

*Oxford House*  
*Good Neighbors – Good Citizens*



*Commemorative Program*

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

**Renaissance Oklahoma City Convention Center Hotel**

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

September 13-16, 2012

# Oxford House 14<sup>th</sup> World Convention

## Convention Schedule

**Panel Meeting Rooms:** #1 is Room 16, #2 is Room 17; #3 is Room 18 C, #4 is Room 19

	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
7 AM – 8:00 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 – 8:15AM
8:00AM – 9:30AM	<b>First General Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invocation</li> <li>Welcome: Mayor Mick Cornett</li> <li>Governor Mary Fallin</li> <li>Election Process</li> </ul>	<b>Third Breakout Panels</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oxford House and Veterans</li> <li>Latest DePaul Research</li> <li>Working With CADCA</li> <li>Landlords and OH Groups</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>
9:35AM – 10:50AM	<b>First Breakout Panels</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oklahoma OH Development</li> <li>Co-occurring Mental Illness</li> <li>Oxford and State Agencies</li> <li>Educating the Public on Recovery</li> </ol>	<b>Fourth Breakout Panels</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New House Email System</li> <li>Civil Rights under FHA</li> <li>New Survey Tools</li> <li>DePaul Publications Update</li> </ol>	[Ends at 10:15]
11:00AM – 12:15PM	<b>Second Breakout Panels</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behavioral Research Matters</li> <li>Oxford House and Drug Courts</li> <li>Women in Oxford Houses</li> <li>Medication in Oxford Houses</li> </ol>	<b>Fifth Breakout Panels</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WC Prospects and Plans</li> <li>Re-entry from Incarceration</li> <li>NA- Origins and Growth</li> <li>International Expansion</li> </ol>	
12:15PM – 1:45PM	Luncheon on Your Own [Petitions for Oxford House World Council election to be turned in by 12:45]	Luncheon on Your Own [AA/NA meetings at hotel] Alumni Lunch; Get Tickets	
2:00 PM – 4:15 PM	<b>Second General Session</b> Speaker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Jason Powers, MD</b> Medical Officer Treatment</li> </ul> Eligible Nominees to World Council each give 3 minute speeches	<b>Third General Session [2:15]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Call out to States</li> <li>Recognize New World Council Members</li> <li>Vote on Resolutions</li> </ul>	
Evening	<b>FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT</b> (6 –9 PM) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Invocation</li> <li>➤ Board Member Remarks</li> <li>➤ Awards</li> <li>➤ Food, Show and Fireworks</li> </ul>	<b>Banquet</b> (6:00 – 8:30) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Dinner</li> <li>➤ AA/NA Tony Brown, UK</li> <li>➤ Awards</li> <li>➤ Dance; 9:30PM – Midnight</li> </ul>	

## *Oxford House: Good Neighbors – Good Citizens*

AA and NA Meetings Throughout Convention  
AA - Biltmore / NA - Egbert

Candidates for World Council: Get Petitions In On Time

**Oxford House World Services**  
1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 300  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

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# Oxford House

## *Good Neighbors – Good Citizens*

From its beginning in October 1975, the men and women in every Oxford House have taken pride in being good neighbors and good citizens. Both values lie at the heart of the concept and system of operations that makes Oxford House so successful. They are so much part and parcel of Oxford House that sometimes residents and alumni take them for granted. This – the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Oxford House World Convention – is a good time to highlight the importance that of being good neighbors and good citizens.

None of us live in a vacuum. Family, neighborhood, community and country affect us. Conversely, we affect our families, neighborhoods, community and country. When we were active in our addiction our effect was negative. In recovery we can – and do – make a lot of positive contributions because we can make rational decisions.

Oxford Houses provides the launch pad for our individual transformation by providing the tools for good citizenship. The democratic way each Oxford House is run gives a practical way to learn [or relearn] how to make choices and accept responsibilities. The process itself opens the door to another chance to become a productive citizen and a comfortable individual. We are able to personally experience the value of being a person who makes a contribution to our own welfare and the welfare of our community – whether that is our Oxford House family, biological family, our neighborhood, our community or our country.

The process, procedures and common goals that underlie the Oxford House concept and system of operation serve to help each of us develop a comfortable way of life. First among the values we learn is the need for sobriety to be the focus of our life. Sobriety is the common bond among all residents of an Oxford House. It is a common goal irrespective of age, race, gender, education, or economic status. That goal is the glue that makes residents and alumni similar to a family. We care enough about each other that we become willing to develop behavior directed to both our own well-being and the well-being of a group of individuals living together. As we begin to carry out simple responsibilities, we build up confidence in our ability to live a full life that is satisfying to ourselves and others without the use of a drink or a fix. Confidence begets more confidence. It happens so quietly that only by looking back to our days of addiction or early sobriety are we able to appreciate how far we have come from a life of chaos to a life full of happiness and satisfaction.

From our first attempt at sobriety, most of us recognize that we are going to have to change ourselves but we are hard-headed and do not want to change. Yet, once we are accepted into an Oxford House, change sneaks up on us. For the first time, we begin to change to adapt to the social setting that rescued us from the fears and chaos of addiction – Oxford House. As a member having an equal voice in decisions affecting the group, we do what is necessary to make the group function well. The group rewards us by paying attention to our ideas, electing us as house leaders and holding us accountable for carrying out leadership responsibilities. We receive dignity. Soon we associate happiness with dozens of activities that make us happy and keep us sober. It just happens but the cause of it happening is being a proud member of an Oxford House and being part of a movement that is in sync with democracy and the pursuit of happiness – not chaos.

The selfless functioning of Oxford House leads to being good neighbors. Pride in the neighborhood makes us mow the grass, clean the house, and behave as a well-functioning family. Our pride and responsible citizenship spills out throughout the neighborhood and the community at large. Seemingly small things produce big results because we have used the organizational tools necessary to solve big problems. Keep in mind that this country has about 25 million citizens still in the chaos of addiction to alcohol and other mood-changing drugs. By working to expand the Oxford House model within our own and other communities, we have an opportunity bring the hope and reality of long-term recovery to many of those currently in the throes of addiction. That too, is part of being a good neighbor and a good citizen.

Expansion of the Oxford House model is a big deal but it is not an insurmountable task. We already know that, just as a well-functioning family desires adequate food, shelter and a better world for subsequent generations, the Oxford House family knows that by sharing the good recovery environment of an Oxford House with those in need recovery can happen. The accomplishments to date show that. They also show that good organization can multiply the accomplishments much more – particularly if the organization takes the time to carefully evaluation the characteristics that have led to the success to date.

The annual Oxford House World Convention is a time for sharing and learning. Being “Good Neighbors – Good Citizens” is a gold standard of every Oxford House. The characteristics that make good neighbors and good citizens are embedded in the Oxford House concept and system of operation. The work of this convention is to better understand why and how our goal is important on an individual and societal basis. Fortunately, Oxford Houses have long been at the forefront of making evaluation of the recovery process part of its culture. Residents and alumni have prided themselves on willingly sharing their experiences with scientific researchers to enable identification of the programs strengths and weaknesses. Year by year new information has been gathered. Year by year, based upon scientific research, Oxford House has been a leading force in making long-term recovery the norm rather than exception.

A simple concept of encouraging recovering individuals to live together to help each other to become comfortable in long-term recovery has become recognized as a best practice. The Oxford House Model was listed during 2011 on the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Procedures [NREPP]. This recognition was based on scientific evidence that demonstrated that Oxford House is a good tool for assuring long-term recovery. The fact that thousands of Oxford House residents and alumni willingly provide data to document success is an example of good citizenship at work.

May this convention become another step in the long road ahead to change the nation by being good neighbors and good citizens.





# THE CITY OF OKLAHOMA CITY

## *Proclamation*

**WHEREAS**, Oxford House is holding its 14<sup>th</sup> Annual World Convention in Oklahoma City, OK September 13 through September 16, 2012; and

**WHEREAS**, Oxford House, Incorporated, is a non-profit organization with an international network of group recovery homes for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts; and

**WHEREAS**, Oxford House is celebrating its 37th anniversary; and

**WHEREAS**, there are now over 1,500 Oxford Houses across the United States, including 60 in Oklahoma, 32 in Canada, 6 in Australia and 2 in Ghana; and 1 in the United Kingdom; and

**WHEREAS**, Oxford House has demonstrated for 37 years that alcoholics and drug addicts can successfully remain sober without relapse.

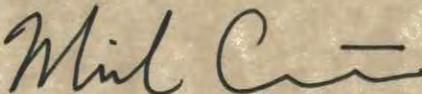
**NOW, THEREFORE, I, MICK CORNETT**, Mayor of The City of Oklahoma City, do hereby proclaim September 14, 2012 as

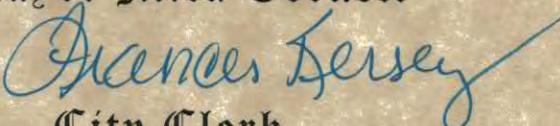
### **OXFORD HOUSE APPRECIATION DAY**

in Oklahoma City and encourage all citizens to support the goals of this organization in helping to make a difference in the lives of individuals recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction.

**Given under my hand and the Seal of The City of Oklahoma City this 4th day of September , 2012.**

Attest:

  
Mayor Mick Cornett

  
City Clerk



## Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup>

**Continental Breakfast**

**7:00 AM – 8:00 AM**  
Great Hall D & E

**OPENING GENERAL SESSION**

**8:00 AM – 9:30 AM**  
Great Hall C

**Invocation** – Major Steven Justice, Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center, Oklahoma City

**Welcome** – Terri White, Commissioner of Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

**Mayor's Welcome – Mayor Mick Cornett.**

Mayor Cornett is in his eighth year as Mayor of Oklahoma City and is just the fourth mayor in the City's history to be elected to a third term. Mayor Cornett is a national urban leader and an advocate for assuring citizens access to services that prevent poor health including addiction to alcohol and drugs. Under his leadership Oklahoma City has low unemployment and has received numerous civic awards. He is also credited with making Oklahoma City a major league city by getting the city a pretty good NBA team!



**Governor's Welcome – Governor Mary Fallin**



Governor Mary Fallin is a pioneer for women in the State of Oklahoma. She was the first woman Congressperson and the first woman Governor in the state. She is a strong supporter of Oxford House. The state of Oklahoma is proud home to a network of 61 Oxford House – 43 for men and 18 for women or women with children.

**Overview of Convention – Paul Molloy, Oxford House**

**World Council Election Process – James McClain, Emeritus Member, World Council**

**FIRST BREAKOUT PANELS**

**9:35 AM – 10:50 AM**

Development of Oxford Houses in Oklahoma  
Dealing with Co-occurring Mental Illness  
Oxford House and State Agencies  
Educating the Public About Recovery

Room 16 – Convention Center  
Room 17 – Convention Center  
Room 18 – Convention Center  
Room 19 – Convention Center

**SECOND BREAKOUT PANELS**

**11:00 AM – 12:15 PM**

Why Behavioral Research and Data Collection Matter  
Oxford House and Drug Courts  
Women in Oxford Houses  
Medication in Oxford Houses

Room 16 – Convention Center  
Room 17 – Convention Center  
Room 18 – Convention Center  
Room 19 – Convention Center

**Lunch and AA/NA Meetings**

**12:15 PM – 1:45 PM**

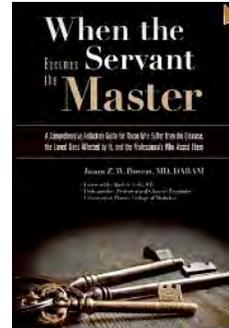
AA meeting in Biltmore/NA meeting in Egbert [12:30- 1:30]

*Lunch on your own – Immediate area has lots of places to eat in or carry out.  
Be back by 1:45 PM*

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS – JASON POWERS, MD**



- ◆ Chief Medical Officer Spirit Lodge, San Cristobal and The Right Step [Chemical dependency treatment centers in Houston, Dallas, Austin, Texas and Taos, New Mexico].
- ◆ Dr. Powers is a member of the American Society of Addiction Medicine [ASAM] and President-Elect of the Texas Society of Addiction Medicine.
- ◆ He is also author of the comprehensive addiction resource book, *When the Servant Becomes the Master*.
- ◆ Dr. Powers often recommends Oxford House living as a way for many of his patients to master long-term sobriety.



**World Council Candidates Present Election Speeches [3 minutes each]**

**Friday Evening**

**Bricktown Ballpark**

**6:00 PM – 9:00 PM**

- Presentation of Director’s Awards – Bill Newman, Member, Board of Directors
- Presentation of Tom Fellows Award – Paul Molloy, CEO
- Dinner
- Entertainment – Bob Perkell’s “One-Man Recovery Show” – Performer from Showtime
- Fireworks

**Hints on Getting the Most out of the Convention**

1. Attend as many sessions as you can.
2. Participate in election of World Council officers.
3. Go to different breakout sessions.
4. Split up to attend different breakout panels to learn as much as possible to bring home.
5. Get to know folks from other states to extend your Oxford House family.
6. Enjoy your sobriety. Learn and have fun.

