to stay around other recovering people. I suppose in some eyes, I should be ready to move on but when I think about it, there is absolutely no reason for me to leave. Oxford House is my family. If we need more beds, I'll stand ready to help open another house.

### **Robert J.**

The first Oxford House outside of the Washington D.C. area was in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania. It was started with the help of Rep. Rooney from the area and the goal was that, if it could be sustained, other houses would be opened in the area. I joined the house in March of 1988, just a couple of months after it began. I was looking for a safe haven. I had had a history of alcohol and drug related problems as well as a failed track record of trying to stop the insanity. By the time I found the house, I had just been released from my second rehab and had a history of grand mal seizures associated with my drinking. I had spent 9 years from my first inpatient detox in 1979 battling this disease with no avail. At the end of my stay at the rehab, they had suggested some form of alternative housing. There was a halfway house in Allentown, but it was filled at the time. The nearest facility was in Reading, an hour away, and by some miracle I had kept my job by the slimmest of threads, and didn't want either the commute or the restrictions that a halfway house entailed. I saw a flier for the Oxford House in Bethlehem at a meeting. Nobody knew a lot about it but it sounded exactly like the kind of place I was looking for. I was afraid that I would once again fail if I was to live on my own and even though living with a bunch of other recovering drunks wasn't my ideal scenario, I knew I had to do something and do it quickly.

The house was located on the South side of Bethlehem, near Lehigh University. The area consisted of older homes, many converted to student apartments. In one direction was a lower income area spotted with small storefronts and bars where it looked like you could get into trouble easily. The other way was the University with eateries and more bars. The Oxford House at 426 Carlton Avenue was going to be our oasis in the desert.

There were 7 of us and, as with any Oxford House, the group represented a rather broad cross section of society; various backgrounds, ethnicities, and histories of problems with addictions. I think we were all looking for a safe place to hide out while we figured out this recovery thing. Jack was the unofficial leader in the house. He was the treasurer and at that time had sole control of house finances. Ralph and Van were both retired. Acie was wheelchair-bound due to an accident that took off his one leg above the knee. Steve, Frank and I were all in our thirties and worked at various jobs.

Everything was smooth for a while. I paid my rent, did my chores and went to meetings. Then our treasurer left with the contents of our checking account. At the ensuing house meeting, Frank and I were



volunteered to take over the books. We made the provision that all checks required 2 signatures and started the long haul back to getting our finances in order. We managed to turn things around and towards the end of that first year we had made a deal with the landlord that if we fixed up the house, he would pay for materials and we would split the cost of installing wall-to-wall carpeting. We put a lot of time and effort making the house more than just a place to crash. We scraped the old layers of wallpaper off, spackled the cracks and repainted the entire downstairs. We bought some better furniture and a large screen TV for the living room. Things were looking good, but we never forgot the main purpose of this experiment – if we made it, we were going to expand. By the second year we had enough funds to consider opening an additional house. We were introduced to a gentleman who owned and leased some houses out as mental health group homes. He happened to have an available house and we decided to open the Broad Street Oxford house. He was a bit leery in the beginning due to the makeup of his new tenants. Mental health was one thing, but alcoholics and addicts? We signed the lease and that started our relationship with the owner. He now owns several houses that we lease from him and is so pleased with us as tenants that he once told me that if at any time we ever needed another house he would go out and buy one for us to use.

Don, a newer member of the original house, and I moved into the new house. We had made a deal and had gotten eight bedrooms worth of beds, dressers and nightstands from a used furniture dealer along with some living and dining room furniture. They delivered everything into a big pile in the front room and Don and I spend the first couple of days rearranging everything. By this time, news of the Oxford house was spreading. We had contacted rehabs and halfway houses, telling them we were expanding and, if they had any candidates, we were available. We soon started getting more requests that we had room for. I think the concept of self-governing recovery houses was a great draw. People who weren't thrilled with the prospect of a halfway house were happy to find an alternative.

By the middle of 1989 we had pooled the resources of both houses and were ready to open another house. We had been talking to some women in the program who wondered why there wasn't a similar housing option for them. It took some doing but we finally found four women who were willing to try living together. The Broad Street landlord found us a house in Allentown and we decided to open the first women's recovery house in the area. It didn't take long for the word to get out and the house filled up. At almost the same time we opened the third men's house on Chew Street in Allentown. Again, Don and I moved to the new Chew Street house to give it some sense of stability. By this time we were getting to be old hands at this.

By the winter of 1989 we had grown from an experiment to four houses. They were full and thriving. We had planted the seeds of what is now a system of 24 houses in the area.

Though we put time and effort into establishing the houses, I, for one, gained much more from the experience. When Frank and I were asked to take over the finances of a broke house in 1988, I wasn't sure where it would lead, or if we could even survive. I went to the Oxford House to find a safe place where I could live until I was capable of living on my own. I found that and so much more. People put their trust in me for the first time in a long time. I had to accept my share of the responsibility of maintaining the house. I had to learn how to balance a checkbook for the first time. People actually gave and trusted me with their money. I had to learn to get along with other people. That everything didn't have to go my way. Sadly, I also learned that not everyone in an Oxford House makes it.

These days there aren't many people living in the houses who know who I am and I don't really mention what we accomplished almost 20 years ago, but when I hear someone in the meetings mention they live in an Oxford House, my ears perk up a little and I thank God I was given the opportunity to maybe, just maybe, do a little good in the world and give back what was given me.

#### **Kathleen G.**

My name is Kathleen G. and I am an addict. I am also in recovery thanks to a twelve-step recovery program, Oxford House and my Higher Power. I have been clean and sober for 13 years. I wasn't an abused child but growing up was hard. I think it's hard for almost everyone. Except for being a rather overly social girl, I never got in much trouble. Like a lot of people I started drinking, partying, and experimenting with drugs and alcohol in my early teens. My father was a professor and my mother a full time university administrator. I was the youngest of four children. I attended a small private school. My parents were probably a little too permissive but they were loving and supportive. In my household alcohol was around every day.

At the end of every day alcohol was used to relax and unwind. I learned very early to use things outside my body to help me cope with my feelings. When I was 15 we lived in London where my father was taking a

sabbatical. This is where I had my first blackout from drinking alcohol. I had been drinking hard liquor for several months and everything just seemed to escalate until I no longer was in control. One night I woke up in a train station I had never been in before. I swore that I'd never let myself get in that position again.

During my college years at UNC Greensboro I used alcohol nightly. I always had to have a drink before any social occasions. Occasionally I was smoking marijuana or snorting cocaine. I became very depressed, but of course never associated it with my drinking. I was never sure how I managed to graduate with a Bachelors Degree in Social Work.

After college I lived in Chapel Hill, NC and going out partying was a normal way of life. I began dating a man who physically abused me for three years. When looking back it is hard to imagine how or why I stayed in that relationship so long. I started using cocaine more and more often to numb the pain and so began a life of insanity. On my 28<sup>th</sup> birthday I got my first DWI. My drug use began to escalate. Snorting cocaine turned into smoking crack. Very shortly after I began smoking crack I started stealing money from my job. Six months later I got caught. I had lost everything. I was being prosecuted by the NC State Attorney General's Office.

My parents had no idea that I was having problems until they got a call from me in a treatment center. I really shocked and scared my whole family. I learned a lot in treatment and was exposed to the 12 steps. I thought I'd go through treatment and get right back to life or what was left of my life, maybe attend an occasional 12-step meeting and be ok. It didn't work out that way.

I relapsed in thirty days. I knew when I went to court if I was to have a chance to not go to prison I needed to stay clean. I had nowhere clean and sober to live. My family really did not want much to do with me. While in outpatient treatment someone mentioned Oxford House. I immediately envisioned an old rundown house with a bunch of people telling you what to do. Out of pure desperation I scheduled an interview with Oxford House – Millbrook in Raleigh, NC. It took me three scheduled interviews to finally show up. When I got there I fell in love with the house and the people there. It was set back in the trees and had a beautiful screened-in porch and stone fireplace. The women seemed nice but the house was having some financial problems. After being there three weeks I went to court. The Judge said that since I was living in an Oxford House, he would give me chance to make restitution. The Judge gave me probation and sent me home.

