

## Building a Recovery Movement

People in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, their families, friends and allies are on the move. In the United States, some are calling on mayors, governors and legislators to change policies to make it possible for people to get needed treatment and recovery support services and to end discriminatory laws. Others are joining recovery celebrations that draw tens of thousands of people and extensive media coverage. For too long those most affected by alcohol and other drug problems have been absent from the public policy debate.

We envision a day when the public will accord individuals and their families dignity and they will receive respectful, nondiscriminatory care on the same basis as people with other health conditions. Their “faces and voices of recovery” from all walks of life will serve powerfully to educate the public, policy makers and the media about the reality of addiction recovery, creating widespread public understanding of the many pathways to recovery.

To that end, local communities of recovery are organizing and sharing ideas, resources and experiences. Grass roots campaigns are countering stigma and demonstrating that recovery is a reality. A network of thousands of recovery homes is spreading rapidly to small towns and large cities. Recovery High Schools and Colleges are flourishing, offering educational opportunities in a recovery-oriented setting.

The recovery community is organizing its ability to care in Recovery Community Centers, where a renewed spirit of service and activism is taking hold. Grassroots recovery community organizations are delivering innovative peer-based recovery support services. These independent, non-profit organizations are led and run by representatives of local communities of recovery on behalf of the recovery community. They:

- Educate the public by putting a face and a voice on recovery
- Advocate
- Provide peer-based and other recovery support services

Hundreds of new grassroots recovery community organizations are all part of this exciting movement. Recovering people are collaborating with visionary professionals and other allies to communicate to the world that addiction recovery is a reality for over 20 million Americans and their families, standing as living proof of the many pathways to recovery, and offering hope to those still struggling. They are promoting widespread understanding that long-term recovery is a reality and is a process that takes time and support.

Individual recovery advocates and recovery community organizations are pursuing several core strategies within this movement. They include:

*Building strong, grassroots organizations* that develop recovery leaders, offer opportunities for recovering people to express their collective voice and provide a forum for community service.

*Advocating for meaningful representation and voice* for people in recovery and their family members on issues that affect their lives.

*Assessing needs* related to the adequacy and quality of local treatment and recovery support services.

*Educating the public, policymakers and service providers* about the prevalence and pathways of addiction recovery.

*Developing human and fiscal resources* by expanding philanthropic and public support for addiction treatment, recovery support services and recovery advocacy and cultivating volunteerism within local communities of recovery.

*Advocating for policy changes* at the local, state and federal levels that promote recovery and remove barriers to recovery.

*Celebrating recovery from addiction* through public events that offer living testimony of the transformative power of recovery.

*Supporting research* that illuminates effective strategies and the processes of long-term recovery.

*Providing peer recovery support services* and other forms of direct support in community settings such as recovery community centers.

Excerpted from writings by Pat Taylor, Phillip Valentine and William White. For more information about the national US organization, Faces & Voices of Recovery, go to [facesandvoicesofrecovery.org](http://facesandvoicesofrecovery.org). For more information on William White, go to [williamwhitepapers.com](http://williamwhitepapers.com).