**Submit any proposed resolutions by 5:00 PM to World Council for review.**

## Saturday September 15<sup>th</sup>

### Continental Breakfast

7:00 AM – 8:00 AM  
Great Hall D & E

### THIRD BREAKOUT PANELS

Oxford House and Veterans  
Latest DePaul Research  
Working with CADCA  
Landlords and Oxford House

8:00 AM – 9:10 AM

Room 16 – Convention Center  
Room 17 – Convention Center  
Room 18 – Convention Center  
Room 19 – Convention Center

### FOURTH BREAKOUT PANELS

Oxford House New Email System  
Civil Rights under FHA  
Using New Survey Tools in Oxford House  
DePaul Publications Update

9:15 AM – 10:30 AM

Room 16 – Convention Center  
Room 17 – Convention Center  
Room 18 – Convention Center  
Room 19 – Convention Center

### FIFTH BREAKOUT PANELS

World Council Prospects and Plans  
Re-entry form Incarceration  
NA: Its Origins and Growth  
International Expansion

10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

Room 16 – Convention Center  
Room 17 – Convention Center  
Room 18 – Convention Center  
Room 19 – Convention Center

### LUNCH

AA Meeting in Biltmotg"      NA Meeting in Egbert [12:30 – 1:30]

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

### ALUMNI LUNCHEON AT SPAGHETTI WAREHOUSE, 101 E. SHERIDAN, OKLAHOMA CITY

[Tickets at Registration Desk: \$25 per person]

### THIRD GENERAL SESSION

2:00 PM – 4:30 PM

#### Regency Ballroom

Call out for States to share new growth and new events  
Report of World Council  
Introduction of New World Council Members  
Vote on Convention Resolutions  
Veterans Committee Meeting immediately following General Session

## Saturday Evening

### Banquet

6:00 PM – 8:30 PM

- ◆ Invocation
- ◆ Reggie Midget Award
- ◆ Founder's Awards
- ◆ Recovery Speaker
- ◆ Dance

9:00 PM – 12:00 PM

## Sunday Morning

### CLOSING GENERAL SESSION

Great Hall D & E

9:00 AM to 10:30 AM

## SUMMARY OF FIRST BREAKOUT PANELS

Development of Oxford Houses in Oklahoma  
Dealing with Co-occurring Mental Illness  
Oxford House and State Agencies  
Educating the Public About Recovery

Room 16 – Convention Center  
Room 17 – Convention Center  
Room 18 – Convention Center  
Room 19 – Convention Center

### Development of Oxford Houses in Oklahoma

#### Room 16 [Convention Center]

Friday 9:35 AM to 10:50AM

Panelist: Jackson Longan Alumnus and OK Outreach Coordinator  
Ray Caesar OK Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services  
Lori Holtzclaw Now in LA but former outreach worker in Oklahoma  
Jeff Hunt Now in NM but former outreach worker in Oklahoma  
Larry Bengé Landlord for some of Oklahoma Oxford Houses

Moderator: Marty Walker Outreach Worker, State of Louisiana

The oldest Oxford House in continual existence in Oklahoma is Oxford House–Southern Hills in Tulsa. It is a house for six men that opened in November 2002. Today, Oklahoma has sixty-one Oxford Houses [43 for men; 18 for women or women with children]. The Oklahoma network of Oxford Houses has a total of 517 recovery beds – 376 for men and 141 for women. The development of a statewide network of Oxford Houses in Oklahoma is good example of how Oxford Houses can be good neighbors and good citizens.

This panel has many of the key players in the development of the statewide network of Oklahoma Oxford Houses. The panel will discuss how they have accomplished what they have and their goals for further expansion. Other states can learn how Oxford House World Services is able to work with state and local officials to develop an effective network of Oxford Houses and change the culture of recovery to one where relapse is not common.

### Dealing with Co-occurring Mental Illness

#### Room 17 [Convention Center]

Friday 9:35 AM to 10:50AM

Panelists: Dr. Jason Powers, MD Chief Medical Officer, Right Step Drug and Alcohol Treatment  
John Majer, PhD Truman College, Chicago, Illinois  
Worth Bolton, MSW Clinical Instructor UNC Chapel Hill

Moderator: Kirstin Hallberg Outreach Coordinator, Nebraska

Many recovering individuals who move into an Oxford House are combating both substance addiction and co-occurring mental illness. Several of the DePaul University studies of the Oxford House population have quantified the presence of those with co-occurring mental illness. In a major NIDA-funded longitudinal study, the DePaul researchers followed 897 residents [604 men and 293 women] representing 189 Oxford Houses across the county for more than one year. All participants were given the PSI [Psychiatric Severity Index] test. About half showed signs of having co-occurring mental illness [25% qualified as severe and 25% moderate). The results of the research showed that those with mental illness did well in an Oxford House setting and, like those recovering solely from addiction to alcohol and/or drugs, most stayed clean and sober and functioned well. Taking the right medicine, in the right amount, at the right time became a habit and abstinence from alcohol and addictive mood-changing drugs was no different from those without a co-occurring disorder. The panel will discuss dealing with co-occurring mental illness within Oxford Houses and address related questions posed by the moderator and the audience.

Dr. Jason Powers is CFO of Right Step Treatment facilities in Texas. Dr. John Majer is a professor at Truman College in Chicago and has been a lead researcher on a number of NIDA/NIAAA funded studies of long-term recovery in Oxford Houses, including the benchmark research noted above. L. Worth Bolton, a Clinical Instructor at UNC Chapel Hill, has over 20 years of work experience in behavioral health services in a wide variety of service settings.

## Oxford House and State Agencies

### Room 18 Convention Center

Friday 9:35AM – 10:50AM

Panelist: Terri White Commissioner ODMHSAS  
Patty Patterson Program Manager ODMHSAS  
MeLinda Trujillo Contract Manager State of Washington  
Ivory Wilson Program Manager Louisiana  
Moderator: Kathleen Gibson Chief Operating Officer, Oxford House, Inc.

Oxford House expansion has depended upon two things: [1] start-up revolving loans and [2] on-site technical assistance. 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.

Terrie White is the Commissioner of the Oklahoma Mental Health Substance Abuse Services. Patty Patterson works with Ray Caesar to manage the contract between the Oklahoma Department on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Melinda Trujillo is a Behavioral Health Program Manager with the Washington State Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery. She is the program manager for Oxford House development where it has the greatest number of Oxford Houses [231] of any state. Ivory Wilson manages the contract between Oxford House and Louisiana where there are 64 Houses.

## Educating The Public About Recovery

### Room 19 Convention Center

Friday 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Panelists: Robert J. Lindsey, M.ED. CEAP President and CEO, NCADD  
Susan R. Thau Senior Consultant representing CADCA  
Tonya Wheeler Executive Director, Advocates for Recovery, Denver, CO  
Ivette A. Torres Recovery Month Coordinator, SAMHSA

Moderator: Anna Mable Jones Former OH outreach and present Faces and Voices of Recovery

Panelists from major government and private sector organizations that focus on public drug and alcohol education will discuss the purpose, value and need for organizations to educate the public on how alcoholics, drug addicts and those with co-occurring mental illness can and do recover. Overcoming the stigma of these diseases and increasing recovery opportunities depend upon an informed public. The panel will discuss the approaches they use – what works and what doesn't – and provide insight into the recovery community's role in these efforts. More and more, the recovery community is recognizing that while there is a role for anonymity, there is also a need to be more forthright about recovery.

Robert Lindsey is the President and CEO of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence [NCADD] – formerly known as the National Council on Alcoholism. He has refocused the group's message and approach and revitalized state chapters throughout the country. With extensive background in legislative, budgetary and regulatory analysis, through her work at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) during the Carter, Reagan and George H.W. Bush Administrations, Sue Thau brings over 30 years of federal, state and international policy development experience to the substance abuse prevention and treatment field in her current role as the lead consultant to the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America [CADCA]. Tonya Wheeler is Executive Director of Advocates for Recovery in Denver, Colorado – a relatively new grassroots movement among recovering alcoholics and/or drug addicts working to educate the public, government and business about the nature of alcoholism and drug addiction and emphasizing that individual recovery can replace addiction if society provides a reasonable opportunity for individual recovery to take place. Ivette Torres, the SAMHSA coordinator of Recovery Month, has established a network of individuals and programs throughout the country dedicated to changing public understanding about recovery. Prior to beginning work at SAMHSA in 1997, Ivette was Vice President of Development for the National Coalition of Hispanic Health Service Organizations and is a past president of the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women.

## SECOND BREAKOUT PANELS

Why Behavioral Research and Data Collection Matter	Room 16 – Convention Center
Oxford House and Drug Courts	Room 17 – Convention Center
Women Oxford Houses	Room 18 – Convention Center
Medication in Oxford Houses	Room 19 – Convention Center

### Why Behavioral Research and Data Collection Matter

**Room 16 [Convention Center]**

**Friday 11:00 AM to 12:15 PM**

Panelists: Leonard Jason, Ph. D. Director, Center for Community Research DePaul University  
John Majer, Ph.D. Psychology Department, Truman College, Chicago, Illinois  
Dr. David Wright Oklahoma Department on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Moderator: Paul Stevens Virginia Oxford House Outreach Coordinator

Jeffrey D. Roth MD, FASAM, a Chicago addictions psychiatrist who edits the Journal of Groups in Addiction and Recovery wrote: “While research on AA has been limited by the role of anonymity in recovery, the willingness of the Oxford Houses to open their doors to academic research gives us an opportunity to see recovery from addiction in action.” This “seeing” the recovery process becomes essential for anyone to understand and evaluation programs related to recovery. Seeing requires data collection and analysis. Data and analysis can help bring about better ways to help addicted individuals move from addiction to long-term recovery. The panel will discuss how research on recovery can influence the ways and means for improving the incidence of long-term recovery.

Leonard Jason, PhD, Director of the DePaul University Center for Community Research, has research every aspect of Oxford House for nearly twenty years and authored or co-authored more than 150 peer-reviewed articles reporting his findings. John Majer, PhD, a professor at Truman College in Chicago, is lead author on a number of research articles involving recovery with a special emphasis on the effect of 12-Step recovery programs. Terri White has held a number of Health and Human Services jobs in Oklahoma and was the first woman to head a Governor’s cabinet position when she became head of the Department of Health in the Administration of Brad Henry. Dr. David Wright is sitting in for Commissioner Terri White and has a background in social work that puts him at the focal point for the use of data related to behavioral research.

### Oxford House and Drug Courts

**Room 17 [Convention Center]**

**Friday 11:00 AM to 12:15 PM**

Panelists: Hon. Sheila Condren Specialty Courts Judge, Rogers County Oklahoma  
Chrisie Rose Rogers County, OK Drug Court Supervisor  
Austin M. Long Montgomery Maryland Drug Court Treatment Coordinator  
Joe Chavez HI Oxford House Outreach Worker

Moderator: Daniel Fuchs CO Oxford House Outreach

In 1990 there were only one or two drug courts in the country. Today there are more than 2,300. The practice and theory of drug courts is simple. It is better to route an alcoholic or drug addict into treatment rather than send him or her to jail. In jurisdiction after jurisdiction, drug court judges have found that drug court participants tend to do much better if they live in an Oxford House. The NADCP is the national nonprofit organization that has promoted, developed and educated judges around the country of the value of drug court intervention. NADCP has proven itself very effective at coordinating and motivating local governments to adopt the drug court model as an effective tool for intervention in the behavior of alcoholics and drug addicts. Not only does such intervention motivate alcoholics and drug addicts to begin and master the recovery process, but it also saves taxpayers the costs of incarceration or repeated cycling in and out of detoxification and treatment.

Panelists are each very familiar with the workings of drug courts and will offer their observations and experiences with them. They will also discuss how Oxford Houses can best serve drug court clients and expectations of drug courts working with Oxford Houses.

## Women in Oxford Houses: The Challenges and Successes

**Room 18 [Convention Center]**

**Friday 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM**

Panelists: Myrna Brown Alumna and former Washington State Coordinator  
Judy Maxwell Washington State Oxford House Outreach  
Paul Harrington Alumni, Oxford Houses of NC  
Lori Holtzclaw Oxford Outreach Oklahoma  
Stacie Anderson Oxford Outreach Washington State

Moderator: George Kent New Jersey Oxford House Outreach

Oxford Houses for women encounter different problems than do Oxford Houses for men – both in establishment and in subsequent operation – but work equally well. This panel of women experienced in Oxford House living and long-term recovery will discuss the challenges and successes of Oxford Houses for women. Each of the panelists has lived in an Oxford House and each has established houses for women and houses for women with children. They will discuss the ways that new houses for women or women with children are established and how the women who move in deal with the challenges and opportunities they face. They will also discuss the role that the pre-convention women’s conference has with respect to Oxford House living.

## Medication in Oxford Houses

**Room 19 Convention Center**

**Friday 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM**

Panelists: Dr. Jason Powers, MD Chief Medical Officer, Right Step Drug and Alcohol Treatment  
Kirstin Hallburg, CAC Counselor and Outreach Omaha, Nebraska  
Trace Purlee Oxford House Outreach Worker, New Mexico

Moderator: Keith Gibson Oxford House Outreach, NC

Recovering alcoholics and drug addicts enter Oxford House with a clear understanding that a condition of residence is to stay clean and sober. However, about half of the residents of Oxford House may also have a mental health disorder that requires medication to control. Medication for some maladies is not only consistent with the clean and sober bedrock of Oxford House but is also essential to maintain the health of the resident. Other medication has many of the characteristics of alcohol or mood-altering drugs that can trigger relapse either for the user or others in the house. This panel will sort through the medications that fit within an Oxford House environment and those that undermine the alcohol and drug free foundation for Oxford House living.