It took me over a year to get comfortable in my own skin again. Oxford House really saved me. I wasn't big on going to meetings. The women there went to meetings and dragged me along until I felt comfortable. I wasn't comfortable in getting a sponsor. The women in my house invited their sponsors over and I got to begin to see what a blessing it would be to have some guidance. Our house had some financial problems but we worked together and solved them. No one was telling what to do. We challenged each other to do the best we could.

After I lived in the Oxford House for one year, I was given the honor of working for Oxford House. Today, 12 years later, I still work for Oxford House. What a wonderful gift to be able to share my experience with others. Oxford House has changed my life in so many ways. I met my husband through Oxford House. Today I have a beautiful daughter and stepson. We own our home. Through Oxford house we learned to be responsible productive members of society.

I will forever be grateful to Paul M. and other founders of Oxford House. They gave the recovering individual the gift of clean and sober living.

#### **David C.**

Life before recovery and Oxford House was chaotic and insane. I had been working in construction in Chicago for 22 years. Drinking and drugging was an everyday acceptable event to me; the thought of addiction never came into play. That is, of course, until I burned so many fires I couldn't find work, got a divorce, hardly ever saw my children, and even my family and friends wouldn't have anything to do with me. The only thing I was sure of was I wasn't doing anybody any good the way things were, especially my kids. So I left. I didn't know at the time that running away just changes location, not the person. I was heading for New Mexico but ended up in St. Joseph, Missouri. There I found a whole lot more drinking to do – and did it! Eventually I became homeless, hungry and sick and ended up in the hospital. The hospital helped me find a treatment center in St. Joseph. One day in the counselors' office I noticed an Oxford House poster and asked about it. I knew I had to do something so they directed me to Oxford House St. Joseph. I was interviewed and accepted, and returned to finish treatment.

A few days later I returned to the house and everybody was gone except for Ed who had been there a few months. Three more guys moved into the house that day. So there we were. Five guys who didn't have the slightest idea what we were doing; we didn't even know each other. Ed brought us to some AA and NA meetings, then he ran a few house meetings and we started going over the Oxford house material we found. I was elected Treasurer. I remember it took me a week to straighten the books out.

Then this guy from the State of Missouri named Reggie Midget showed up from something called Kansas City Chapter 1 that we found out we were a part of. The St. Joseph house is 50 miles away from Kansas City. Apparently the house had some serious problems and when they found out the Chapter was coming up they all scattered. Ed called it the 'mass exodus.' We had quite a long meeting. I cannot believe how fortunate I was, the first six weeks of sobriety in twenty some years, 500 miles from home with a bunch of people who didn't know each other. The only thing we had in common was recovery; we had had enough and just didn't want to go back. The house eventually filled up but it was about three years before the first of five of us left, all but one of us left successfully. I stayed in the house for five years, became active in the chapter and AA and kept in touch with Reggie a lot. We turned to him for help all the time.

One day Reggie was shot and killed. We went without an Outreach Worker for a long time and then one day Reggie's boss showed up to see how the house was doing so I asked Al when they were going to replace Reggie. He told me to send in a résumé. I thought, yeah, right, like the state would hire me. Al came back about a month later and asked if I sent a résumé in. So I sent one in. Today I find myself working for the State of Missouri, Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Oxford House Outreach and enjoying over eight years of comfortable sobriety.

#### **Greg H.**

After a week in detox and twenty-eight days in rehab, I was clean and sober and ready to go home. However the staff at the rehab did not agree. My insurance had run out and the twenty-eight day program was completed, but the staff told me I was not leaving until I had some structured place to go. The staff was going to let me stay free of charge until a place they deemed safe was available for me. I thought I'd just go to my parents' house. They would let me stay there until I could move in with some friends or find a place of my own. No matter that my father was an alcoholic, I had no decent friends, and no job or money. The staff told me I'd be drunk if I did that, and if I drank again I would dead by the time I was twenty-five.

I was twenty-one years old. I had been drinking a case of beer a day for the last five years. That was on top of daily pot smoking, PCP, Quaaludes, Valium, or whatever else came my way. Jails, car accidents, psychiatrists, Antabuse, none of it stopped my drinking, until now. And until now no one seemed to care as much as the staff at the rehab. When I arrived they thought of sending me back to detox because I would not talk and my roommate complained I was having the DT's at night. Aside from one visit by my mom to bring me a carton of Marlboros, I had no visitors.

That was until a couple of days after my twenty-eighth day when Amos White came to see me. He was probably sixty but looked to be eighty. A true AA old timer. He used a portable oxygen tank to breathe because of emphysema. I had met him at an AA meeting that I had sporadically attended during the past year trying to get sober. Someone had told him I was in rehab, and I could not leave for lack of a place to go. It was a hot summer afternoon when he came to visit and we sat outside. He invited me to stay with him and his wife, Dorothy, until an opening in a halfway house came up. The staff agreed and I was gone the next day to Amos' three-bedroom brick ranch.

Within a week I got a call from the rehab. An Oxford House in DC, just a few miles away, had an opening. I was to call to make an appointment for an interview. Amos drove me downtown to the row house on 19<sup>th</sup> Street. He waited outside as I mounted the steps to the small front stoop. A little spindly old black man with no front teeth and a lit cigarette dangling from his mouth eyed me as I came up the steps. I asked if this was the Oxford House. He grunted and motioned his head for me to go inside. This was Ed Gibbs. A long time house resident, he actually had a lot to say, but unfortunately most of it was no more coherent than his grunting.

The house was an old narrow three-story row house with a full basement. All floors had three bedrooms and a bathroom, except the first floor which had a kitchen at the back and a living room at the front, with a small dining room in between. The house was home to fifteen men. I was greeted by Hugh Johnson, an even older black

man than Ed. But Hugh was cheerful, a true host. I was shown to the living room and introduced to the few guys sitting there watching TV.

We made small talk as the rest of the house members were rounded up for the interview. When everyone had assembled in the living room, I couldn't help but notice that I was one of only a few white guys. I was also the youngest. The short interview was uneventful with questions about how I got sober, how long I was sober, did I have a job, was I willing to get a job and pay rent and do my chores. I do recall some questions about whether or not I went to AA or NA, which was followed by an angry retort from one old guy that going to AA or NA was not necessary. I came to find out that old guy was Ben, another long-time house resident who had moved in straight out of Lorton, the DC Federal Prison. He had managed to stay clean and sober (and angry) since then, without ever attending a single meeting. After the short interview I was asked to sit in the dining room, some ten feet away. I sat at the table, trying not to look into the living room, but hearing everything that was said. A heated debate ensued. One side led by Ben argued I was too young, and not the right type of guy. The other side led by Hugh suggested I should be given a chance. Finally a vote was taken. Hugh came to the dining room and asked me to come forward. He announced I had been accepted. I moved in the next day.

Being the newest member to the house, my room was at the far back on the third floor with the next newest member. My roommate worked nights for the City as a maintenance worker. He slept during the day. This was to become a source of problems as he expected me to be quiet when he was sleeping. He also liked the room boiling hot in the winter. It was the hottest room in the house already being on the top floor. I couldn't stand it when he came home from work, without taking a shower and went to bed in the little room. I opened the window, even in the winter when it was snowing. This would eventually wake him up and we would argue. One argument had us in the hallway yelling at each other. Physical contact was off limits. I knew this, but I enticed him to push me. I then called a house meeting to have him evicted for touching me. It didn't work, and we eventually made up.

