

RISING!

IN THIS ISSUE

News from Faces & Voices 2

Questions for Carrie Blake 4

The Key Message:
Recovery is Powerful 5

Training for Potent
Press Outreach 6

Welcome Founding Members. . . . 8

Language and the Recovery Advocate: Why We Worry About Words

by Bill White

‘Words are important. If you want to care for something, you call it a flower; if you want to kill something, you call it a weed.’

— Don Coyhis, White Bison

Some question why we recovery advocates should invest valuable time debating the words that convey alcohol and drug (AOD) problems and solutions when there are suffering individuals and families to be engaged, recovery support resources to be created, communities that need to be educated and discriminatory policies to be changed.

We must invest this time because achieving our broader goals depends on our ability to forge a recovery-oriented vocabulary.

Words have immense power to wound or heal. The wrong words shame people with AOD problems and drive them into the shadows. The wrong words, by conveying that people are not worthy and capable of recovery, fuel self-destruction and prevent or postpone help-seeking. The right words catalyze personal transformation and offer invitations to citizenship and community service. The right words awaken processes of personal healing, family renewal and community and cultural revitalization. The wrong words stigmatize and disempower.

Words determine the social institutions that lay claim to AOD problems and whether people with such problems will find themselves in systems of compassion and care or systems of control and punishment. How we as a culture conceptualize AOD problems dictates whether the people with those problems will be tended to by a physician, a counselor, a preacher, a community activist or a jailer. The labels *drunkard*, *dipsomaniac*, *wino*, *dope fiend*, *crack whore*, *speed freak*, and *substance abuser*, to name a few, elicit fear and disdain, whereas mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, friends, neighbors, coworkers and employees with AOD problems can lay claim to our compassion and the resources of our communities.

● continued on page 3

Save the Date!

September 15, 2007

**Rally for
Recovery!**

Stay tuned to
www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org
for more information



NEWS FROM FACES & VOICES

Rising! Recovery in Action is a quarterly publication of Faces & Voices of Recovery. "Letters to the Editor" and your thoughts and ideas can be sent to info@facesandvoicesofrecovery.org. We welcome your feedback!

We are grateful to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and people in the recovery community for their support of this resource for people in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, their family members, friends and allies who are mobilizing to make recovery a reality for millions more Americans.

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To Recovery Advocates Everywhere:

In the last several months, we have taken significant action to further the growth and reach of Faces & Voices of Recovery. We have offered an opportunity to individuals, organizations and corporations to become founding members; set a strategic plan to guide us through 2010, and launched well-received media and messaging trainings to focus on "the life-saving/life enhancing promise of recovery." Our stories, particularly those of long-term recovery, give hope and life to the promise.

I want to welcome all of our new founding members and encourage those who have not yet joined to do so. We have been fortunate to receive funding from private foundations and government agencies over the last few years. But our future sustainability and growth and our ability to advocate will ultimately come from our members — both as a source of funds and as a constantly growing, organized and active group of faces and voices for recovery. Our recovery movement is national in scope but lives and grows through individuals, local and state recovery communities and a broad spectrum of allied organizations.

Our goals and strategic plan incorporate many elements of our Right to Addiction Recovery platform. Our regional representatives will be working with you to develop events and activities for our mutual benefit and recovery advocacy, including next year's September 15, 2007 Rally for Recovery!

We are pleased to release an updated version of Advocacy with Anonymity. Faces & Voices board member William Cope Meyers writes and talks about anonymity, asking, "Why is addiction the only disease without a ribbon of hope to wear out in public? Why do so many people with addiction receive censure and punishment, which do nothing to solve the problem, rather than understanding and treatment, which do?" In his new book, Broken, William tells his own story of addiction and redemption.

As our recovery advocacy movement grows, Faces & Voices will hold additional trainings, develop speaking opportunities and advocate for improved rights for those seeking or in long-term recovery. Visit our website, www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org to: see Faces & Voices new messaging guide, "Talking About Recovery," link to William's reflections, get a copy of Advocacy With Anonymity, learn more about our goals and strategic plan and find out about coming events. Above all, visit our site to join Faces & Voices.