The panelists will discuss the use and misuse of medicines within an Oxford House. Some medications are not permitted because they may be illicit or cause mood-changing behavior and be addictive. On the other hand, some medicines are correctly prescribed and may be necessary for controlling serious mental illness or making a transition from addictive use to comfortable sobriety. The panel will consider how such situations are handled and steps taken by various houses to assure that the person with the prescription or others in the house do not misuse legitimate medications. Understanding different medications, their use and abuse is the first step to knowing how an individual Oxford House should monitor and control the presence of drugs within the clean and sober living environment of an Oxford House.

Dr. Jason Powers, MD, Chief Medical Officer of Right Step, a treatment facility throughout Texas, is the author of a new book “When the Servant Becomes the Master”. Kirstin Hallburg is a counselor and outreach specialist from Nebraska. Trace Purlee, a New Mexico outreach worker, has established houses for women in New Mexico.

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*World Council Nominations Must Be In By Noon*



## Working With CADCA

**Room 18 [Convention Center]**

**Saturday 8:00 AM – 9:10 AM**

Speaker: Susan R. Thau

Senior Consultant representing CADCA

Moderator: Gino Pugliese

Oxford House Coordinator Washington State

This breakout will focus on the mission and activities of Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America [CADCA] and examine ways that Oxford House residents and alumni can become involved in helping communities avoid drug epidemics. CADCA is the nation's leading drug abuse prevention organization, representing the interests of more than 5,000 community anti-drug coalitions in the country. In 1992, the President's Drug Advisory Council (PDAC) encouraged the formation of CADCA to respond to the dramatic growth in the number of substance abuse coalitions and their need to share ideas, problems and solutions. The organization was officially launched in October 1992 under the leadership of Alvah Chapman, the Director and retired Chairman and CEO of Knight Ridder, Inc., who became CADCA's first chairman. Since August 1998, Major General Arthur T. Dean [Ret. USA] has led the organization as Chairman and CEO. The organization has evolved to become the nation's leading national substance abuse prevention organization, working to empower community-based coalitions and represent their interests both nationally and internationally.

Sue Thau, primary consultant to CADCA, brings over 30 years of federal, state and international policy development experience to the substance abuse prevention and treatment field. She has an extensive background in legislative, budgetary and regulatory analysis, through her work at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) during the Carter, Reagan and George H.W. Bush Administrations.

## Landlords and Oxford House

**Room 19 [Convention Center]**

**Saturday 8:00 AM – 9:10 AM**

Panelists: Larry Bengé  
Jane Molloy  
Bill Lauer  
Jeff Hunt  
Mike Riley

Landlord of several Oxford Houses in Oklahoma  
Landlord in Silver Spring, Maryland  
Landlord in Wisconsin  
Oxford House Outreach Worker, New Mexico  
Landlord of several Oxford Houses in New Mexico

Moderator: Johnny Roach

Oxford House Outreach Worker, Delaware

Oxford Houses depend upon having a good relationship with landlords and try to convince potential landlords that renting a house to an Oxford House group are better than renting to a biological family. Once an Oxford House is a tenant the group stays year after year. On the other hand a biological family tends to move after a couple of years. Every time there is a move the landlord has to refurbish and seek out new tenants. For example, Oxford House – Northampton in Washington, DC has been in the same house since 1976. Unfortunately after more than 35 years the group of men at that house will be moving next month as the current third-generation landlords have decided to do something else with the property. Nevertheless a 36-year run is not bad.

This panel – made up of three long-term landlords and two outreach workers – will discuss the relationship between landlords and an Oxford House group. In particular, the panel will discuss the advantages of dealing with an Oxford House group that always elected officers that overcome any problems associated with the group changing as individuals move in or leave. It will also discuss the best ways for Oxford House residents to approach landlords about renting suitable houses and how to encourage existing landlords to recommend Oxford House as tenants to potential landlords.

## FOURTH BREAKOUT PANELS

Oxford House New Email System  
Civil Rights under FHA  
Using New Survey Tools in Oxford House  
DePaul Publications Update

Room 16 – Convention Center  
Room 17 – Convention Center  
Room 18 – Convention Center  
Room 19 – Convention Center

### The New Oxford House Email System

**Room 16 [Convention Center]**

**Saturday 9:15 AM – 10:30 AM**

Panelist: Tony Perkins  
Blake Bippes  
John Fox

Oxford House Alumnus, Washington State  
Oxford House Outreach, Washington State  
Oxford House North Carolina Coordinator

Moderator: Misty Wilkins

NC Outreach Worker

There are now nearly 1,600 Oxford Houses in the United States and other countries. The importance of communications between and among the houses is great. Obviously there are a number of ways in which this can take place. Knowing the email of each house can provide a good way of houses keeping in touch with each other. Of equal – or perhaps greater significance – is the fact that an active email address can be a big an important tool for putting applicants in touch to get an interview for admission to an Oxford House. In today’s world many individuals are far more comfortable in using email rather than the telephone. Also email stays in place until answered. When all residents in a house have access to the house email it is far more likely that an applicant, a counselor or a drug court official can get a quick response when inquiries are made about vacancies, interviews and other information related to admission into an Oxford House.

Tony Perkins has set up a discrete email system for all Oxford Houses. In the future every new Oxford House will be assigned an email address that is consistent with the email addresses common to all Oxford Houses. Existing houses without a current email address can learn how to get one that is consistent with the uniform Oxford House email protocol. Existing houses with an old email address can learn how to convert their existing email address to one that is consistent with the new email system.

Blake Bippes is an outreach worker in eastern Washington and has used a standardized email system among Washington’s 239 Oxford Houses. John Fox is coordinator in North Carolina and has worked extensively with Virginia and West Virginia.

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# Oxford House

*Good Neighbors – Good Citizens*

## Civil Rights and Federal Fair Housing Act

**Room 17 [Convention Center]**

**Saturday 9:15 AM – 10:30 AM**

Panelists: Steve Polin Civil Rights Attorney, Member of DC Bar  
Chris McGuire Oxford House Outreach Worker Texas  
Marty Walker Oxford House Outreach Worker Louisiana  
Dan Fuchs Oxford House Outreach, Colorado

Moderator: George Kent Oxford House Outreach Coordinator New Jersey

From its establishment in 1975, Oxford House has sought good houses to rent in good neighborhoods. Until the 1988 Amendments to the Federal Fair Housing Act, zoning laws kept group homes out of the better residential neighborhoods. When Oxford House began expansion following enactment of the recovery home start-up loan mandate in the 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, it took advantage of the FHA to rent houses in good neighborhoods. The FHA extended the prohibition against discrimination to “handicapped” individuals. Since everyone in an Oxford House is utilizing the group home to overcome alcoholism, drug addiction or co-occurring mental illness, they qualify as handicapped and thereby a protected class under the FHA. As such, local governments must make a “reasonable accommodation” in their zoning laws to avoid discrimination against Oxford Houses. Oxford House served as the trailblazer in seeking court definition and affirmation of the 1988 Amendments to the FHA including the US Supreme Court in *City of Edmonds, WA v. Oxford House, Inc.* decided in 1995. In spite of that favorable decision, localities continue to try to avoid accommodating Oxford House residents trying one barrier after another. This panel will discuss the current state of the law and explain how Oxford House has successfully applied the law to thwart insurance companies that try to discriminate against landlords renting to Oxford House as well as jurisdictions that dream up new tactics to satisfy those who continue NIMBY discrimination.

Steve Polin is an alumnus of Oxford House and has become the leading lawyer in the nation with respect to application of the Federal Fair Housing Act to protect rights of the disabled. He has handled housing civil rights cases throughout the country and has coordinated most of the Oxford House litigation to assure that Oxford Houses can be located in good neighborhoods.

## Using New Survey Tools in Oxford House

**Room 18 [Convention Center]**

**Saturday 9:15 AM – 10:30 AM**

Panelists: Johnny Roach Oxford House Outreach Worker Delaware  
Jackson Longan Oxford House Outreach Worker Oklahoma  
Judy Maxwell Oxford House Outreach Worker Washington  
Jeff Hunt Oxford House Outreach Worker New Mexico

Moderator: Lori S. Holtzclaw Member Oxford House Board of Directors

This panel will discuss the new modernized method of collection of data from current Oxford House residents to continue the annual comparisons that have been done since the early days of Oxford House. The panel will discuss the new web-based system to encourage all houses to report data when requested to do so by Oxford House World Services. In particular the panel will discuss how the new system can make data collection easier and the system of operation each house should follow.

The Comptroller in each house will have the principal responsibility for assuring that each house gets the survey data into the computer system when it is needed. House residents will still be asked for data no more than once a year. However, by using Survey Monkey as a resource for data collection it will make analysis of the data much easier. In the past data input – while labor intensive – could be undertaken but now it is time for better efficiency.

The panel will also discuss the value that is derived from collecting important data about our recovery or our lack of recovery. This information will not only help each of understand the recovery process better but will help other recovering individuals and treatment professionals to better understand the recovery process.

## DePaul Publications Up-date

**Room 19 [Convention Center]**

**Saturday 9:15 AM – 10:30 AM**

Panelists: Leonard Jason, Ph D Director DePaul Community Research Center  
John Majer, Ph D Truman College, Chicago, Illinois  
Chris Beasley Ph.D. Candidate DePaul Community Research Center

Moderator: Doug Cihon Oxford Outreach West Virginia

The dedicated team at DePaul University Community Research Center has been the lead investigator of Oxford House since 1991. As with all scientific research, methodology and results are shared with the field through the publication of articles in various professional journals. Peers in the field review each article documenting findings and conclusions before being accepted for publication. Just in 2012 there are ten [10] articles have been published and another ten [10] articles are in press. This panel will discuss the latest publications and provide a preview of research underway that will provide data and analysis for the next year.

Dr. Jason began his studies of the Oxford House Model shortly after the CBS ten-minute “60 Minutes” segment about Oxford House was broadcast in May 1991. Jason’s area of expertise centered on community psychology and he saw the development and utilization of community in the Oxford House movement. John Majer, PhD began working with Dr. Jason in 1995. Chris Beasley, a doctoral candidate at DePaul University, is preparing his thesis on Oxford House. Chris has been a front-line researcher at the DePaul Community Research Center.

## FIFTH BREAKOUT PANELS

World Council Prospects and Plans  
Re-entry form Incarceration  
NA: Its Origins and Growth  
International Expansion

Room 16 – Convention Center  
Room 17 – Convention Center  
Room 18 – Convention Center  
Room 19 – Convention Center

### World Council: Prospects and Plans

**Room 16 [Convention Center]**

**Saturday 10:45 AM to 12:00 Noon**

Panelists: Sheri Glisson Chairperson, Silver Spring, Maryland  
[And Other World Council Members Prior to Current Election]

Moderator: Judy Maxwell Outreach Worker, Washington State

The World Council is an advisory body for the Oxford House, Inc. Board of Directors. It consists of 12 members [9 residents and 3 alumni members] plus two emeritus members, Myrna Brown and James McClain. The members of the World Council are elected for terms of office limited to three years. One-third of the members are elected at each annual Oxford House World Convention. The members have a monthly telephonic conference every month and once a year go on retreat to work together to focus on Oxford House development and expansion. Each year at the convention one-third of the members are elected.

The purpose of the panel will be to bring the membership up-to-date on the activities of World Council during the past year and to solicit ideas about ways and means to strengthen Oxford House and to foster more expansion.

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**Oxford House**  
*Good Neighbors – Good Citizens*

## Re-entry from Incarceration

**Room 17 [Convention Center]**

**Saturday 10:45 AM to 12:00 Noon**

Panelists: Tony Perkins Alumnus Washington State Oxford Houses  
Floyd Long Transition Officer OK Department of Corrections  
Kurtis Taylor OHI Prison Outreach in North Carolina  
Chris Beasley Ph.D. Candidate DePaul Community Research Center

Moderator: Marty Walker Louisiana Oxford House Outreach

Over three-quarters of the Oxford House population [78%] at any given time has done jail or prison time. This is a natural consequence of the fact that addiction to alcohol and/or drugs impairs judgment and leads to violence or poor judgment causing arrest, conviction and imprisonment. In America today, 2.2 million individuals are incarcerated. Approximately 80% of those in jails or prison are addicted to alcohol and/or drugs. Often their last crime that led to their conviction and incarceration is directly tied to their being high or intoxicated. Each year, between 600,000 and 700,000 of those who are incarcerated re-enter society. Within one year of re-entry, about half will commit another crime and be headed to conviction and re-entry to incarceration. The experience of those who enter an Oxford House following incarceration is long-term recovery and crime-free behavior. This panel will focus on the ways and means to encourage more recovering individuals leaving incarceration to immediately move into an Oxford House to protect against relapse and criminal recidivism.

Four 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. Tony Perkins has introduced creative ways for individuals leaving prison to line up acceptance into an Oxford House before they leave the prison environment. Floyd Long is a transition officer with the Department of Corrections and refers a number of individuals to Oklahoma Oxford Houses. Kurtis Taylor has led an innovative program for prison outreach in North Carolina. Chris Beasley has focused on Oxford House residents having criminal backgrounds.