I felt right at home with the arguing that went on. I hadn't been there a week when I saw Ben arguing with Ed in the kitchen. Ben, well over six feet and two hundred pounds, and Ed all but five and half feet tall and maybe a hundred and fifty pounds. Both were yelling and cussing at each other about some menial issue with the house. Ben opened a kitchen drawer and pulled out a long carving knife and waved it in the air, as Ed yelled and shook his finger at him. All the while Hugh sat at the kitchen table and smiled at me. Soon the argument died down with muffled "motherfuckers" and Ed walking out and Ben returning the knife to the drawer. Later that evening they were playing spades at the dining room table as if they were the longtime friends they were.

I had been kicked out of everywhere I had lived since leaving home. The reasons were well founded and related to by drunken behavior and my general inability to get along with people. Oxford House helped. I felt comfortable with the anger that was allowed to be displayed toward one another. We were fifteen recovering drunks, prone to antisocial behavior, from varying backgrounds in varying stages of recovery. It was only natural that we would have difficulty getting along at times. We all needed to learn to live with others. The Oxford House taught me how to live with others by allowing me to be myself. When problems did arise we talked about them. Everything was resolved democratically. Everyone was on equal footing and of equal importance in an Oxford House.

One time we had an applicant who was young and HIV positive. At that time in the mid 1980's there was not much public awareness or public education about HIV and AIDS. HIV positive persons were often shunned. Because I was given a chance when I was younger than most, I felt compelled to argue for the guy's admission. We had a vigorous debate and he was admitted.

I lived and breathed recovery that first year in the house. We went to meetings together, played cards at night, ate together, drank coffee and talked. When I first moved in I had no money. The house supplied condiments such as ketchup, mustard, salt, sugar, and coffee. But also the house supplied hotdogs, bread, and peanut butter and jelly. There was one guy who rarely worked, and usually lived off peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, hotdogs, and coffee. I did the same the first month.

A guy named Holland who had been in the house about six months when I moved in worked for a construction company. A guy in the program came to the house each morning to pick Holland up to work doing labor and cleanup for a builder. Knowing I needed a job, Holland got me work with the guy. I kept that job for a year until I was hired by the builder himself.

After a year in the house I went back to college. I had been kicked out of one college and dropped out of another. I enrolled at the University of Maryland. I took the subway to the DC line and then transferred to a bus for the remaining trip each day. I was able to study during these long commutes, and then work my construction job on days off and weekends.

About this time Hugh announced that the local Chapter had decided to open another house. (At that time this was the only Oxford House Chapter, since there were only a dozen Oxford Houses, all in or around DC). Our landlord was going to rent another house a few blocks away. The new house was nicer and in a better neighborhood. Hugh, myself and Mike, a long time resident like Hugh, moved over to the new house. Mike and I were roommates; we had the best room in the house. While the house was nicer, it had a terrible smell in the kitchen when the oven was on. We pulled the oven out from the wall and discovered a large half-baked rat. We also had the usual roaches in the bathrooms and kitchen. It was especially bad late at night when you turned on the kitchen light; it would take a few seconds for all the roaches to clear out as they ran under the appliances and cabinets.

After another year at the new house I moved out on my own with some others in the program. A few years later I went to work for Oxford House when government funding fueled an expansion of Oxford Houses across the country. Later I went to law school. I have been a lawyer for over ten years, and am now married with kids. None of which would have happened if I was still drinking and using. I have not had a drink in over twenty years. By the grace of God, AA, and Oxford House.

### **Paula H.**

My name is Paula H. and I live in Durham, North Carolina. My sobriety date is April 26, 1998. I was born in 1951 in Greensboro, North Carolina. I started 1st grade early at the age of 5 at a small Lutheran School. Even back then I was very compulsive and obsessive in my behavior. I talked all the time and for some reason told everyone my name was Laverne. I had a frightening experience during this time due to an illness which caused me to have two needles in my back. From that time on I was extremely afraid of needles which I now look at as a blessing due to my 30 year addiction to heroin.

I did not grow up in a very dysfunctional family and had the experience of being raised by two very religious parents. However, one was quiet and strong (my father) and the other was very mean and outspoken (my mother). Growing up as the only girl with three brothers and being a Daddy's girl, you would think everything was fine. Early on I had to learn how to lie to go places if it was not church related. I had developed a resentment toward my mother because nothing or no one pleased her. Later, on as I learned how to accept people by working the steps, I was finally able to not focus on her but on how I could not let it keep bothering me. This always was a reason for me to use after having one of my constant bad encounters with my mother.

Also, at this time, the Civil Rights movement was in full swing and I vividly remember having to go to the back of the movie theater and sit in the balcony because I was Black. I was the 2<sup>nd</sup> class to integrate the first white high school in Greensboro, NC. Needless to say, I had no love for white people. When I graduated from high school my goal was to get as far away from my mother, Greensboro and the church as possible.

This led me to Howard University in August 1968, just turning 17 in March. I had family there whom I had visited, and because I wanted to be Black and relevant, and Howard University was the No.1 Black school in the nation, that's where I needed to be. I immediately started participating in every aspect of college life since I was not allowed to drink or smoke growing up. First it started with drinking in the dorms with my roommates and occasionally smoking marijuana. Then I received a visit from some friends from home who lived in New York and they were doing heroin. I tried it because I didn't think they would give me anything bad. One friend was living in DC so I continued to hang with him and it was not until he told me to watch that I could get a habit that I started beginning to realize what was going on but not how it would play out for the rest of my life.

Right after that, drugs hit the campus and before I knew it in 1970, I was a full-blown heroin addict. I cannot smell well today because I snorted so much drugs up my nostrils. I was afraid of needles because of my childhood experience and after seeing a couple of people overdose I was real glad of this fear. However, I was in so much denial I did not consider myself a junkie because I didn't shoot drugs.

My first husband and I started using together and before long, he was selling only to college students which made me think I was better than other addicts on the streets. The excitement of having money all the time and possessing more material things than my parents fascinated me. I was unaware of how it was changing my way of thinking or my morals. School became secondary and being cool became a way of life. I did manage to get a good

job after school and could probably have managed a successful career there but my office ethics were poor. I would be up all night high, come to work late, do the minimum and was not really interested in upward mobility.

Eventually, people started complaining and started suspecting something but could not really put their finger on what was the problem. By 1979, I had been in a relationship for 11 years, gotten married, had a son and had continued to use steadily. I did not use most of my pregnancy because I did not want to have a junkie baby and had watched one of my girlfriends continue to use and have a stillborn child. Ironically, the thought of not using still had not crossed my mind. In fact, the night I delivered my son, who is 26 now, a minister and working on his Ph.D., my request to my friends was to bring me some dope, that I had done my nine months. I initially thought that having my first child would slow me down because I was 29 but the disease is more powerful than your wanting to take care of a child. I was even aware by now that I had a problem: I was still having fun.

As both my husband and my habit increased and his not having a real 9-5 job, naturally money became an issue and my husband was more concerned about his habit than mine. So this began my process of stealing my drugs from him. We started promoting concert with the Jackson Five, Marvin Gaye and the Village People as a result of my husband's connection with big dealers in New York. As a result, we really started living the life of drug dealers. In a few years as our habits increased and we were our best customers, and we were separating, my family had to come to DC to get me and my son. I finally had to tell them about my addiction. I was sent to drug programs that I didn't want to attend and ended up with them getting custody of my son. Even this did not make me look at what was going on.

Once back in NC, I continued seeking those who used and ended up marrying my 2<sup>nd</sup> husband who was a drug dealer. This relationship was very physically and mentally abusive. I started dealing myself, was arrested for the first time in my life, left town and returned to DC to keep from going to jail. I started working but was still caught up with others who used. After 20 years of just using heroin, I started using crack and if I was not crazy before, I certainly was now. I ended up getting locked up after a house was raided and was handcuffed, shackled and brought back to NC because they found out I was a fugitive.