On TV, the following would be called a pledge break; well, I want to encourage you to become a founding member and a face and voice for recovery. You will receive issues of RISING! and our bimonthly electronic newsletter. There are more benefits, depending on your membership level. Membership can cost less than one Starbucks latte per month. Go to www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org and follow the simple directions. The best time to join is now. Thank you. Now on to the rest of RISING! ●

Merlyn Karst, enjoying long-term recovery, is chair of the Faces & Voices board of directors. He is a founding member of Advocates for Recovery-Colorado and active with the Betty Ford Center Children's Program-Colorado.

It is time people in recovery rejected imposed language and laid claim to words that adequately convey the nature of our experience, strength and hope.

We must forge a new vocabulary that humanizes AOD problems and widens the doorways of entry into recovery. Let's forever banish language that, by objectifying and demonizing addiction, sets the stage for sequestration and punishment. We must counter the clinical language that reduces human beings to diagnostic labels that ignore our strengths and resiliencies. We must also reject the demeaning epithets (e.g., "retreads", "frequent flyers") professionals sometimes use to castigate those who need repeated treatment.

'We need a new language that is hope-infused, recovery-focused and family-centered; one that reflects and conveys diverse pathways and styles of recovery.'

Historically, people with severe AOD problems have had wars declared against them. They've been subjected to invasive and unconscionable practices such as laws calling for their mandatory sterilization. Why? Because this culture defined them as less than human and depicted them as hopeless through words and phrases like "once an addict, always an addict." We need a new language that is hope-infused, recovery-focused and family-centered; one that reflects and conveys diverse pathways and styles of recovery.

The words and metaphors that permeate the Native American-focused recovery group White Bison differ from those of the Recovery Alliance of El Paso or PRO-ACT's Woman's Recovery Center in Pennsylvania. We can expand our menu of catalytic words and metaphors while at the same time formulating a common vocabulary that will best enhance a national message that clearly and passionately conveys the living reality of long-term recovery from addiction.

Participate in these discussions and debates about language! It is time we embraced a new language that helps us talk about how we heal ourselves, our families and our communities. It is time we abandon a rhetoric that declares war on our own people. ●

Bill White's latest book is Let's Go Make Some History: Chronicles of the New Addiction Recovery Advocacy Movement. His articles can be found at http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/resources/publications_white.php.



Bill White

QUESTIONS FOR CARRIE BLAKE

Carrie Blake, a nurse and the coordinator of Rhode Island Communities for Addiction Recovery Efforts (RICAREs) in Providence, recently attended a Faces & Voices of Recovery media training in Louisville.



Carrie Blake of Rhode Island CAREs

'Back at home, two of us were going to an interview to tell our stories. We got together and did a little mock interview like at the training. It really helped.'

Q. Can you tell me a little about your grassroots alliance and what you do?

A. Our main focus is on legislative advocacy. Since fear is still a barrier, trying to get policies and laws changed is like nailing jelly to a tree, unfortunately.

Q. RICAREs has a great track record in getting media coverage of your advocacy work. Has it been hard to interest reporters in the work that you're doing?

A. It's hard. It's not a popular subject. But we've been fortunate. Anything at all going on in the recovery community that we can grab onto, we try to use to get media attention. We're putting out the message that recovery is real, that we are staying off of drugs and alcohol.

Q. What advice would you give recovery advocates who are being interviewed?

A. The absolute most important piece of advice is to prepare. I walked into an interview without preparing *once*, and I will *never* do that again. I stammered, and I didn't have my answers prepared. I was embarrassed. Now I write something down even if I'm not going to read what I write. If print reporters are coming to an event, not to do an interview, I'll prepare a press package.

Q. You were able to put the Faces & Voices message and media training to work. Can you tell us a little about your experiences?

A. We would like to reproduce the training here. We practiced how best to say things so that the message is very clear and comes through very true. Back at home, two of us were going to an interview to tell our stories. We got together and did a little mock interview like at the training. It really helped.