## Narcotics Anonymous NA – History of Origins and Growth

**Room 18 [Convention Center]**

**10:45 AM – 12:00 Noon**

Panelists: Boyd Pickard Operator recovery residence in Raleigh, NC  
Chris Budnick Instructor – North Carolina State University

Moderator: John Fox Oxford House Coordinator North Carolina

This panel will share the history of NA development and discuss what can be learned from the history of NA that can be of value to Oxford House in its efforts to share the model with others.

Boyd Pickard is in long-term recovery, who was born and raised in North Carolina, operates a recovery residence for men in Raleigh. Chris Budnick is a person in long-term recovery, who works for The Healing Place of Wake County (Raleigh, NC) and is an adjunct instructor in the Department of Social Work, North Carolina State University. Boyd and Chris met in 2007 and since that time they have been on a mission to preserve, digitize and share information related to the history of 12-step recovery for addicts. Boyd and Chris have co-authored four publications related to Narcotics Anonymous and have presented on the history of the Basic Text and early history of Narcotics Anonymous in Michigan, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

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**Oxford House**  
**Good Neighbors – Good Citizens**

## International Expansion

Room 19 [Convention Center]

10:45 AM – 12:00 Noon

Panelists: Tony Brown Established first Oxford House in England  
Dan O’Laughlin Hopeful Way Foundation, Ghana  
Myrna Brown Established first Oxford House in Australia  
Leonard Jason, PhD Director Community Research Center, DePaul University

Moderator: Debbie Dungee Oxford House World Services

Alcoholism, drug addiction and co-occurring mental illness know no border. Individuals are afflicted with these illnesses all around the world. Unfortunately, in many places neither 12-Step groups nor Oxford Houses exist. These panel members have first-hand knowledge about expanding Oxford House and 12-Step meetings internationally. In some areas of the world, the abstinent model for alcoholism and drug addiction recovery is not emphasized, however more and more countries are faced with the problem and are turning to the abstinent model of recovery. In the past year, Oxford House has made presentations in Chile at the request of the government as it explores the benefits of recovery housing. Oxford House was also a participant at the recent World Federation Against Drugs conference in Stockholm, Sweden. Italy, Romania, Russia, England and Norway were among the countries expressing interest development of the Oxford House model as an important tool for long-term recovery.

The panel will consider what Oxford House can do to more effectively share the benefits of Oxford House living throughout the world. Tony Brown – who attended the Chicago Convention last year – has brought Oxford House to England and opened the first Oxford House there. Dan O’Laughlin established an Oxford House just outside Accra in Ghana with the help of Byron Merriweather a former Oxford House outreach worker in Virginia. Dan and his wife Agnes head the Hopeful Way Foundation that assists in carrying of the recovery message to Ghana. Myrna Brown – formerly an outreach worker in the State of Washington – went to Australia ten years ago and began a cluster of Oxford House there. Dr. Leonard Jason’s researchers have studied addiction and recovery in other parts of the world including Australia and Bulgaria with a focus on recovery housing and Oxford House development.

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### 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. Many Oxford House stories of the transition from addiction to sobriety – comfortable enough to assure long-term recovery without relapse – are at the website: [www.oxfordhouse.org](http://www.oxfordhouse.org) under “About Us/Stories”.*

## 2012 STORIES

### ELIZABETH L.

I was born in Fort Worth, Texas and was raised by my mother, who took care of both my sister and me without the help of my father. My father was an alcoholic and left our family early on due to his alcoholism, and as a result, my memory of him is limited. I had difficulty concentrating when I was young, and, by the time I was in second grade, I was diagnosed with ADD and put on Ritalin. I learned at any early age that chemicals could alter how I felt and acted, and, though it took time for my disease to kick in, I was unconsciously aware of how a chemical could be an “easy” fix.

Growing up, I always felt different. I fell quite easily into attention-seeking behavior, as well as manipulative behavior, in order to gain the attention that I felt was missing. I never excelled at school, and I was acutely aware of how much I struggled with my studies. It was during my freshman year of high school that I began cutting class and smoking marijuana with my friends in order to avoid the embarrassment of sitting in class. I was popular in high school and very sociable – I was voted Howdy Queen during my freshman and sophomore years. However, by the time I got to my sophomore year, my disease had progressed enough to start affecting my life. In this case, I missed the dance and was not able to receive my crown, which signaled the beginning of my downhill slide.

I entered my first treatment center at the age of fifteen, but my disease still steadily progressed. I was kicked out of several schools, in and out of jail, suicidal, and my mother was at her wits end. I moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma with my father, with whom I had little previous relationship. My behavior and drug use continued to get worse in Oklahoma. I managed to graduate from high school after attending eight different schools.

I began using drugs intravenously at the age of 20 and immediately fell in love with it. I spent several years using drugs in this manner, and the drugs were no longer fun. I needed the drugs to make it through the day – I was completely dependent and hooked.

I tried to turn my life around and entered into dental school in an attempt to get myself back on track. It was during this time that I began forging prescriptions in an attempt to keep the withdrawal symptoms at bay. I was caught and given the choice of three years in prison or long term treatment. The choice was easy for me – I chose treatment.

Even in treatment I was a boundary pusher. I constantly challenged the rules, manipulated, and engaged in self-seeking, egocentric behavior. Upon entering treatment, I was unable to see how my actions provoked consequences. Through a series of experiences within the facility I was faced with the truth about my actions. The director of the facility attended my court hearing and attested to the potential of my character. She could see that I was still active in my disease, but within me I had the ability to do great things. It was with her belief that I began to be inspired to change my behavior. I graduated from treatment after nine months and entered into a sober living home. I didn't have a car or a job but I was determined to change my life. I started attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings on a frequent basis and it was in those rooms that I met a girl who lived in Oxford House.

When I moved into my first Oxford House there were only three other people living there. I had to learn all of the officer positions in the house quickly. I became active in Oxford House – I was instantly on fire with the unity and fellowship I discovered – in a way that I had never found in all of my years of using. I started having fun in recovery and Oxford House became my passion. I devoted a lot of my time to service work – I was on the planning committee for the state convention, I became involved in chapter as the chapter secretary, and I began to go to struggling houses to offer my strength, experience, and hope. Any service work that was needed I was more than willing to do.

In 2011 I was able to attend the World Convention in Washington DC. The fellowship that I experienced there was beyond anything that I had ever had in my life, and it ignited a great passion within me that is inextinguishable. When I came back to Tulsa I was fortunate enough to help open up a new women's house.

In March 2012, I was recognized for my service work within Oxford and was offered a position as a part-time Outreach Worker for Oxford House in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. I am fortunate enough to be a part of planning for

the World Convention this year, along with the wonderful work I get to do on a daily basis. I am fortunate that Oxford has given me the opportunity to incorporate unity, fellowship, and service not only in my personal life, but in my professional life, as well. I am the person I am today because of what Oxford has given me, and I strive on a daily basis to give back everything that I have been given.

Through Oxford I have learned about responsibility, accountability, love, and growth. In conjunction with NA, step work, and my higher power, I now live a life that is free of the obsession of my addiction. My life is immersed in recovery, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity I have been given in my life. I now have the ability to share my own passion and my love of Oxford with those that I meet, and I hope that I pass on my enthusiasm and gratitude to those that I come across. My experience with Oxford has been amazing so far, and I look forward to what the future may bring. Because of the growth I am able to attain within Oxford, I can now safely say I am out of the dark and living fully in the light – I have a future to look forward to. My sobriety date is January 24, 2010, and every single day of that is a wonderful blessing to me.

#### **KAREN M.**

My name is Karen M. I surrendered to God and the 12-step program of Narcotics Anonymous in July 1996. I can remember from very early on that I just did not fit in and no matter how hard I tried I was just different and a misfit. I had always had an issue with self-acceptance and self-esteem; drugs made me invincible and confident. Ten years of drug abuse sent my life in a downward spiral and I needed help desperately. I had attempted suicide three times. I was a mother with a 3-year-old son and I knew that taking my life was no longer what I wanted because deep inside I knew I wanted to raise him myself. But more than that, I wanted to feel whole on the inside.

I went to treatment for substance abuse because I felt I had nothing to lose, I had lost everything already. Upon discharge from the treatment facility, the team of clinicians incorporated transitional housing into my recovery plan. I moved into Brentwood Oxford House in October 1996 and that choice literally changed my life forever. I made bonds with people that I still know and love 15 years later. My goal upon entering into Oxford House was to make enough money to move into my own apartment so that I could get my son back in my care. I found group living to be hard in the beginning because I wasn't willing to change my attitude, thinking and behavior but, after taking some suggestions, I made a decision to go back to college, get therapy for my son and myself and remain in the Oxford house until I was ready to move.

I graduated from college in 1999 while living in Oxford house. I was then able to support myself and my son sufficiently. Today I am proud to say that my son finished his first year of college and I am working with people that I love. I know that by following suggestions and living the Oxford House model, I have a life beyond my wildest dreams...I am free and at peace.

#### **ADAM S.**

My using career was a short one. My late sponsor always used to tell me that I was one of the lucky ones. I never called it luck; what I went through wasn't luck, it was a plan from a power greater than myself.

I was 17 when I went to college and I had had the typical suburban issues – drinking here and there, smoking some weed on occasion. Luckily, I had been well liked in high school and well known. If I had to venture a guess, I would say I was voted most likely to succeed. Little did I know in less than two years I would lose almost everything. My first morning in college, I woke up to see my roommate Jonah peeing in a gallon milk jug and breaking up a brick of weed on his desk. I didn't know it at the time but he was one of the biggest suppliers on campus. It was six weeks later and Jonah had to leave school. By now, I had become a regular smoker and I was meeting people that I could get it from. I started supplying my "friends" here and there; another few months went by and I had taken over Jonah's spot as the largest supplier on the campus.

Two weeks before I was set to leave for an internship, I needed to stop smoking. I am a big guy and I had a feeling that I wasn't going to be clean fast enough to pass the impending UA that would secure my future at the school and in professional life. If I failed I would be set back over a year in my program and suspended. The day before my UA, I failed a home test and thought for sure that I was doomed. It was at this point that the thought crossed my mind that I might have a problem. I ended up passing the test, how I don't know, again a plan from a power greater

than myself. I spent the next six months training at the largest hotel in the historic adult playground of New Orleans. I don't remember much of it, but, for being 18, I sure did drink a lot.

This is probably getting boring now, but after blowing an \$8,000 reserve plus the \$4,000 I made while in New Orleans, I went back to school, owing \$500 to the bank in New Orleans. All the people that I had known before going to New Orleans came back with new skills and new substances. I remember the first time I tried cocaine and I remember looking at the line in front of me, saying, "Hell, its college and you only live once!" This was a phrase in six months that I would regret. From there it was down hill, and fast. The next six months I had spent every waking moment of my life seeking and taking any kind of upper and some downers I could get my hands on. At this point I had babied and nursed my cocaine and weed addiction into being a more than \$500-a-day habit and being one of the most successful suppliers on the campus. I had become a human garbage disposal taking anything I could get my hands on and stepping on anyone who got in my way. I had orchestrated multistate deals and stolen cars. I had driven 3 hours to find that the supplier I was going to meet was in one of the largest busts Massachusetts had had in a decade. Luckily I wasn't there. I had had minimal run-ins with the law but nothing major, thank God.

Anyway, when I decided to stop what I was doing, I went into a treatment center in Burien, WA. It's an adolescent center; at 19, I was one of the oldest ones in there and I thought I was unique. I went through the typical denial and remorse. Not wanting to be there and not thinking I had anything more than a cocaine problem, I was looking for a quick spin dry cycle and that was it. About 15 days into treatment I realized I didn't have a cocaine problem, I had an Adam problem. And from that point on I decided I needed to be sober. My last using date was 3/18/2005.

It was about a week before my release and my family started asking questions about where I was going to go, or what I was going to do. My dad wanted me to go into the Coast Guard, to give me structure. My mother, an active user, wanted me to live with her, vowing to remove all substances from her home. Somehow, I felt that I needed to be on my own; I needed to learn how to live, let alone learn how to live sober. I was talking to my counselor and he had heard of Oxford House. He made some calls and found a house in Bremerton, WA, about 2 hours from my hometown. I was disappointed because I didn't want to live that far away from my family. Either way I was willing to talk with them and learn more. Four days before my release someone from the Lake Dolloff Oxford house in Auburn, contacted my mother and told them they had an opening. I was so excited to live in my hometown!! The treatment center let me leave for the interview, which is very rare, by the way. I remember Steve, who was the house president; tall and skinny, he had a caring disposition and I could tell he honestly wanted me to succeed. Dan, the gentleman who was the house HSR at the time and the person who returned my mothers phone call, was also there, I am grateful to him; he is now one of my best friends. The interview went well they accepted me into the house.

I lived in the Lake Dolloff Oxford house for almost exactly two years doing every position they had and taking on more responsibility at the house and chapter level. When I moved out of the house I still was the chapter president and I held that position at the permission of my chapter until my term was up.

Oxford taught me how to live a clean and sober life, how to take care of a home, be a responsible member of society and be held accountable for my actions. I am now married, my wife Jennifer and I bought a house in 2009 and, at the time this is written, we have a 9-week-old son named Aiden. I am a responsible employee, husband, father and son. Oxford took me from a scared 19-year-old to a confident and upstanding man with seven and a half years of sobriety.