In 1983, I was sentenced to 4 years for conspiracy to sell heroin, but it was reduced to 6 months, day for day. After spending 6 months in jail, I did have a chance to look at who I had become but had not decided that I wanted to stop but rather focused on controlling my use by not using every day. I started to work again for temporary agencies and finally got a good job related to the accounting I had studied in college at NC A&T State University in Greensboro, NC. But by now, I am doing okay so I did not realize that drugs have affected every aspect of my life.

So toward the end of 1994 after burying one of my best friends from college who died from this disease, I found myself in treatment for the first time. This was the first time that I learned that I had a disease and that a 12-step program was the way to recover. I learned a lot there but was not ready to buy into, no drug use of any kind at all or following all the suggestions. Needless to say, I relapsed after four months clean, almost killed my children and myself in a car accident because I was so high but after a few weeks continued using again. In 1996, my job started finding out that I had a problem. Campus police had me on video driving the State vehicle because by now my husband won't let me drive any of our cars because I don't know how to come home.

The University had started a 'no smoking in the building' policy and I was still smoking crack in the bathrooms at lunch with air freshener. So I was told that I could not come back on campus and immediately went back to treatment after consulting with the Employee Assistance Program. I was scheduled to attend an exit interview from my job while in treatment and I was so nervous. But for the first time, I followed a suggestion and was honest that I was an addict. My job let me resign with rehire status, yes, and I know it was only God's grace and mercy that intervened.

From treatment, I went to a halfway house in Chapel Hill for 6 months. But because I didn't spend the time working on building a foundation of recovery by working closely with a sponsor, working steps or learning spiritual principles, I made the decision to go back home to my family which I was advised against. I was counseled that I needed more time to learn how to stay clean and sober by everyone including my mental health counselor. So, after going home, and a job not working out, and husband still using, after 10 months clean I relapsed. The next 6 months were the worse in all my using years. I was calling the NA hotline and everyone in Chapel Hill, Greensboro or wherever I knew in recovery.

So, finally on 4/26/98, I came back to Chapel Hill to re-build a foundation of recovery. I went back to Detox, Stabilization and was in the first women's Oxford House in Chapel Hill. All of us in the house (6) had a month clean and were crazy as hell. So after 6 months, the Chapter came in and put us all back on Newcomers' Contract. From then on, I realized the importance of the guidelines and got involved in the Chapter as the Secretary. Oxford House definitely is a major reason while I am clean today and that's why I continue to work with the houses with Special Projects. It taught me how to be responsible and care for everyone regardless of their race, gender or sexual preference and enhanced my 12-step recovery program. Today, I am a Human Resources Facilitator and Administrative Assistant to the Chair of the Department, but what I enjoy most is my work for Oxford House which is my passion. I know what it can do because I am a living witness.

#### **David J.**

My name is David, and I'm a gratefully recovering addict. I was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. I had a fairly good childhood. Both of my parents worked and did the best they could in raising me. As I entered the adolescent stage, I became a follower and education was no longer a top priority for me. I can recall the importance of proving myself in order to fit in, and this meant getting into fights and doing other mischievous acts. At age thirteen, after years of watching relatives, including my parents, smoke marijuana, I became curious of how it made you feel. So two of friends and I tried smoking burnt leaves in rolling paper to see if we would have the same effect as marijuana. The leaves didn't give us a buzz. Within a year, I was introduced to marijuana by a group of older guys in the neighborhood. The particular drug caused me to hallucinate to the point where I became frightened.

For the next few years, I occasionally smoked marijuana with extreme caution. It wasn't until I was introduced to crack cocaine in 1991 that "weed" had become a played out fad. For the next eight years, unmanageability, degradation, and self destruction became the story of my life. Because of my low self esteem, inability to cope with life's ups and downs, and unwillingness to accept personal responsibility, my only coping skill was smoking crack.

In 1999, after running out of ideas, becoming physical exhausted, and being homeless, I surrendered to the disease of active addiction. I checked into a treatment center called Reality Inc. located in Laurel, Maryland where I spent twenty-eight days. While I was at Reality, I heard about Oxford House. I told my counselor that I wanted to move into an Oxford house upon completion of treatment. Somehow, she convinced me that an Oxford house wouldn't have been my best option at that time. She recommended that I moved into Reality's 9-12 month transitional house. So I moved into the T.R.R. and lived there for fifteen months. At this point, moving into an Oxford house was not part of my post-treatment plan. Moving into my own apartment was. After living in the transitional house, I had no other alternative but to move into another recovery house because of my financial situation. I lived in this particular recovery house for one year.

Once again, my plan to move into my own apartment had failed. Not only was I financially unstable, my life had again become unmanageable. My meeting attendance and step work had greatly diminished. My disease told me that I was OK because I drove a Cadillac, dated a beautiful woman, and maintained a few service positions. I had lost contact with my inner self. In other words, I was in relapse mode. Because I decided that the rent at the sober house was too expensive, I decided to move out. The question was, where was I going to live? Both my sponsor and my significant other, who did and still works at Oxford House World Services (Anna M., who is now my wife), strongly suggested that I move into an Oxford House. Once again, I humbly did what was suggested. In October of 2001, I moved into Oxford House, Olney located in Silver Spring, Maryland where I resided for six months. Step work and meeting attendance immediately became a high priority. During my residence at Olney, I served as the Chapter Secretary for the Montgomery County Chapter and the president of the House. I also served on the Oxford House World Council as an alumnus for three years. Although I moved out of the Oxford House 4 years ago and have completed my term as a World Council member, I will continue to give back to the Oxford House community when and wherever possible.

#### **Antonio R.**

Let me first start off by saying that when my life is over, on my tomb will be my name and date of birth – with a dash between that date and the year of my demise. I am so grateful that I have the opportunity to have this awesome outcome in that dash.

I was born in Raleigh, N.C., the middle child of five. I grew up having parents who were both visibly impaired. I can remember as early as 6 years old seeing Mom sloppy drunk. Also, the house was dirty and there was no food on the table. Dad lived there but I think he really hated her. He only came home late at night or

sometimes two or three days later. As kids, my younger brother and I would play outside with the other kids and go over to their nice clean houses and see their sober and responsible parents. Although I didn't know what being responsible was, at least that looked good. It looked loving and caring and it is what I wanted so, at age six, I didn't want to be a Russell, I wanted to belong somewhere else. I couldn't invite kids to my house; I was too ashamed for them to see Mom passed out, or to see another man in Mom's bedroom. Notice I said my Mom's bedroom; I never knew them to share bedrooms like I think my friends parents did. So, at a very young age, I began to experience unbalanced living and verbal abuse.

When I was 10 years old, Mom continued to drink and at times would display public drinking and drunkenness. This was so embarrassing to me that it crushed my esteem. I felt ashamed; all my friends would laugh at her and I was hurt. I always thought of myself as being sensitive to my own and other people's feelings. What I mean is that, if I was hurt, I would show it real well so when my friends would laugh at my Mom, we would fight, and when their parents came out to see what was going on, my Mom would come also. She was very protective of us. Even if she hurt us, she wouldn't allow anyone else to do it, so if a another kid's parents would come to her to tell her that I got angry and attacked their kid, she would defend me, and oftentimes there were fist fights between the adults right in front of us.

Mom would always be drinking. I remember when I was around 13 years old there would be parties at our house – alcohol of course – and at the end of the party all the adults would leave and leave the alcohol there. My younger brother and I wondered what it would taste like. If we drank a little bit, nobody would know, so we went down, and got us some – just a little cup of 6 O'clock Scotch. It made me feel different. You know, I believe I felt like Mom isn't that bad. I drank some more that night alone. My brother was scared; he went on to bed or he may have been drunk. As I took that drink, I don't know what happened but I know I liked it. I looked forward from that day on for Mom to buy alcohol, get drunk, and pass out so I could feel like that too.