Q. How did you use your training when you were interviewed by the media?

A. I had a couple of spots for National Recovery Month in September so I used the messages right out of that training. I've changed some of what I say and I've added other things, even when I go out to advocate. Not talking about the disease concept is a very big change. I've dropped that. It's frustrating because I know this is a disease. But if the public is not hearing that, then I'm shooting myself in the foot by saying it. If there's a better way for them to hear the message, then that's what I want them to do. I want them to hear me. ●

Helping People to Hear the Message of Recovery

by Pat Taylor

People sometimes ask, “Given the research and public discourse that shows that addiction is a disease, why isn’t Faces & Voices talking about it as a disease in its messaging?” We have decided to side-step this discussion for now. Our three years of research shows that Americans first need to hear from the recovery community about the reality of long-term recovery.

Because of personal experiences, beliefs and/or prejudices, it’s still difficult for many Americans to accept that addiction is a disease or a health problem. While many in the public may say they believe this, when you scratch just beneath the surface, they consider addiction first and foremost a moral issue. That’s why our messaging is about the reality of long-term recovery for now.

The public, including policymakers, holds these beliefs even though many notable organizations such as the World Health Organization and the American Medical Association declared alcoholism a serious medical problem more than 50 years ago. Furthermore, scientific advances have offered remarkable insights into how the brain molds behaviors that affect addiction.

Nora D. Volkow, director of the federal government’s National Institute on Drug Abuse, puts it plainly: “Drug addiction is a brain disease. Although initial drug use might be voluntary, once addiction develops, this control is markedly disrupted.”

When the public experiences the power and reality of recovery through our outreach, support for providing the help people need when they need it will grow. As a result, we will be able to remove the discriminatory barriers that keep people from getting on with their lives once they are no longer using alcohol or other drugs. Gradually, people will come to fully understand that this is a health issue. ●

Pat Taylor is the executive director of Faces & Voices.



Media trainers and Faces & Voices’ board members Carol McDaid (left), Joe Powell, and Anara Guard lead the Louisville, KY training.

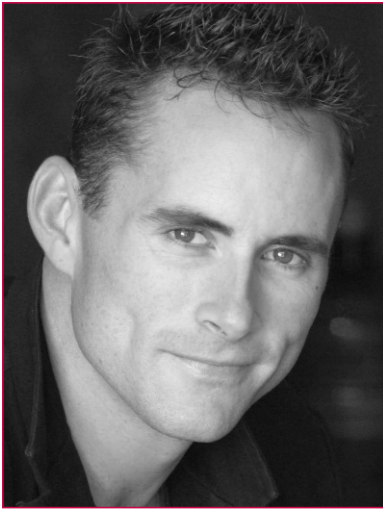
‘When the public experiences the power and reality of recovery through our outreach, support for providing the help people need when they need it will grow.’

A LPHABET SOUP

B-roll

B-roll

Extra footage, or back-up video, considered secondary footage (as opposed to the primary video of a story). News producers sometimes use this extra footage as a sort of visual “filler” to illustrate a concept or story and to give a news piece some dimension. For instance, to illustrate a story about employment discrimination, a news team may include several seconds of B-roll of video shot in an unemployment office or courthouse. Businesses and organizations occasionally provide free B-roll to a news team to help publicize their product or work. To encourage television news departments to cover recovery issues, think of ways to help them get B-roll that will help them to illustrate future stories on your issues.



Greg Maloney, a member of Denver-based Advocates for Recovery.

Training Builds Potent Press Outreach Skills

by Greg Maloney

Faces & Voices has always considered media outreach a core ingredient of recovery advocacy. In 2006, we've stepped up our commitment to this work by building on a 2-year process to identify successful ways of talking about the recovery experience. We've sponsored media trainings in Louisville, Los Angeles and Dallas. Greg Maloney, a member of the Denver-based group Advocates for Recovery (AFR), recounts his experience.

In August 2006, Advocates for Recovery and Faces & Voices of Recovery graciously sponsored me for a media training held in Los Angeles. I was able to learn valuable lessons. The sessions covered:

- appropriately communicating with the media (print, on-camera, etc.)
- message strategy and development and
- staying on message.

'I was able to deliver my own message that is true and valid for me, and people listened because I was positive and enthusiastic about the subject.'