Thank you to Oxford, Dan, Paul Molloy, Tony P, June A, Gino P, and everyone else for teaching me what to do and how to do it because, without this organization, I am sure that I would not be alive today. I have been to three conventions Wichita, KS, DC, and New Orleans. I have wanted to go back but, due to family obligations, and financial restraints I have not been able to attend and I do truly miss the camaraderie and sleepless nights of the convention. Good Luck and if I can do it, anyone can!!! Thank you

**TAMMY L.**

I am writing to express a sincere thanks to Karen McKinnon, Alton Hicks and the North Carolina State Oxford Houses (Steeds Run Ladies). No amount of words could ever truly show or express my feelings of gratitude.

Long story short, I am an Oxford House Alumna. I resided within an Oxford House for a 7 month period in 2011. During this time I was successful and maintained my sobriety. The mistake I made (as I'm sure others have also) was leaving the organization too early. Simply, I just wasn't ready. In turn, I did relapse. Upon, this period of relapse, I made decisions, which caused me legal troubles. The end result was probation and, inevitably, a probation violation. This violation threatened to incarcerate me for a period of 8-19 months. I had recently been arrested for the violation and incarcerated for a period of 72 days in Wake County Detention Center. My spirit, heart and soul knew that my situation was due to my addiction of alcohol and the unmanageability of my life. I knew I was powerless. I began to admit and acknowledge the downfall of my life. Through my higher power and the education of my addiction, I realized sobriety was and is my only option.

I then relocated to Swann Oxford House in Chapel Hill. I was back in an Oxford House and living sober. But my past reared its ugly head. I was facing legal trouble due to my past probation violation. I told the court of my sober living and the path of sobriety I was following. Nonetheless, I still had to deal with the consequence of my past actions. Alton Hicks (an Oxford House alumni/peer advocate/friend) suggested that I use the resources of the Oxford House associates. He contacted Karen and explained my predicament. Karen was aware of my situation due to the Swann House. Swann House was willing and hoped I returned. Alton researched and provided information about NC OH to the courts. Also, Karen wrote a letter that "saved my life". She explained my goals, current progress, the OH organization and its benefits to my life, sobriety and rehabilitation. The thing that shocked and amazed me was the lack of knowledge that the Wake County court systems knew in regards to the Oxford House organization. Upon introducing the judge to the idea of releasing me to an Oxford House, we also educated him on it. The court uses various rehabs and sober living tools and was shocked to learn they weren't aware of Oxford House. Due to the time and the support of Karen, Alton and Oxford House, my release was granted. I was ordered to report to an Oxford House within 48 hours or return to jail. Through the support of Steeds Run ladies acceptance, I am a current house member and a woman free from the institution of jail. The ladies were more than caring, understanding and open to my plight. Karen went over and beyond her call of duty and support as a woman. Without OH, Karen and Alton; I would be incarcerated and not on my path of recovery. Their thoughtfulness means so much to me.

I will use this opportunity God has granted me to the uplifting of my life. I appreciate everyone for being in my life and it proves that love and unselfishness is still alive in this world. Everyone has been a true example of how the program was created to work. My light of life has been brightened and I have them and OH to thank for that. I wish you the best and thanks for letting me share!

#### **RACHAEL L.**

I was born and raised in Vancouver, WA. I grew up with my parents and a brother who was five years older than me. I was a typical tomboy girl who played sports and did a lot of family activities. Drugs were not around my life growing up. Hearing about drugs always scared me, thinking I would die if I ever did them. So I made sure to steer clear from them.

When I was about 20, I got my first real job as a waitress at IHOP restaurant. I made some really great friends, or so I thought. One day I was with two of the other servers I had become close to and they were whispering about something. Then they started to argue. I got nosy and said "What's up?" They had lost their Meth hook up. Immediately I said, "I know where to get some." We went in on a bag and that was the start of a very dangerous love affair for me. I got hooked instantly. I still lived at home with my parents, so I had to keep a low cover. I would stay at my "new" friends' houses all the time; my excuse was that they lived close to work so it just made sense. After a few months, I had lost a tremendous amount of weight and my parents had started to take notice so I told them I was working a lot of hours and working hard and was dropping weight from that. They only believed me for a short time. I got careless and passed out after eight days of being awake with all of my drugs and paraphernalia all around me. Brilliant, I know!! I moved to Arizona with my boyfriend for 13 months and got clean there. We decided we wanted to move home – not such a bright idea because I wasn't ready to stay away from Meth yet. Even though I had not done any for over a year, it made me want it more. The first day I was home, I called one of the girls I worked with at IHOP; we got together and got high that day. My boyfriend found out and gave me an ultimatum: Him or Meth. At the time, the choice was easy: METH!

That was September 2003. I hopped on and went for a ride for five more years. I knew how to hide it from my parents now, so I had no problems. I got a great job as a cocktail waitress and was making bank! My parents said I was

doing so good that they co-signed for me to get a new car. Life was great, or, again, so I thought. After about six months into this job, a friend and I went to get some drugs from his friend. The guy and I hit it off, literally. A few months of dating him, I had gone from working full time and making money, and my parents still in the dark of my drug abuse to getting kicked out of my parents' house, losing my job, and living with this guy who, not long after I moved in, started beating me up. Never in my life did I think I would ever end up as a punching bag, especially when I didn't do anything to warrant it. My parents changed the locks on the house and said if I wanted to come home, I had to clean up my act. Yeah, like that was going to happen. So I stayed in this relationship, mostly because I had no place to go. Pathetic excuse but I didn't want to sleep outside, which I did a few times.

In April 2005, I had no money, no job and no way to get drugs. I had a brilliant idea to break into my parents' house because I had some jewelry and stuff I figured I could sell for some money. I lived there my whole life and knew how to get into the house. I got in and scoured the place. I found all of my stuff and found a few other things as well – a shoebox with about \$900 in it. I made a judgment call (a poor one at best); I took a few hundred thinking my mom wouldn't notice. I did this the next few days until the money was gone. I went back one more time and stole my mom's work money, which warranted a phone call to the police from my parents. I really thought I was getting away with it, until the police showed up at my boyfriend's house to arrest me. I went to jail and hated it. My crime was Residential Burglary-DV. I swore that when I got out I wasn't going to go back. but I did several times for probation violations. Also, I had gotten a TEN-YEAR no contact order with my parents for my first offense. That was crazy to me. I did this dance with going to jail for the next year, all PV's, until I had had it with my boyfriend.

In June 2006, the fighting had gotten so much worse the longer we were together, and I was tired of fighting back. I went to a friend's house to stay until I could figure out what to do. My PO at the time told me she didn't care where I was staying as long as I was going to try and go to treatment and then possibly get into an Oxford House. I had attempted Oxford House in December 2005. I had interviewed and was accepted at the Chalet II house, but I never showed up. Then, in April 2006, I interviewed and got accepted at the Myrna B house; this time I showed up but peed dirty, so I was asked to leave. I decided to go to treatment. I was so sick of the lifestyle and not having a safe place to go. I went to treatment in July until the day before Labor Day. I interviewed at three Oxford houses while in treatment and finally got into the Columbia River house in September 2006. I loved it! I thought it was such an amazing idea; the whole concept was so awesome. After six months of living there, a roommate asked me to move out with her, thinking I was "better." I did.

That day I had a drink in my hand, so stupid! A month later, I had started doing cocaine, and two months after that I had moved into my own place and starting using Meth again. A longer story shorter, I bounced back into jail with two more felonies, lost my own place and was back to nothing. I got out of jail in February 2008, decided I was ready to get clean again but had three weeks until there was a bed in treatment for me. I had to couch surf with some friends, and the wrong friends they were. During my stay, I found out that while I was in jail for two and a half months, my best friend ever was killed in a car accident that ended in an explosion. I lost it, and in those three weeks, I slept for about three whole days. I used more Meth than I had probably ever used. I was devastated. I finally got to treatment and ran into a guy that I had seen off and on over the last four years. We decided that 'we' didn't need treatment and left after a week. Not a great idea, but did it anyways. We lasted a whole three weeks together, and I said enough and we broke up. I stayed clean during this time; got a place with a lady I knew from before, got my old job back and was getting my life together. I smoked marijuana on April 24<sup>th</sup> and decided to get a ride from a friend to go shopping; they had this plan to go shoplifting. I used to do that and didn't have any money so it sounded like a good idea. Right? Well, I got arrested and went to jail; luckily a friend that I worked with came and bailed me out so I could keep my job. I knew that I was going to have to go to jail for PV's. I also knew that I wanted a different life. So I talked to my attorney about Drug court. He didn't think I would qualify but I did.

When I turned myself in, I moved out of my place because, to be successful in Drug court, Oxford house would be the best way for me. While I was in jail I went to medical and found out I was pregnant. That was the "sign" or motivation I needed to make my final decision to stay clean. I got out of jail and walked to the closest Oxford house I knew of. When I got to Historic Flynn house, I asked if they couched. They didn't, so I called the Columbia River house (my alma mater) and luckily they couched and there was still people I knew who lived there. That was May 19<sup>th</sup> 2008. I was a coucher for a week, then was voted in. That was a Monday. That following Friday, I opted into Drug court. I went to see my new PO that next week and while there I bumped into my former PO, Judy. She asked how I was doing, I said, "Well, I am new in drug court, pregnant, and living in Oxford house." She laughed and said

I had better do well or she would personally arrest me. I told her to expect a call to my graduation in 12 months. She smiled and said: “I guess we’ll see.”

Twelve months went by so fast and I was graduating drug court, sanction-free and in the minimum 12 month requirement. In that time, I also had my son, Mickey. It didn’t feel real until I held him in my arms. I was meant to be a mother and it felt so good. So I called Judy and left her a message letting her know when and what time my graduation was. The day of graduation I had so many people show up for me, including Judy. She told me how proud she was of me for completing drug court and staying clean. What a great feeling that was!

In January 2010, I went back to school to get myself a career. Today I am a couple of quarters away from completing college with my AA. I still reside at the Columbia River Oxford House. I have been the Chapter Chair for just over a year, and I am also the current Washington State Association Secretary. My son and I have grown a tremendous life for us and it has helped me get to where I am today. My son was born with special needs and that has been a challenge but I haven’t been given more than I can handle. He is the most amazing thing I have done in my life besides being clean and sober. My parents have been amazing for the last four years, very supportive and loving towards Mickey and me. They both told me some great things and I continue to live by them daily. My mom told me this quote, “When you make the commitment to change, the Universe conspires to assist you.” My dad told me, the day we found out my son had special needs: “Honey, you just sealed your sobriety for life.” How amazing those words have helped me keep going strong. I got my first tattoo with the words-Remember the Universe; Sealed for Life; along with two flowers that represent my parents.

My ultimate goal is to become an Outreach Worker, so I am being patient. I love my life in Oxford and I am so grateful to have had this amazing opportunity to be a part of. This is my second World Conference and I am so blessed to be going. Thank you OHI!

#### **CHRIS M.**

I was born on September 30, 1978 in Dallas, Texas. I never was the kid who had a big family. My mother had separated from my father when I was around the age of 5. She had raised my sister and me with some help from my dad. One thing I always carried with a lot of pride was my last name of McGuire. I guess it’s the Irish in me.

After several years of still doing the same thing, my buddies eventually moved on – except one of them. I moved into a duplex that my mother was staying at. She ended up moving next door to help take care of my grandmother. This was a period in my life where the cocaine use was getting worse. I can remember many days of being up late and calling into work.

My friend, his girlfriend and I eventually got our own house. I was still running with the mafia. They were bringing in several hundred pounds at a time. I can remember it like it was yesterday when he and I finally got into a fight over drugs because it got to where I couldn’t trust him anymore. He started using heroin and I was doing my own thing. Years later he died from this disease. One of my regrets to this day is that I missed his funeral because I was loaded. I couldn’t handle it and of course I turned to drugs. This was also a time when I had lost my grandfather, grandmother and my uncle. The only way I knew how to handle things was to turn to drugs.

A few years had passed when I had started using meth. Funny thing is, I was against it for a long while and then fell in love with it. My life went downhill even faster. I quickly was losing everything. I was fighting with my mother more and I had lost a great job at an engineering firm. I thought I could make it again by just selling meth. My anger was getting out of control; I didn’t trust anyone anymore and all of my values really went out the door.

I stopped believing in God and had lost all faith. Once again I moved back in with my mother. She was still living in the house that was left by my grandmother when she passed away. The fighting between us was growing out of control and she was becoming more afraid of me. One night she and I got into a big argument over a disturbing phone call she had received from someone threatening her. She moved out and let me stay. Eventually she went down to the court and had me evicted.

My aunt had lived next door at the duplex. I had always loved her growing up and still to this day I do. My addiction had brought me to my lowest all time low. One night while she wasn’t home I had made the biggest mistake of

my life and robbed her house. All I could think about was what I could take to help support my habit or how much I could buy to make money to get back on my feet. I had taken things from her that had sentimental value and that you could never replace. I eventually made the front page of the Dallas morning news on how they weren't doing their job in getting me. I became a high profile case facing a 20-year sentence.