I may have been in the 5th grade before they integrated the schools but the only white teacher at my school noticed that I had not been as involved as I had been before. The problem was really a lot of things. First, I couldn't read. Second, I felt I needed a little something to make me feel better. I didn't want to tell her what was going on but I didn't want to always feel sick when I drank. I wanted help but didn't want any adults to know. Mrs. Holleyfield insisted that I allow her to help me with reading, I am so grateful to her today for that. She had the chance to meet my mom. She knew about my mom's condition, but never knew about me; at least I didn't think she did. Thinking about that now, maybe she did, but being the only white person who was in our community maybe she didn't want to address my mom. I figure what she did was this: she got me connected with outside activities such as Boy Scouts, YMCA, and a lot of positive things that had spiritual connections, so my drinking stopped as I stayed involved in those things. Life at home was still rough, but the outside things allowed me to develop values.

At 13 or 14 I felt I had outgrown those activities and was interested in girls, and the things that come along with that. At times, I was really unbalanced. Mom still drank so that had begun to feel normal. On the other hand, I had the teaching of Mrs. Holleyfield, and Scout Master Mallette to whom I owe a lot, but I wanted to fit in with the hood crowd so I abandoned all the positive help only to return to the pain, fighting, shootings stabbing, the alcohol and the rest. Then, at age 15, I used the weed and alcohol together because the stuff made me not feel, and when I didn't want to feel, it worked. I continued to go to school drunk but I graduated on time and joined the U S Marine Corps – what a place for a alcoholic like me!! **BUT I LOVE THE MARINE CORPS!** We could have drinking and drugging parties and nobody cared. This was before drug tests in the military.

At that time Mom was at home and she had stopped cold turkey but her health was bad. I was a member of the reserve unit and needed a job. I could always make the right connections to get a job because I could do a good job for anyone but the drinking and dope was a problem. I had a chance to meet the then-Governor of the state. I always put myself in a position where I can get connected to get help if I need it. He had his secretary make a phone call to get me a job with the IRS. That was awesome. I worked there three years. I don't know how but I drank that one up too. Then I was able to get a job with the Department of Corrections. I allowed my addiction to make them force me to make a decision – quit or be fired.

After this, I worked at a large hospital. I was there about twelve years, and I drank and got high on and off the job. One day, my new boss, who had moved to North Carolina from Poughkeepsie, N. Y., saw my behavior, my absences from work and my tardiness and told me that I had a problem. I thought she had to be crazy; I was doing this before she got there. But she told me that her husband was a friend of Bill Wilson. I didn't know what the hell she was talking about. Then she told me what she and her husband had gone through, and how help was available.



She said she loved me and wanted to see me helped. I wanted that also but not totally; just until I felt better. She said she would fire me from my \$40,000 a year job if I didn't get help.

The job paid for treatment and gave me awesome tool to use. It even gave me a home plan. Somewhere in the story I got married and had two kids whom I love very much, but the home plan was Oxford House so I followed through and went to the house. It was very nice but I couldn't understand how this many people could live in a house with everyone preaching the same sermon – don't use, go to meetings, pay your fees. It seemed strange and on New Year's night I figured I hadn't had a drink in two whole weeks and maybe one wouldn't hurt. That was a mistake. The guys said: "We told you at the door that if you felt that not using and living here was a problem you should let us know. We love you but you can't stay here." I was hurt again so I went back into treatment. I said to my Oxford House friends later that I just needed to leave Raleigh and go somewhere else and they suggested I try a Greensboro Oxford House. Having had prior experience in an Oxford House – even if it was brief – I knew it was safe haven for anyone who would commit to saying clean and sober and life would get better. I had seen it happen.

I have now committed myself to God and to spiritual principles. Oxford House has afforded me the opportunity to be the natural burning bush that we have read about. Also, Oxford House has allowed me to see the Red Seas in my life and the lives of others open up and we have been able to walk through to better lives. It is the will of God. I am so grateful that Oxford House is in my dash. I have committed the rest of my life to be used by God. Thanks for letting me share. May God's choice blessing be yours.

### **John F.**

I was born in 1959 in Phoenix, Az. I'm 46 years old; I was the only child who lived in the house. When my mom was pregnant with me, my father died in a car accident; he was drunk. Mother remarried when I was 6. The man she married became my father in every sense of the word. I was raised in Florida and we were pretty much a normal family. I played sports, had lots of friends, did ok in school, did not get in much trouble then, drank a beer every once in a while with my parents, smoked a joint even less but not with my parents. When I was about 13 we moved to North Carolina. It was like moving to Mars – everything was different – the schools, people, even the Little League – which they didn't have. I did not fit in too good and I began to isolate and get very angry for being there and I became very unsure of myself. My schoolwork went way down as they were teaching things I had learned two years earlier and I got bored and finally dropped out but went back later to get my GED. That went on for a year or so. The people I was hanging out with were smoking pot and taking pills so I did too and liked it and began to do it all the time and began to take other drugs – anything I could get. When I was sixteen I stuck a needle in my arm and began shooting heroin and then it was on. I loved it.

When I was twenty I realized after being up all night that I was going to die or go to jail. Neither sounded good to me so I went to Augusta, GA., stopped doing drugs, got a job and then got drunk. Jim Beam became my new best friend. I drank daily until I passed out. I could not just have a few. I was able to keep my job and did very well at it getting promotions along the way but, like all alcoholics, things started going down hill. I started drinking before and at work so, after six years, I took 4 weeks vacation, went back to NC and got married and we started using heroin again. I got on the methadone program on and off but that did not work.

I lost everything in the next 9 years: my pride, dignity, self-esteem, wife, and all my belongings. I became homeless and there it was my bottom. I wanted to kill myself but had not the nerve and ended up in Duke Hospital and detox and I became very willing to do what I had to do to stop using. I started taking suggestions and after three weeks I said what do I do now. They said 'treatment' so I went for thirty-four days, then I said, what do I do now? They suggested a halfway house or an Oxford House. I remembered when I was in detox a couple of guys came in one night and showed us a tape and talked to us about Oxford House. I did not remember much about it but Oxford House sounded cooler than a halfway house so I went for an interview in Henderson, NC. There was one bed and two applicants. They knew the other guy since he was friends with some of them so I knew I was not going to get in but they accepted me because I had two more days clean than the other guy, and they said they went by principles before personalities. That was just too cool; I loved it.

I got involved in NA and AA but I had an overwhelming need to give something back and Oxford House is where I fit in. So I went to meetings to help me stay clean and Oxford House gave me the time I needed to do so. I got involved with Oxford House by going to a lot of house and chapter meetings and really liked it. I felt like I was really doing something good. After about a year clean and sober I had a couple weeks vacation and I asked if there was anything I could do to help and was told to go to Greensboro, NC and find a house to open as a Oxford House

so I did. A job opened up about that same time and I was offered the position. Since then, I have been working with Oxford House – opening houses, starting chapters, working with the communities, staying clean and sober and maybe helping 1 or 2 along the way. I've loved just about every minute of it. That was ten years ago last month. I'm tired of typing but that's the gist of it.

**Anna M.**

Hello, my name is Anna and I am beyond doubt a grateful recovering addict. I was born and raised in Washington, DC. I'm the seventh of eight children and lived the majority of my earlier years in a dysfunctional family life style that was similar to most of the inner city kids I grew up with. My father and mother separated when I was 5 years old and for a few years my mother did not allow me to see or speak to my father. There was not a lot of stability and I can remember moving from place to place, being transferred from school to school.

After a while I was able to spend weekends and holidays with my father who was a bookie and ran a boarding house. Needless to say this was not a healthy environment for a kid to grow up in. Although my mother tried her best, she had her demon (alcohol) and her drinking habits and the constant drinkers in the household often clouded her judgment.