The training not only taught me how Faces & Voices, as a national organization representing our community, puts forward a positive message of recovery, but how to deliver *my own* message built on Faces & Voices's guiding principles. I learned how to respond to harmful questions like "have you ever been arrested?" or "what was your drug of choice?" The trainers taught me not to elaborate on my past life and how I lived as a drug addict, but to focus on how I live now as a person in long-term recovery and the benefits of long-term recovery *in my life*. The meaning of "long-term" is how you define it for yourself. Your personal story is not debatable.

People were available to film mock interviews. I was one of the lucky chosen two that got to do an on-camera interview. That was a very neat experience! I was able to see myself and my ticks on camera. Body language is a powerful communicator beyond speech. I was able to see what my body did when the interviewer asked me a tough question, and when I got an easy question. Every expression you have shows on camera. When you add nerves to an interview, it is far more difficult to be conscious of your body language and concentrate on staying on message. I was trying not to sound stupid while staying on message and maintaining composure. I was able to do it thanks to the training! We discussed our need to have a concise, unified message as recovery advocates. Now we have that message to adopt, one that has been tested and found to be a powerful way of talking to the public. I have wanted this for some time. The training pointed out that even some of the things we're accustomed to saying as a community aren't necessarily the most effective. For instance, Faces & Voices found that because of their personal experiences and/or prejudices, it's difficult for many Americans to truly believe that addiction is a disease or a health problem, so we needed other ways of talking about addiction.

I was able to deliver my own message that is true and valid for me, and people listened because I was positive and enthusiastic about the subject.

continued on page 7

I took great pictures and made fantastic friends of recovery from all over the country at this training. I thank Faces & Voices and Colorado's Advocates for Recovery (AFR) for their financial and moral support and allowing me this wonderful opportunity to represent the recovery community. If you have the opportunity to go to a media training hosted by Faces & Voices, I would highly recommend it!

Even if you can't go, if you want to improve your confidence in talking about recovery, visit http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/campaigns/2006-05-10_messaging_memo.php to download helpful handouts. •



Debbie Dettor of Maine Alliance for Addiction Recovery.



Interview at Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR)'s Recovery Walk!

Five Keys to Talking About Recovery

1. *Make it personal, so that we have credibility*
2. *Keep it simple and in the present tense, so that it's real and understandable*
3. *Help people understand that recovery means that you or the person that you care about is no longer using alcohol or other drugs. We do this by moving away from saying "in recovery" to saying "in long-term recovery," talking about stability and mentioning the length of time that the person is in recovery*
4. *Talk about your recovery—not your addiction*
5. *Help people understand that there's more to recovery than not using alcohol or other drugs, and that part of recovery is creating a better life*

The Tip Sheet for Media Interviews

As part of its commitment to increasing media advocacy by the recovery community, Faces & Voices has just published The Tip Sheet for Media Interviews. This tool can guide you in your pre-interview preparation, what to do during the interview and how to follow up.

Faces & Voices prepared the guide in consultation with GMMB, a national public relations firm that focuses on political and issue-oriented communications. The 9-page sheet includes easy-to-spot, easy-to-read bullet points that can be used as a checklist for any encounter with members of the press. These items touch on everything from “maintain eye contact with the interviewer” to “not for attribution.”

To download the tip sheet, visit http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/resources/2006_media_trainings_home.php ●

Join! Membership Supports Faces & Voices

Faces & Voices of Recovery relies upon the tax-deductible charitable donations of others to effectively advocate for and with the recovery community. We would like to thank all of the following organizations for becoming founding organizational members.

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| A New PATH | Heartland CARES, Inc. |
| Advocates for Recovery | Maine Alliance for Addiction Recovery (MAAR) |
| Art of Recovery Expo | Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery (MOAR) |
| Association of Persons Affected by Addiction (APAA) | The McShin Foundation |
| Chautauqua Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Council | People Advocating Recovery |
| Common Strength | Project VOX-Greater Flint |
| Community Addiction Recovery Association | The RASE Project |
| Center for Dependency, Addiction and Rehabilitation (CeDAR) | RECOVER Project/WMTC |
| Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR) | Recovery Consultants of Atlanta |
| Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse of Sullivan County | The Shoulder |
| Friends of Recovery Association | Sober Living Network, Inc. |
| Friends of Recovery New Hampshire (FOR NH) | Yale Behavioral Health |



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