I was in the hallway talking with my attorney and he told me the DA did not want to come down off my sentence. I looked at him and said: "What do you mean? I thought I was only going to get probation since I had never been on paper before." He then told me that the DA wanted to give me a 20-year sentence. They wanted to make an example of me because I had made the front of the news. Plus, Dallas and Mesquite had wanted to catch me for years on drug charges. I looked at my attorney and told him, "Well I guess they're going to have to do their job and catch me again." As I was walking out of the courthouse, I turned back around and decided to man up. I went in with an open plea to the judge. I was sentenced to shock probation, which is where you are sent to prison along with 10 years probation when you get out.

I ended up doing about 8 or 9 months in prison. Soon after I got out I was doing the same thing over again; insanity, right? It was only 3 days from when I got out that I was using meth again. It didn't take long before I was fighting with my mother again. I hadn't talked with my dad, my sister or her husband for several years. My pride got in the way of even wanting to talk with them. I felt they all owed me an apology, when I was the one who needed to apologize from all the pain I caused them.

I soon went on the run to New Orleans and met up with an old friend. I thought this would solve everything and I would start over. That was the longest drive ever. I was constantly thinking something was wrong with my car because I was so high. Things didn't go as I planned with him so I came back on my birthday.

The day that changed my life was Oct 8, 2006. This was the day my mother saved my life. After everything I had put her through, she had the courage to call the police to tell them I was staying with her. I had woken up that morning and had a couple of donuts with my dog. Then I heard that knock. I quickly got up and started to run towards her back door when she told me it was the boy scouts. I just stopped and looked at her. She went behind the door and walked back in the apartment crying; that's when I knew I was facing an automatic 10-year sentence. No going to court or anything.

By the grace of God I received another chance. I had chosen to go to a substance abuse felony punishment for the easy way out. This is where my faith in God had come back. I slowly started to pray and read the Bible while I was locked up. When I got to the unit, after about a month, this is when my mom told me she was the one that turned me in. The funny thing is, one night I had a dream that someone I knew had snitched me out. I opened the Bible up and the page that I turned to talked about not getting revenge. I quickly wrote my mother about the dream and what I read.

When I was released from the unit I had to spend 90 days at the Salvation Army. This is where I learned about Oxford House. I didn't want to live with a bunch of guys after all this but I had no choice but to move into one. Soon I started to work my program. It was exactly one year from the day I was locked up that I moved into my Oxford House. I have been clean from drugs and alcohol for a little over 5 ½ years. It has become my passion to help other recovering addicts to get back on their feet. I was elected as a Chapter and State Chair for Oxford House in 2008 and in 2009 became Vice Chair on the World Council.

One of the sayings that I don't like to hear is that relapse is a part of recovery. I truly believe that helping others will remind me of my past and gets me out of self.

## **MARY**

As I write this, I am lounging on one of the couches in a 9 bedroom Oxford House for Women in New Orleans, LA that has been open for 7 days. My name is Mary and I am an alcoholic with the gift of desperation.

I started drinking when I was 15 years old after being raped, getting pregnant and giving the child that was the product of that vicious act up for adoption. I left home and never went back. I drank all the time. I managed to finish high school but I am still not sure how I did that. I got married at 20 and had my daughter when I was 21. I man-

aged to not drink when I was pregnant with her or with her sister who was born 19 months later. My oldest son, however, was born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome as I didn't stop drinking during my pregnancy. He was born in 1992. My children's father's grandmother took custody of my children when my son was born. The sadness of losing my children was just another excuse to drink.

In 1995, I got sober when a friend introduced me to AA. I stayed sober for 12 ½ years and had 3 more children in my sobriety. My last pregnancy was twins, a boy and a girl. On April 20, 2008, my twins were in a car accident. They were 8 years old. My daughter died after being in a coma for 4 weeks. My son, her twin, was devastated, as was I – and our entire family. My husband left and I drank. Since then, I have struggled to get and stay sober. In March, 2011 my son who was 12 at the time (he's 14 now) had to drive us home from a Mardi Gras Parade because I was too drunk to drive. On Ash Wednesday I checked into detox.

My two youngest sons were sent to a boys' home in New Orleans where they could get the help that they needed while I was getting the help that I needed. I went to a long-term all-female treatment facility here in the city. I was there for a total of 8 months. When I got out, I moved in with a man that I had been seeing since my divorce. He drinks a lot and I really thought that I could live there and not drink. I drank again. And again. And again. I have enough white chips to decorate a whole wall in my bedroom. It's true. I was one of those judgmental people in AA who get frustrated at people constantly picking up white chips. Now I am the one that I used to judge. How ironic, huh?

So, on June 18, 2012, I made a decision to surrender to my alcoholism. I was willing to do whatever was necessary to stay sober. I put all of my belongings into my car and parked it in front of an AA clubhouse in New Orleans, LA. I went inside to a meeting, picked up a white chip and went back to my car to go to sleep. It didn't take long for people in the meetings to notice what I was doing. AA's made sure I had something to eat, sometimes even a couch to lay my head on. I got a job as a waitress in a pancake house near the clubhouse.

There is a woman in AA who used to bring meetings into the treatment center I was in and we had stayed in contact after I left. She told me that she had a friend who is involved with Oxford House and gave me her number. I called Lori soon after that and she told me that they would be opening a house for women in the city soon, like maybe a month or two. I chose to not go to one of the other houses out of town and to wait for New Orleans. I continued sleeping in my car and staying sober. To me, it didn't matter where I lay my head as long as I stayed sober.

I called Lori several times to touch base. Lori and I talked on Saturday, July 28, 2012 and we met up. She had a man named Marty with her and they showed me the house. My sons were with me and we all went to lunch and talked and laughed and a great time. At the end of lunch, we walked back to the new house and made plans to meet up later that afternoon.

When Lori and I met up later, she handed me keys to my new home. I didn't expect it to happen so quickly. I didn't expect anything that has happened to me since. I live in the first Oxford House for Women in New Orleans!! The house is called Vieux Carre and it has 9 bedrooms and is beautiful. I went to my first Chapter Meeting this past Sunday and I can't even begin to explain to you how much in awe of Oxford House I am.

I am finding out that it is more than just a place to lay my head. It is about having a family, which I haven't had since I was a child. It's about learning to live differently. Last week, I had a bad day and couldn't make it all the way to my house. I stopped at one of the Oxford Houses for Men and cried on their shoulder until I felt safe enough to go home. They are my brothers now. I belong somewhere, finally. I feel like I have known Lori my whole life.

I still can't believe that I am trusted with keys to this beautiful house. Not only that, but I am President of our house and there are four of us as of today. I have never seen the loving actions from other people in my life as I see every-day with this organization. The generosity of the other houses in our chapter and even in other chapters just blows me away. When I was in the Chapter Meeting I struggled with how to tell these men (and Lori) just what they have done for me. I do not know how to express the gratitude that I feel.

Can you believe that an alcoholic like me lives at Oxford House Vieux Carre? Oxford House has saved my life. I can be safe, sober and responsible because I have these wonderful people in my life to show me how to do it. I did my first interview today with the help of Marty and one of the men from another house. Now there are four of us

and it is wonderful! I am sitting here listening to the laughter and chatter in the house and just had to pinch myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming.

At a house meeting in another chapter that I attended (to learn how it's done), they stand in the circle at the end and say, "Let's have a moment of silence for the alcoholics and drug addicts who are still sick and suffering." That pretty much says it all for what this organization is doing to save lives, one alcoholic/addict at a time. Thank you so much for giving me a chance. I would probably be drinking again were it not for all of you!!

#### **STEVE P.**

My name is Steve Preslar and I am an addict. The specifics of how, when, and why are not important. We, as addicts and alcoholics, are very familiar with the lonely road of addiction and where it ends. So I will start out by saying I was at the end of this road and for the first time in my active addiction; I truly wanted a change. I was either going to live or I was going to die, and, frankly I didn't care which one it would be.

Not knowing how or what to do, I checked into a rehabilitation center. It was extremely hard for me to believe that the staff there truly cared for me; someone they had never met before; someone I had come to hate. Through their hope and desire for me to succeed, I made a decision to live but I still didn't know how.

A few calls were made in preparation for my departure and a bed was open at the Cedarwild Oxford house in Charlotte, NC. I had never heard of Oxford House, and was scared to death. Men I had never met before welcomed me with open arms. They truly cared for me and wanted me to succeed, just like the rehabilitation center. I moved in and started to learn the Oxford house way of life. The desire to change was mine and mine alone, but Oxford House gave me the responsibility, accountability, tough love, and support needed to stay on the course. The help I received in rehab weighed heavy upon my heart; so I decided to go back to school. Using tools I acquired from Oxford House, I recently graduated and now I am a Certified Nursing Assistant in NC.

Because of Oxford House, I have a family, the greatest and closest friends I have ever had. With Oxford House I continue learn who I am and how to have patience, joy and peace in my life. I would like to thank my Higher Power, Oxford House, and my brothers and, sisters for showing me the way and traveling with me on my new journey.

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." – Robert Frost

I thank you all for saving my life.

#### **SANDY G.**

My name is Sandy and I am an addict. I am 34 years old and my clean date is 1-21-2010. I have been married twice and I have 2 teenage children. I started using when I was 12 and have used everything I could since then, including, people and places. I was always looking for something to make me feel OK. I left my children with their father in 2001 and told myself I was doing something good for them. I moved about every 6 months to a year because nothing ever "fit" for me. The end of the road started for me in the fall of 2009 when I decided that living in my van with my boyfriend, constantly chasing one more, was better than living with my parents and having regular contact with my children. I had been in and out of psychiatric hospitals and had found some labels that I believed made sense of why I was the way I was. I finally had something to blame everything on and none of it was my fault.

By Dec. 2009 I was turning tricks and every second of my life I was finding ways and means to get just one more. After a failed attempt at a trick, my boyfriend and I had gotten into a big fight and two days later, when I didn't have the strength to move, he took me to the hospital. I was very dehydrated, required IV fluids, had a bruised skull, temporary right eye problems, and more bruising in my vaginal walls than the doctors had ever seen. I left the hospital that day and went back to getting high. Christmas Eve 2009 my boyfriend got arrested for DWLR and a few hours later my home (van) broke down. I stayed locked in a hotel room with a "john" for 18 hours waiting on the answer to "what now". I could either go live on the streets or go to my family and let it all out. So, Christmas morning, that is what I did. I told them everything and my sister said I could stay with her. Even with my family's love, I still couldn't stop and I asked to move back in with my parents thinking that would "make" me stop. It didn't.

On Jan. 20, 2010, at 3am when I knocked on my dad's bedroom window to let me in, I knew something had to change. That next day, while sitting on the computer, I remembered hearing of NA and thought it might be worth a try. I was out of answers. My sister drove me there and when I walked in I saw all these people laughing and smiling and I got pissed off. I was in the wrong place for sure because these people were too happy to know what I was going through. I stayed for the meeting and someone gave me a basic text. I don't remember much more than that. As we were leaving I told myself that I wouldn't be going back and that my destiny was just to be 'stuck in stupid and parked in dumb.'

As I was leaving, this lady stopped me and started a conversation, then she offered me a ride home. I knew I had nothing to give her for the ride but decided I would just duck out and wouldn't see her again anyway. I don't remember much about the ride home other than I had found some identification. We sat in her truck and talked for a long time and she answered every question that I had. She said she would come to get me the next day for another meeting and that I could call anytime. I did call that night and she answered. The next night we went to a meeting and I picked up my white chip. She became my sponsor and helped me in more ways than I can ever say. I became very honest with her and was willing to do whatever she said.

During the Spring of 2011, I was talking to a member of the Men's Oxford house and was wondering why there was nothing in Salisbury for women. Between the two of us, we found a house and talked to the right people and it was in the works. We knew there was a need for one. I wasn't going to move in the house, just continue to stay with my parents and work on me. The house was due to open in Aug. 2011 and in July, after many conversations with my sponsor, I called and applied. The house opened and two other women and I moved in on Aug. 15, 2011.

The day I moved out, my dad changed the locks on the door because, with 18 months clean, I was still so self-centered that he couldn't stand to live with me and didn't want me back. When I moved into an Oxford House, I was in a space of only applying the principles I was learning to the dope and nothing else. This house has helped me learn how to apply the principles to every area of my life. I was full of so much control and self-centeredness and wanted it to be the way I wanted it. I have learned that I don't have all the answers and that my way isn't the best way. I have been in this house a year next month and I am a completely different person from the one that moved in. I have learned to listen and think before I talk. I have learned how to be there for another recovering woman. I have learned that God can bring a message to me through anyone. There are days that I don't want to live here; those days are usually the ones that I don't want to do any work. I have learned responsibility and selflessness. There really isn't enough paper for me to describe all that I have learned. I know that when I moved in I was headed for a relapse and my program was iffy. Today I am secure in my foundation and my program is as strong as ever. I have found a sense of peace that I have never known before. I know that just for today I never have to use again and because of this house I know that just for today I never have to live in my disease again.

My plan is to take care of my responsibilities and when the time is right to get a place for me and my children who, because of the Oxford House, feel more secure in our relationship than ever before and I plan on being an Oxford House alumna.