I remember the first time I got high. I was sent home from school because I had an embarrassing incident in class. My mother sent me back to school and on the way back a friend and I spotted a joint on the ground. We picked it up and smoked it. I can remember feeling "this is okay" since it made having to face the kids (who were taunting me) an easy cross to bear. I was in the sixth grade.

My addiction progressed to alcohol and snorting cocaine throughout high school and college. I can remember saying to myself that I would never become a crackhead but two years after coming home from college I found myself hitting the pipe. Throughout the years of my crack addiction, I lost friends, family members and even my own self-respect. I tried treatment centers but always for the wrong reasons – to get my job back, get my family off my back or to gain weight. It never really worked; I always came out and continued my old patterns of use and abuse. I never took the advice that was given to me or suggestions. I needed to learn and accept that I had a problem with drugs and alcohol.

In August 1999 I actually hit rock bottom and my older sister wrote my obituary and sent it to me. At this point I had given up all faith that I could stop using. I was a crack addict and I didn't care. One day while wandering the streets of DC my ex-husband spotted me and noticed how much I'd deteriorated and suggested I try treatment again. He told me about a place in Laurel, MD.

I remember walking up the stairs of The Reality Treatment Center and finally realizing I had to change my life because I was killing myself. This time I had the desire to do whatever it took to get my life back. I had in fact surrendered. I stayed there for 28 days and this time it was different, I listened and learned about the disease of addiction and as I learned I became more willing to change.

After treatment I spent six months at the halfway house next door and this is where I was introduced to Oxford House. I never knew there were places for women to live with the same illnesses, working together to stay clean. I knew this was where I belonged. The interviewing process for me was thorough and the women of Oxford House Emack made me feel at home. What I remember most about the interview and took to heart was their honesty and being told that I had to learn to change and keep an open mind. I was accepted at Oxford House Emack in Beltsville, MD. At this time it was the only women's house in PG County MD. The women were an example of what I could accomplish with my life. I felt honored to be in the company of each and every one of my roommates.

While living at Oxford House Emack I held the position of Secretary, Treasure, Chore Coordinator and President. The more involved I became with Oxford House, it made me want to grow and help other women see that if I could do it, so could they. I applied for a job with Oxford House, Inc. and was hired as an Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director. I quickly learned the importance of chapters and how houses help in expanding Oxford Houses Worldwide. With the help of each house in PG County, MD we formed a chapter and I was elected chapter Chair. I am now the Housing Services Manager where I help dozens of Oxford Houses throughout the country become chartered and stay on track. Working at Oxford House, Inc. has led me to take steps I never imagined I could. I help coordinate the World Conventions, I've started five new houses and I've been granted the opportunity to become an advocate for recovery, speaking at workshops and giving presentations on the tremendous gift I received and the good work of Oxford House, Inc. Women who live in Oxford Houses learn to focus on themselves, deal with life after addiction and gain comfortable sobriety. I'm living proof.

I've remarried and my husband is an Oxford House alumnus. I've regained my family and friends and built new friendships; something I never thought would be possible. Oxford House has afforded me the opportunity to become an advocate for recovery, and I work with my church spreading the word how Oxford House has saved my life (and others like me) and helped me to become a productive member of society. Along with the pastor of my church, we've formed an Oxford House Partnership Grant to help women in need with the financial help they need prior to moving into an Oxford House. Oxford House living has been a blessing in my life; I've learned to love myself, focus on my purpose in life and continue on my path of sobriety.

**Joe P.**

On June 17<sup>th</sup> 1989 I was walking out of Hempstead General hospital in somewhat of a daze having just gotten stitches put in my scalp and deciding what I should do. If I turned right I might be able to get another hit, but was it worth the trouble? After all, I had just gotten out of the hospital because I was smacked in the head with a five-gallon plastic piss and shit bucket for not passing the pipe quick enough to another addict. If I turned left I could walk home to my parent's house and ask for help.

I turned left. That night I called the 1-800 Cocaine Hotline number and thirty days later I was leaving an alcohol and drug abuse treatment center in Shawnee Mission, Kansas, 1,200 miles from home. I was headed to meet someone from Washington D.C. who was opening up some kind of a new halfway house in Kansas City, Missouri. It was called Oxford House and after hearing some horror stories about the traditional Kansas City halfway houses, I knew that this was my best bet.

I always hated being told what to do and the rules that I had heard about in this place were somewhat livable. All I had to do was stay clean and sober, pay my rent and participate in the democratic functioning of the house. I truly wanted to stay clean and sober and having just finished my second in-patient treatment in the last six months I knew I could not do it alone, nor could I do it the way I had previously tried.

While I was in treatment I was told, "we don't think you should go back to New York" and having been beaten to a state of willingness by alcohol and drugs I acquiesced to my counselor's suggestion. I became the first person to move into Oxford House in Missouri. It was July 20, 1989 and they had just entered into a lease agreement for a house in midtown Kansas City. I moved in and slept on the floor for the first few days while they tried to get beds delivered.

The counselor who dropped me off on Friday figured he wouldn't see me on Monday when he came back. He did however take me to my first outside AA meeting; it was a men's group called P III. It became my home group. I found a job as a line cook at the Allis Plaza Hotel in downtown Kansas City and within a few weeks we had six or seven people living in the house.

We had people from the Washington D.C. area come to the house who were veterans of the Oxford House system. They showed us how to run the house, how to have house meetings, how to keep the books and how to do interviews for new housemates. I was elected the house president and for the next year I went to work, went to AA meetings on a daily basis, and helped whoever was there working with the Oxford House program establish new houses.

I was truly fortunate because while in treatment I had what is called a spiritual experience. While I knew on an intellectual level that alcohol and drugs only meant trouble for me, I did not know what I could do about the misery and trouble they always seemed to bring about. One afternoon however a light went off and I was able to accept that I was powerless over alcohol and drugs with the knowledge that there was a solution. Once I accepted the fact of my powerlessness I was somehow filled with some peace and serenity knowing that the solution was to be found in the programs of AA and NA.

My spiritual experience also lifted the obsession to drink and drug. I no longer thought constantly about where I was going to get my next drink or next hit. Living with other people who were clean and sober and trying to do the right thing was great because you always had someone to talk to or go to a meeting with. I could always find a ride or even walk if the weather was decent.

I'd been working with the people from DC who were opening up houses in the KC area and I knew that I wanted to do the same. That is, help other people in early recovery have a chance to live in an Oxford House. After being clean for a year I applied for a position with the state of Missouri to help open up Oxford Houses throughout the state. I was hired and became the first housing specialist in Missouri.

My mentor from DC became the coordinator of the program and we began to open up houses throughout the state. It was a little odd because here I was a New Yorker and I became more familiar with the state of Missouri than most Missourians. I traveled from Cape Girardeau in the southeast corner of the state to St. Joseph in the Northwest corner of the state.

I lived in the first Oxford House in the state of Missouri for over eighteen months. Gradually my life got better. I purchased a new car, a 1989 Hyundai Exel, so I could do all of the traveling my new job required. I no longer had to take the bus to work and I even had a phone installed in the car. It was about the size of a small shoebox but at that time I certainly thought I was pretty uptown.

Living in Oxford House helped me learn to be responsible. I had to pay my rent on time, I had to do my chores and attend house meetings. It was OK though because for the first time in my life I was doing what I needed to take care of myself. Living with nine other alcoholics and addicts in a six bedroom house can be both a blessing and a curse. It is a curse when people are not responsible for themselves and go back to their old behaviors. It was a blessing because more often than not the people I lived with were working a program of recovery and if I needed someone to talk to there was always someone there.

Oxford House taught me that I can be assertive and stand up for what I believe is right. I went back to college and eventually graduated Magna Cum Laude from Columbia College. While working for the Missouri Oxford House program I became involved with a number of lawsuits that we were having with neighborhood associations and cities throughout the state.