#### **WILL M.**

My name is Will M. and I am an addict. My clean date is June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011. I was born and raised in Greensboro, North Carolina. I grew up in what I would consider an, "all-American family." I have two brothers; one older and one younger. In my childhood I had everything I ever needed or wanted; I did not go without. The memories I have of my childhood were, for the most part all good, but the most vivid memory I have occurred when I was eleven years old. I found my dad having an affair. I did not tell anyone because I knew what would come next; I went about a month and told no one. I remember coming home from school the day after telling my mom, and there was a locksmith at my house changing our locks. I did not see or speak to my dad again for about two years.

Not to say that I started using drugs because of this; however, this was around the time I had my first experience with drugs, and I loved it! It changed the way I felt about myself and about life in general. I used this one particular substance for the next three years until I got to high school and things were more accessible. I experimented with various substances throughout high school, and, of course, had consequences for everything I did. I did not care about anything or anyone. I had several "run-ins" with the law, and I got my first DUI before I even graduated from

high school. By the time I actually did graduate from high school, I thought I had found what I had been looking for, and nothing else mattered. The idea of going to college was completely foreign to me.

I moved out of my mom's house and got a house with some people I thought were friends. After three months they saw me for who I was; they all moved out and I was all alone in a four bedroom house. I was okay with that. I stayed there for three more months and in that time I got another DUI, lost my job, and had absolutely nothing. I hated life and seemed to think life hated me; I attempted suicide, and ended up in a psych ward. When I was released I decided that I needed a geographical change. I moved to Greenville, NC; which I now know was a horrible idea. I was introduced to harder, more illicit drugs, which took me to places I would have never been; put me in and out of jail, and again at the end of the day, I was all alone. In two years of that lifestyle, that I could not seem to escape, I moved back to Greensboro. What I found out about moving from place to place was that I always brought myself and all of my problems with me. I continued doing the same thing I had always done against my will for about two more years. Life was horrible and chaotic. I could not seem to use enough to cover and numb the pain that came from what I was doing. I tried everything to stop and nothing ever worked. I knew where the real help was because my older brother had walked down the same roads that I did; gotten clean and completely turned his life around. I wanted to do that so badly but I could not. I was too ashamed to ask for the help that I so desperately needed.

When I finally accepted that I needed help and actually asked for it, it was there for me. So, I went to treatment. I remember being in treatment and hearing about Oxford House and I immediately shot that down and wrote it off; I was not doing that. About two days before I was released, I realized that I had burnt all of my bridges and had nowhere else to go. I decided to call and set up an interview with an Oxford House. The day I got out I went to this house for my interview. I was so scared because I did not know what to expect. The house accepted me which was a great relief. I met people there that it was working for which was a big deal for me because I did not think it was possible to go five minutes without using something. It gave me hope that maybe it was possible.

After getting clean and removing myself from the only way of life I knew, things started changing and getting better. I was able to open up and let people in for the first time in my life. I took the suggestions that were given to me about getting a sponsor; calling him and working the steps. In working the steps I found freedom, and, in time, the day came that I did not think about getting high. That is when I knew it was possible. Today I continue to do what works: I attend meetings regularly, even when I don't want to or don't think I need to do so. I call my sponsor, work steps, reach out to newcomers and do service work whenever I can. My life has changed tremendously from taking these simple suggestions and dealing with things as they come to me, one day at a time. I have met genuine people who understand me and have my best interest at heart. They accept me for who I am; an addict. I have friends today that I can call at any given time and tell them anything, and they will listen and actually help me with my struggles. I have been able to repair broken, damaged relationships with my family, which I thought would never happen. In this process I have landed the most amazing job that does more for my recovery than I ever imagined. I can show up and be there for someone else today, and not base everything on what I can get out of it. From practicing the principles the program offers, I can actually enjoy life today. This journey has not been the easiest but I now know it is possible to live life without the use of drugs.

#### **JULIE N.**

I am a grateful recovering addict and my problem is Julie. I was born in February, 1977 to wonderful parents in Louisiana -- young parents; successful parents. Success came at a price and, when I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, my dad went to prison for embezzlement. He was the Vice President of a bank in our small town and the President of the local Country Club. My silver spoon was ripped right out of my mouth and then came humility. My mom, sister, and I moved out of our big house and right into a small duplex. The next 18 months were spent traveling back and forth to Texarkana to visit Dad in jail. Fun times, right? During my sophomore year of high school, my dad had this bright idea of a "geographical cure" and we moved. On my second day in this new high school, my dad walked out the door never to be seen again. He committed suicide on August 25, 1992 because he could no longer handle his own battle within himself. I spent the next 20 years looking for answers I would never get, and subconsciously placing myself in situations to get the answers I so desired.

I got married to a great man in the Air Force at Barksdale AFB. I played the role of mom to my beautiful two boys, doting wife to a man whose job came first, and so-called friend to many. But I was drinking heavily and then came the drugs. I guess I was born an addict, because it wasn't long at all before I was using daily, drinking daily, and still wearing the mask. Boy was that EXHAUSTING. My dealer ran out of my drug of choice and introduced me to

something that changed my life forever. Let's just say that for my husband; having a crackhead for a wife was not appealing in our community, especially since, by this time, he had been promoted to Major.

We moved....another "geographical cure" in our attempts to save me from the problem I had created for us and ended up in Arlington, VA. It wasn't long before I found what I was looking for and ended up spending the majority of my time searching the streets of Southeast DC. I left my boys at home alone one night to just go get "ONE". I didn't come home. I was arrested the next morning and spent the next 10 days in DC lockup. I was charged with felony child neglect and was sentenced to 4 years of probation and an 8 year suspended prison sentence. I left jail, went to treatment....left treatment, went to a shelter....left the shelter, went to OH-Diva House. And life was getting better by the minute!! Or so I thought!

I moved out of Oxford House entirely too soon and against the advice of my peers and my sponsor. I went back with my family....what could be better than that? My husband was offered a position as Commander of a bomb squadron at Minot AFB, ND and off we went. And I took myself with me. And another "geographical cure" failed yet again. I was drinking shortly after my one year celebration and, while in detox after spending time in ICU, I was divorced. Just like that I lost everything I put ahead of my recovery. I moved back to OH-Diva House with my tail between my legs and it wasn't long before I was using AGAIN. No God of my understanding; no service to others. I was selfishness through and through. They evicted me in February 2010 and that's when the suicide attempt came. That's when my dad (the wonderful man my mom married after my other dad passed away) came to pick me up and off I went – back to Louisiana and guess what?? Another "geographical cure" on the horizon. Guess who I took with me? MYSELF. Again.

Needless to say, I hit ROCK bottom on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011. It took 5 more days of me selling everything I could get my hands on....furniture, jewelry, myself....just to get my drugs. I realized I was near death, alone, scared, and if I didn't get help, I would never see my children again. And I realized that I did not want to leave them with the same legacy that was left to me. So I called an Oxford House in Virginia (my boys and ex-husband lived in Arlington). My mom had given me 5 phone numbers of 5 Oxford Houses in 5 different states. She told me to pick a number. I had no idea that the random phone number I picked would land me in a town I had never heard of....Lynchburg, VA. The Oxford House had been open less than a month. The women of Oxford House Randolph Macon welcomed me with open arms. I had driven 16 hours straight, alone, no job, only the clothes on my back, on a wing and a prayer. And God took my hand and led me exactly to where I needed to be.

And then I believed. I believed that there was a Higher Power that was taking care of me when I could not take care of myself. I believed in Oxford House and, if it worked for me, it can work for anyone. I believed in my future for the first time. I believed that I could stay clean and sober. I believed in myself. Then I put service and God before self.

I now have the amazing opportunity to work with other recovering addicts and alcoholics and share and spread the message of Oxford House to people in 5 cities, 26 houses and counting, and hundreds of souls. I am so blessed to be where I am today. I owe it all to this amazing organization and my life will never be the same thanks to the support of my former Oxford House Diva's, my Randolph Macon Oxford House, and the many people I come in contact with on a daily basis. I celebrated my first miracle year on July 10, 2012. God is GOOD....ALL THE TIME.

#### **LYNN W.**

My name is Lynn Williams. I am a mother and a grandmother who grew up in a military family in Hampton, Virginia. This is not my first rodeo in recovery; previously I was clean for 10 years, had a great job in the recovery field. At that time it was all about money, property and prestige -- needless to say, for all the wrong reasons – and I relapsed.

After relapsing, it took me 6 years and some horrific experiences to realize that I did not want to live like that anymore. I was homeless, unemployed and unemployable. I was bankrupt mentally, physically and spiritually. For the first time, after using on and off for 27 years, I decided I wanted something different and I wanted it for me more than someone else wanted it for me. I went in residential treatment for 4 months to get a foundation and some acceptance and today I am the housing manager for that same program.

I moved into Brentwood Oxford House on February 15, 2010 and they put me to work. Once I was sold on the Oxford House concept I gave it my all. I read all that I could find about Oxford House including all the house and position manuals. I scoured the website and asked lots of questions. I got involved with my house and the chapter; I went to state board meetings and attended conventions. I was amazed that Oxford House was not just Raleigh, NC but the world.

Today, I live in Oxford House Pond in Cary, NC, I have a sponsor who is an Oxford House alumna and I use her on a daily basis. I have served several positions in the house. I serve as Chapter 1 Treasurer and Co-chair of Housing Services. I am the Activities Chair for the State Board of NC Oxford Houses and I am serving a term with the World Council as a Resident Alternate. I am also a Peer Advocate. Everything I do in Oxford House gives me the opportunity to help the newcomer, giving back what was so freely given to me. I still thirst for the knowledge of Oxford House and am ever so grateful for the opportunity not to just exist but to live a happy, healthy productive life, clean from any mood or mind-altering substances. The war is over and I finally have a HOME where I feel I belong!

### **SCOTTY D.**

We, the addicted, have all heard varying tragedies that inevitably follow whatever self-destructive course one falls into. Hell, most of us are the very outcome of those tragedies. So my story isn't totally unique except the excess to which I fell. My resume reads in the form of a judgment and sentencing form: 10 years x 3, 8years x 2, 5 years x 2, Life x 5.

In 1989 my addictions and mental maladies had run full course and by October 22, I found myself in a jail cell facing 90 + felony counts of Armed Robbery in four different states. I went on a bender that broke my life into a mess that was too surreal to comprehend for a number of years, and to even try to fix the mess I had made was beyond belief.

My freedom from addiction came at the loss of my freedom. Irony at its best! Regardless, I was freed from years of different self-inflicted abuses, and I was content with that. I spent the next two decades reading and educating myself to be the man I should have been from the beginning. I never asked for a parole or sentence modification. I never even asked God to help me get out, just to help me do each day without hurting myself or others.

I utilized my time for self-improvement, and my environment was a monastery that allowed me to keep myself from things that threatened my sanctity. The misconception that the prison system is a sober living environment is insipid at best. The fact is there is more, better, cheaper, and it is readily available. The thing is that an individual can make that concerted effort to separate from this lifestyle, and it is generally respected. The peer-pressure isn't as severe in the joint as it seems out here.

After a number of years, the states finally finished with me and released me under many Parole Stipulations and it was time to put years of practice into practical application. Entering into the world out here without family or friends, financial support would have been impossible, but this was part of my plan. Putting my family through the drama's I did left me little room for favors, and I really wanted to show everyone that I could do it without being more of a burden to them. This is where I ran into problems.

There are not too many places that help the average civilian find his or her way back to sobriety with open arms and housing, much less for someone with my history. The apprehension with my case was never really based on my capability to re-offend, but the fact that after two decades in a cage there would be too many things to face for the first time. The consensus was (and still remains in some circles) that re-adapting to modern society would be too overwhelming for an addict to successfully re-integrate without relapse.

Oxford house offered me a safe environment to slowly step out into this new world, and a support network of some men and women who have been through enough that they won't let someone half step, or fake their way through. They are people who care because they have been there to one degree or another, and have dedicated their life and sobriety to helping others find a way out.

I don't have the oppressive structure of a prison here; instead, I have a group that I belong to as an equal voice, which expects me to pull my weight and answer responsibly for my actions. I have a sense of belonging to a team that has a positive set of goals and a future. I am learning how to manage a household – budgeting, paying bills, and all the essentials that are necessary to survive as an adult that I deprived myself of as a young man. The life skills learned here are as valuable as any degree. The encouragement and effort to make each one not only self-sufficient, but to see our self-worth in spite of our histories, surpasses that of any program offered anywhere. The worry of falling back into old habits has been eased with the comfort and support that has been offered by Oxford House. At some point soon I'll step out on my own, and I give a lot of the credit to me and a strong spirit to live sober and free. But, in fairness, I have to share this credit with this group that was willing to take a gamble on me. If not for their help, my outcome might have been different.

At some point I would like to be listed as one of the success stories as opposed to a recidivism statistic. I believe this is not only possible, but probable, thanks to Oxford House and the men and women who support this organization

### **ROA P.**

My story goes a little like this...after years of abusing crystal meth and anything I could get my hands on, I finally got into enough trouble to land myself a short 9-month stay in prison. I had been in and out of jails for about 2 years and when the convictions took me to prison, I had enough. Or so I thought. I managed to stay "clean" for a few months after being released and even got a job at work release and continued to work for that same company. I started to drink and eventually went back to my "drug of choice", crystal.