I was able to work closely with the wonderful attorneys the state and Oxford House had defending their rights to locate houses in good neighborhoods. It was at that time that I asked one of the attorneys whether I should take the law school admissions test and he offered me two choices; he offered to either talk me into or out of going to law school. I graduated law school in December 1998 and have been practicing law since that time.

In September 1990 I met my future wife, she also was in recovery and was working as a counselor for a treatment program. We married in 1991 and today have four children that we have adopted from China. After moving out of Oxford House I maintained my sobriety by attending twelve-step meetings, opening up Oxford Houses throughout the state and working with other alcoholics.

Unfortunately for me though the gifts of sobriety took me away from the program and after fifteen years of sobriety I went back out. After years of sobriety my disease came knocking on my door and I answered. The misery and the pain of alcoholism and drug addiction once again appeared in my life as a result of putting the program of AA on the back burner.

I had become an AA expert and no longer needed to go to meetings. It has been a struggle to regain what I once took for granted; however, I have been fortunate and am regaining what I once took for granted one day at a time. I ended up in treatment once again, and when I first got there all I wanted to know was when was my out date. After being there for about two days though, there was a lecture about turning problems into opportunities.

I had forgotten what I had once known about recovery because I had stayed away from the program for so long. I finally saw that here was an opportunity to get back on track, work the steps and ask for help. I go to meetings once again on a daily basis; I call my sponsor and am once again enjoying things that I took for granted.

As they say in the program, the disease of alcoholism and drug addiction is a subtle foe; it is cunning, baffling and powerful, and I am not. I need a program of recovery to help me stay sober. I thank God on a daily basis for my recovery and I still thank the Oxford House program for helping me to learn that I can stay sober with the help and support of other recovering individuals.

#### **Andrea's Story**

Sometime in March 1989, I was ninety days clean and sober and homeless. I had heard about Oxford House because my boyfriend, Jeff G., had moved into one after he had left me the year before because I continued to use drugs and alcohol. Now clean, Jeff was living in a nice big beautiful house across from Rock Creek Park and he always bragged how great it was and how it was helping his recovery. I was living with my manicurist in a room in a very slippery neighborhood in Northeast Washington, D.C. I continued to tell Jeff and my network "No way am I going to live with a bunch of addicts, especially women."

At an NA meeting that we all attended on Monday nights, a young lady announced there was an opening at a women's Oxford House in Georgetown up Wisconsin Avenue. My network raised my hand to get the woman's attention to meet her after the meeting to get more information. I moved into the River Road Oxford House [RROH] a few days later. My whole life changed after that day. The RROH was one of five women's Oxford Houses in the WDC area. It was a small house that held 5 women and later on we opened the basement to hold nine more. We were a close-knit house and loved recovery, especially each other. We felt so blessed to live in a nice neighborhood near great 12-step meetings. We extended our blessings and OH experience to other women.

I became personally involved with the OH Board of Directors and helped start other women OHs. Watching and following Paul M. and others who gave their time and dedication unconditionally helped me grow in all areas of my recovery. I was off to learning and experiencing life beyond my imagination. I worked in other states and the US Virgin Islands spreading the wonderful principles of OH. RR OH soon became Argyle Terrace and the core women remaining continued to grow spiritually and mentally in our recovery. We were asked to tell our story on the CBS 60 Minutes program. What an exciting opportunity to tell my OH story on national TV. After staying in OH for three years and holding every position in the house, it was time for me to leave to let another addict/alcoholic receive the OH rewards. It was hard to leave the house but I was prepared and stood on solid ground.

I received my Master of Human Services in the year 2000 and became employed as a Program Manager – a promotion from my position as a Substance Abuse Therapist. The Argyle Women still get together and support each other in our new endeavors. We are still clean and most of all grateful to Oxford House for our new way of life. I recently bought a nice house in a good neighborhood. Thanks to Oxford House I can live in a house and neighborhood even a good as I did when I was at Argyle Terrace.

#### **Angela J.**

My name is Angela J. and this is my Oxford House story. I am originally from Chicago, Illinois and I started using drugs at the age of 16 years old. I was a person who felt that I just did not fit in, a single parent of two who relocated to Maryland for employment at a large transportation company. My using of drugs came to Maryland with me. By the time I reached the age of 32 years old I was introduced to crack cocaine. My life was on a sprawl downwards. I went to eight different rehabs in and out patient. After treatment I always returned to the same environment because I thought I needed to be home with my kids and I couldn't afford to move. It was so difficult to try to stay clean with drug dealers that I knew hanging on the corners and people that I once got high with knocking on my door. Needless to say I didn't stay clean. I even tried staying with my family members who never understood the disease of addiction. They wanted to talk about the harm I had done; they would truly beat me up with my past. The idea of me talking about a drug dream was not comprehensible to them nor was the understanding that for the first 90 days it was truly necessary for someone like me to attend an AA or NA meeting. The pressure was the excuse I needed to get high again. I soon landed myself in jail, then I finally made a decision to try a rehab again and follow every suggestion given to me by my counselors.

I went to NIH for 28 days and the nurse suggested that I consider going to stay in an Oxford House. I called for an interview. The interview was in College Park, Maryland. There were six ladies that gave me a warm welcome when I got there and they played a video about Oxford Houses. They allowed me to share about my experience and they shared about themselves. I truly felt that this was where I needed to be and wanted to be. They went over the guidelines and by-laws of the house. I was given a contract to sign which I felt gave me some balance and boundaries that was greatly needed at that time. A curfew would not allow me to be out at night when my disease was active the most when I was using. Four meetings per week with a signed slip was a requirement and that got me in the habit of attending meetings, I also had to have a job in two weeks or volunteer; there would be no lying around the house. Most important was to pay my rent on time. I stayed at the Oxford House in College Park for 45 days then I was asked to leave for disruptive behavior. I couldn't understand that but my sponsor who was an alumna of Oxford House was able to help me understand the role I played in getting myself put out. Now I was homeless for thirty days and had nowhere to go. An outreach worker whose name was Anna was starting a new house and I was given an opportunity to stay there

The Cardinal Oxford House opened in October 2006. The outreach worker came for three months to train the members in the house on the officers' positions and how to deal with differences. I found that an Oxford House gives me a place where I can live with people that understand the disease of addiction. Never am I able to isolate like when I lived in my own apartment. It gives me a safety net because I know if I use drugs or drink I will be asked to leave. Family members weren't able to recognize behaviors when I was headed towards relapse or even if I

used drugs. An addict can tell when another addict is high. Cardinal Oxford House has allowed me to grow and develop to be a better person. The skills that I have developed have prepared me to be more productive in life. The Oxford House is self run. As President you learn to show leadership and how to listen to others. The Secretary position has given me the opportunity to learn the importance of recording details in a business meeting. The Treasurer position showed me how to balance financial reports, how to read a bank statement to be sure all bills are being paid on time, and the importance of doing an audit. As Comptroller I have learned to keep records of all incoming finances and to be sure that rent is paid on the time schedule agreed with house members. The chore coordinator job is to make sure that the house has the supplies needed and that everyone is doing their part to keep the house clean. Also she must report any repairs that might need to be reported to be fixed.

I presently have been able to stay clean for two years and can truly say it would not have been possible without living in the Oxford House. I have a healthy relationship with my kids and my family today. The rent is very affordable and I am to pay off some of the debts I accumulated while I was using drugs. I have been through some hardships but there are people that I have developed a relationship with who have helped me through them. I have been able to attend workshops about Oxford House and the convention that Oxford House residents throughout the United States attend. I have had an opportunity to be in the survey given by DePaul University on Oxford House. I am also a member of the World Council Committee whose major responsibility is to suggest any necessary changes to improve the Oxford House Operating System. Today I am eternally grateful and I will always be an advocate for Oxford Houses.

### **Mark S.**

*I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me* Philippians 4:13

I was born in 1960 and was raised in St. Martins Catholic Church and am still a member today. Through the years, my parents made huge sacrifices so that I could attend Catholic school from first grade up to my college graduation. They wanted me to get a good education.

While in grade school, I excelled in academics and athletics. I also participated in groups such as the Chess Club, Glee club, the Basketball team, and I was an alter boy. By being an active member in these clubs, it helped me to become socially active with my peers and the adults that surrounded me and helped me along the way. With the help and support of my family, teachers and friends, I continued to achieve good grades and graduated 12<sup>th</sup> of my class at Mackin Catholic High School.

When the opportunity came for me to decide which college I wanted to attend, I decided to attend Wheeling Jesuit College in Wheeling, West Virginia. Upon entering college, I had a clean record. I didn't follow what everyone else was doing such as having sexual intercourse, drinking alcohol or using drugs. However, during my freshman year, I was introduced to all the negativity that surrounded me. I started doing all the things everyone else was doing instead of keeping the clean record that I entered with. Although I graduated with a Bachelor Of Arts Degree in Banking and Finance, I also graduated with a full fledged addiction to cocaine and alcohol.

When I returned home from college, my family and friends were excited to see me. They were very proud of me for being the 13<sup>th</sup> African-American student to graduate from Wheeling Jesuit College. As days turned into weeks, it was time for me to venture out and start my career. However I became lazy searching for a job and ended up working at a grocery store.

As the days went by, I started to see more and more of my high school friends who were selling drugs. I saw what they were doing so I began to sell drugs myself in order to support my habit. I found myself drinking Remy Martin, Pink Champel and snorting cocaine. A couple of years went by and my condition only got worse. I felt bad about all the drugs and drinking that I was doing so I decided to do something to make my situation better; I joined the Army Reserves.

A change was needed in my life, and I was willing to make that change by joining the military. I thought the military's strict, structured and disciplined environment would help me with my addiction but unfortunately it did not. I was sent to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for eight months for basic training. When the time came for me to graduate from basic training and return home, I found myself back in the same situation prior to entering the military.

When I came home this time, it was different. I was introduced to smoking crack, and after a year went by with this addiction, I lost everything I had; my home, my lady, and my mind. I abandoned everything I had in my life. I had no insurance, no credit cards. I was behind three car payments, my license was dead. I was \$30,000 in debt, and I had been out five days straight, trying to find money to support my habit. Then on December 10, 1988, as I sat in my car in an alley, I cried out to God for help. On the next day, I received help, which started me on the road to recovery.

I went to in-patient treatment for two weeks, and within those two weeks I was educated on what I was doing to myself; mentally as well as emotionally. My drug addiction was a behavioral disease, and in order to be cured from this disease the first thing I had to do was change the people I was around, the places I was going and the things I was doing. I was told I had to find a new place to live, and I could not return to the place where I was staying. I moved back in with my mother, and since I wasn't being productive there it was suggested to me that I move into a recovery house.

There were two types of recovery houses; one was a Halfway house, in which you had to have a job, pay to live there, and someone was monitoring the house. The second type of home was an Oxford house, where the members of the house monitored the house, everyone in the house was in a 12-step program, and the members of the house chose who was elected in and out of the house. Due to the differences in the two homes; I decided that Oxford house was the best for me.

In December of 1988, I went to an interview to get into an Oxford house. I put my best suit on, grabbed my briefcase and was ready for the interview. During the interview, I never spoke about recovering from my drug addiction; instead, I talked about how they could improve their house. I suggested how they could fix the drapes and what kind of furniture they needed to put inside the house. Therefore they decided not to accept me in the house.

From that point on, my attitude was completely different because I knew I had no place to go. I went to another interview for the house and during this interview I talked about my recovery and how I could stay off drugs and alcohol and how the house could help me in my recovery. This time the members of the house accepted me in. During my acceptance, they mentioned I would have a roommate. I questioned which one of the members would be my roommate and a man named Billy raised his hand. Billy was tall, thin, and he was gay. At the time, I did not like gay men, but I realized Billy had 6 months of clean time and I had 10 days so it was principles over personalities. Billy and other members of the house taught me the process of how to stay clean off of drugs and alcohol. I started to excel as a person in the house. I began going to my 12-Step program meetings, arriving to work on time and eventually ended up with 60 days of being clean from drugs and alcohol. The members of the house then voted me to be the Coordinator of the house, which gave me some responsibility and self worth. I was so excited about being clean and being in charge of the house that my sponsor asked me to open up another house in D.C. with him.

During the opening of this house, my sponsor allowed me to play a key role in assisting him in teaching the people the concept of the Oxford house. We did a great job in starting the house. This experience strengthened my confidence and therefore I decided that I wanted to change jobs. Instead of working at a grocery store, I wanted to utilize my degree so I interviewed for jobs at the local banks. The interviews went great, but they also did credit checks, and at the time my credit wasn't good; so they said "Well, if you can't take care of your own money, how can we expect you to take care of ours?"

During my job-hunting process, God intervened in my life once again and a door was opened for me. Oxford House received federal legislation to open up houses all over the country. After this announcement they asked me to become a spokesperson for the company, which consisted of traveling all over the country opening up houses everywhere, since my sponsor and I did such a great job in D.C. I was then asked to tell my Oxford House story on the "60 Minutes" television broadcast, which was an honor for me to share my story with the world. I continued working for Oxford house for approximately four years and I am eternally grateful to Paul M. and The Oxford House family for giving me an opportunity to show my skills around the country.

Today, I am happily married with a son and I own several businesses ranging from Mental Health homes to Hair Salons. Just think, it all came from saying no to drugs and alcohol and yes to Jesus in a new way of life through Oxford House.

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*The authors of the preceding stories hope that in some small way the stories will help communities at large to understand the value of encouraging the development of Oxford Houses in their communities. We know that alcoholics and drug addicts serious about recovery will use the opportunity Oxford House provides to become clean and sober and stay that way. With the availability of Oxford House, relapse does not have to be part of recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction.*

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Wichita 2006

*Oxford House Comes of Age*

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# Oxford House Resident Profile<sup>1</sup>

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Number of Women's Houses:	255	No. of Women Residents:	2,091
Number of Houses For Men:	867	No. of Men Residents:	7,060
Global Network of Houses:	1,122	Total Number of Residents:	9,151
Number of States with Houses:	41	Cities with Houses:	278
Average Cost Per Person Per Week:	\$89.75	Rent Per Group Per Month:	\$1,350
Residents Working 6/15/02:	91%	Average Monthly Earnings:	\$1,402
Percent Addicted to Alcohol only:	29%	Percent Addicted To Drugs or Drugs and Alcohol:	71%
Race --		Marital Status --	
White;	59%	Never Married	45%
Black;	29%	Separated	18%
Hispanic	4%	Divorced	32%
Other <sup>2</sup>	8%	Married	4%
		Widowed	.1%
Prior Homelessness:	54%	Average Time Homeless:	6 Mos.
Prior Jail:	76%	Average Jail Time:	13 Mo
Average AA or NA Meetings Per Week Per Resident:	5.1	Percent Going To Counseling <u>and</u> AA or NA:	41%
Average Length of Sobriety of House Residents:	13.5 Mos.	Residents Expelled Because of Relapse:	19.1%
Average Length of Stay In An Oxford House:	13.1 Mos.	Average No. of Applicants For Each Vacant Bed:	3.3

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<sup>1</sup> As of June 30, 2005 or March 1, 2006 based on standard OHI survey and house reports.

<sup>2</sup> Other includes Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander and Hawaiian.

*Notes:*

*See You Next Year in  
Washington*

# Oxford House™

1975-2006

*31 Years of Organized Self-Help To Enable Alcoholics and Drug Addicts to Recover Without Relapse*

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- Providing Technical Assistance to Keep Existing Oxford Houses on Track
- Providing Organization of Chapters to Help Houses Help Themselves
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