After about 6 months of staying high, I had enough. With the help of my boy friend and his family, I put myself into treatment at Lakeside Milam in Kirkland. I now know that this was the best investment I ever made for myself. My head cleared enough in there and the Oxford coordinator, who still to this day is one of my best friends, talked to me about moving into Oxford. His sister lived there and she was getting her life in order. I didn't know what I wanted, but I didn't want to ever live or feel the way I did when I first walked into that treatment center. So I did was suggested and moved into the Licton Springs Oxford House in Seattle. It was November of 2006 and I moved out June 1, 2011.

Oxford was the most amazing and wonderful and frustrating experience I could have had at that point in my life. I made lifelong friends. I grew up and I began having trusting and solid relationships with other women. I never thought I could trust other women, let alone become friends with them and, thanks to Oxford, I have wonderful friendships with amazing women!!! Learning to live my life the way it was intended, that's something I learned living in Oxford. It truly is a "new way of living"...I immersed myself into doing service work for my Oxford house as well as on a chapter level and enjoyed all our shenanigans at the state meetings, especially when we had to travel, lol! I got to go to New Orleans for the World Convention in 2008 and meet folks from all over. I came to believe in the bigger picture of what this whole thing was about. It is so much more than just me, more than my chapter and more than my state. Oxford Houses are saving lives anywhere people can open up a house. That to me is such an amazing feat.

I had the honor of meeting Paul Molloy and his wife in New Orleans and even passed a shirt around for people to sign with their chapters and states. I will never forget my days at Oxford and if ever asked to do service work for it, I would gladly say "when and where?" If you're new to your house or even if you've been there for a while, GET INVOLVED and STAY INVOLVED!!!!

My name is Roa Pesamino and I'm an alumna of the Licton Springs Oxford House, Chapter 23 of Washington State. Oxford along with my 12-step program saved my life and will forever be thankful!!!

### **MONICA H.**

As I was growing up, there were many pressures in my life that affected my choices on drugs and alcohol. Being a social butterfly and always into extracurricular activities, it might seem that I wouldn't test limits on experimenting with drugs. There was such a diverse, interesting culture with many new paths that I began seeking my own creative side through clothing, music, and people. I soon came to a point in my life where I was not with the same crowd as

before and I started losing touch with my goals in life. At the time drugs were introduced to me; having low ambitions brought me further into my addiction.

Addiction to drugs has been a problem for me since I was a teenager. I have been in and out of treatment facilities trying to find a solution. After three detoxes, two rehabs and many hours of Intensive Outpatient Treatment, I wanted to quit using but couldn't understand how. I never had the right kind of willingness, guidance, or knowledge of recovery in order to stay clean. Also, living at my parents' was always a trigger for me, so I would always end up going out for days on binges and would lose my parent's trust over and over again.

My rock bottom was when I went out the last time. I was arrested and got a possession charge. Being in jail for three weeks, while my parents used tough love on me by not getting me out, really made me think about how to fix what I had done wrong. While in jail, I was visited by a counselor to help me find the best solution for when I went to court. When he mentioned the Oxford House to me, I remembered hearing about it at treatment in Black Mountain. Since there was a women's house in Hickory, I knew if I was accepted that I could be close to my daughter, who was living with my parents. The day of court went smoothly, and the judge granted me permission to stay at the Oxford House instead of spending fifteen months in jail. I was crying tears of joy because I knew that my life was saved.

Once I was accepted and moved into the Viewmont Oxford House, I made it my new dwelling. I made friends at the house and in Narcotics Anonymous, which helped me learn about myself and open up to others more. I had been so lost into masks and dark illusions from my active addiction that I was shut down and spiritually dead. So, moving into a structured environment where I could meet new people and still have the freedom to be myself, I found a new life and discovered my inner beauty.

I lived at the Oxford House for over fourteen months, and I held all of the house positions, including Chapter Secretary and Chapter Chair. I couldn't ask for anything more than the willingness I had gained and the respect I received from holding these important roles. Also, I started to stand up for what I believed in: freedom from active addiction. Doing service work at the Chapter meetings and going to the State Board Meetings really sparked my interest, and it made me want to learn more about the organization. The Conventions were where I started to branch out to other Oxford Houses around the state and the world, too.

Now, I have moved out of the Oxford House residency and into an apartment not far away. I am an alumna and I stay connected to the girls at the house and to the other houses in the Chapter. I've just been elected to be Chapter Secretary for Chapter 16, in which I am truly delighted. I believe in the power of service work and how it can keep me clean. Staying in contact with Misty Wilkins, the Outreach Worker for Chapter 16, has been a blessing for my recovery and spiritual growth. I love my new life, and a chance to make the wrongs I've done right make this journey very rewarding.

#### **MATTHEW E.**

My story starts like everyone else's – I was born. I was born in Oklahoma City in 1982 and was raised in a loving home until I flew the coop when I was 19 to college (I very quickly returned but shall get to that directly). There was little to no alcohol and no drugs whatsoever. I grew up in a somewhat affluent suburb of Dallas and from the get-go I knew, or rather felt, that something about me was different. I did not have many friends. I was a very curious child who tinkered with just about everything to learn how it worked, and read. I read a great deal. Over the years since, I have come to realize that reading was my first escape from the alien reality in which I lived. Reading allowed me to both satisfy my curiosity of the world and to escape into more idyllic locales where I could make sense of everything.

Moving along to when I was about ten or twelve, I distinctly remember feeling as if I had nothing in common with anyone in my life, including my parents and sister. By this time I had been completely ostracized from my peers, had been through so much religious abuse by individuals who considered themselves my better simply because I was not as devout as they were, was having great deal of trouble in school due to having dyslexia and other learning disabilities, and was becoming increasingly more odd and eccentric in the way I dressed, spoke, and acted. Despite feeling so alien to the outside world at this time, I still knew and took at least some solace in the fact my parents loved me and did what they could to understand me. My sister, on the other hand, was a different matter entirely, but over the years through the program I have been able to mend this relationship and at least be there for her to the

best of my ability even though often times it is not reciprocated. It was also at this time in my life that I began to fight with other boys and become a disruption in class when a teacher admonished me or attempted to make a fool out of me for asking a question which was above the level at which it was being taught. For example, when I was in third grade I had a teacher mark an answer wrong for using the scientific name of something instead of the common name that she was looking for; it was things such as these which I had to deal with throughout my entire primary school career and even to this day in college. All of this simply served to show me that I was abnormal by everyone else's standards and to reinforce within myself that I was alone against the rest of the world. It is from this part of my life that I have gained the ability to get through whatever life throws at me no matter what.

Now that I have given you a short rundown of my origins, I think it prudent to qualify myself. I got high for the first time when I was seventeen years old. I must warn you, though, if drug specific dialogue bothers you, first off I believe that ignoring this aspect of addiction is a disservice to the program and two, talk to your sponsor about it. A year and a half later in my senior year, I tried ecstasy for the first time and fell in love with it; however, it would be another year before I began using it heavily. Between my first experience with ecstasy and hitting the races, I got drunk (and blacked out) for the first time and began to smoke pot on a semi-regular basis. After graduating high school, I went to college in St. Louis and within a month was expelled from school for hazing and fighting. I was the victim of a hazing incident in which I received third degree burns on my upper arm and drank so much I began having an alcoholic seizure. Upon my return to my parents' house, I got a job at a coffee shop and met a girl who became both my using buddy and my first love. We began using ecstasy daily for about six months and eventually I got to a point where I had had enough so I told her that I wanted to stop to which she replied that I should call her after a break from the life for a couple weeks; I have never seen nor spoken to her since. At this point, I was still only nineteen and there was a break of about a year between doing anything at all until I went to school in Denton (north of Dallas about thirty miles) where I began smoking copious amounts of marijuana, drinking copious amounts of alcohol, and dropping acid when I could get my hands on it. Once I turned twenty-one, however, everything went to hell in a hand basket. Overnight I became an alcoholic drinking a fifth a day and smoking about an eighth of weed along with it. There were times when I would do this or that drug but it was just short of a year until I found my true loves – cocaine and ketamine. This was the beginning of the end and I went to the absolute depths of moral degradation, emotional turmoil, and mental anguish that is so common in addicts. Eventually I attempted to check myself into detox but was not admitted because my prescribing physician would not sign off. So I went home and began detoxing alone. I made it three days until I called my using buddy and used the last time. I remember the exact day, where I was standing in my kitchen, and that it was 11:29PM March 29, 2006 when I bent over the mirror for my last night of using. The next day, March 30 2006, I went to my first meeting, an AA in downtown Lewisville where I was living at the time, still drunk and high and admitted I was powerless. Since then I have not relapsed. This one day was the end of my previous life and the beginning of my current one.

After this admission, the real work started. Yes, the DT's sucked royally- the kicking, shitting, and puking were one of the hardest things I have been through – but slowly, through going to three meetings a day, they began to abate. In my arrogance, I worked all twelve steps there at that first meeting, and continued to work all twelve of them every time I was there until someone took me aside and said it was much more than just reading them over and pontificating about them. I got a sponsor and began working steps. I got through the fourth step and my first sponsor broke my anonymity during a meeting. Despite this, I persevered and began the search for a new sponsor. I went through another four men due to my beliefs surrounding a higher power (at the time I was a raging atheist) and finally found the man who helped me learn to live again in the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. He just so happened to be an evangelical southern Baptist and not once did he ever say anything to me about my beliefs or attempt to witness me. It was through this man that I learned the true meaning of being honest, open-minded, and willing. My sponsor was, to put it lightly, a 'hard ass.' He was oftentimes very short with me when I was having a problem because I had called him before going to meeting and talked about it. However, once I did, he would stay on the phone with me for hours if need be. He suggested I get into service past making coffee for meetings, to begin sponsoring other men, and to walk the principles, which I was so apt to talk. He completely demolished any shred of ego I had and taught me the true meaning of humility. He even took time away from his wife who was dying of stage four cancer to do stepwork with me. Most importantly, I learned from him one of the cornerstones of my program, "Keep it simple, stupid!"

Since I have been clean, I have been through almost everything, both the good and the bad – death of friends, loved ones, a parent, marriage, divorce, finding out about a child when he was four, dealing with debilitating depressions and hospitalizations for ECT treatments (shock treatments), moving to a strange city where I knew nobody to save

my life, rebuilding a support group, and having a child whom I have never seen due to my relationship (or lack thereof) with my ex-wife. My first eighteen months clean, I buried eight friends and a much beloved uncle. I found out about my oldest son three weeks after I had my two years clean. I met my future wife right before finding out about my son and was hospitalized four months later to begin six months of ECT treatments. I left everything behind and moved two thousand miles away from everything I had ever known with a backpack, two shirts, and a pair of pants. No matter what though, I always go through these things with the mentality of 'no matter what' and that no matter how bad it gets, I will *always* learn something new about myself; I just might have no idea what it could be.

Upon arriving at where I now call home, I entered an Oxford House for the first time since cleaning up. It was very strange to move in somewhere in a recovery setting with four years clean but since then I have been amazed. Prior to moving in, I had lived alone the entire time I was clean (save for about eight months with my ex-wife) and had no idea what it was like to have someone to lean on other than at the other end of a phone. I was thrown into service in the house right away and the men in the house helped me to find a home group and sponsor while at the same time supporting me as I adjusted to my new life. I have had some ups and downs since living at my house, but nothing in all the years I have been clean nor the store of knowledge I have dealing with the less savory aspects of life on life's terms could prepare me for the phone call from my mother telling me to get to Dallas as soon as humanly possible because my father had been in a bicycle accident and it did not look good. It took me almost fourteen hours to get there between layovers and whatnot and I arrived at the hospital just in time to say goodbye. As my father was taken off life support, I was able to hold his hand and tell him that I would take care of my mother and sister and be alright with it. The men of the house stood behind me the whole time, took care of my things, were there for me at all hours of the night, and welcomed me back with open arms and genuine concern for my well being. Through this single event in my life, since I have not thought about using a single time since that phone call, I have realized that I truly am past the drugs and onto the more deeply-rooted aspects of my addiction. I have found that I have other addictions surrounding sex, spending money, eating, smoking (I am in the process of quitting again though), and isolation. Living in Oxford House, with its broad range of members in different stages of recovery, I have been able to talk to them about what I am realizing through this whole ordeal with my father in addition to my sponsor.

In these meager six years I have been clean at the time I am writing this, I have learned many things about myself and the rest of the world. I have learned that, contrary to my belief, the universe does not revolve around me and that the vast majority of people out there could care less about even knowing my name. It has been through the steps, traditions, and concepts that I have been able to get alright with myself, others, and being of service to others. Through being accountable I have been able to show up for people who have never had someone there for them. I owe my life to the program and as such am obligated to give away what was so freely given to me. I encourage every man who is fresh in recovery to at the least investigate Oxford House and I will do my best to sponsor them in the way that has worked for me. All said and told though, the only thing I have to say is that I "keep it simple, stupid" so that I can stay willing to grow.

#### **TRACE P.**

I first tried to get sober in December of 1981. Three years after graduating high school I hit my first bottom: drugs, alcohol, dropping out of college, getting married and then, divorced a year later, I had become a single parent and monster addict/alcoholic. God gave me the admission "I'm an alcoholic," so I called Alcoholics Anonymous.

A couple weeks into A.A., I went to a dance and met my second husband, a man on paper for DUI who claimed marijuana could be part of being sober. I thought so, too. Although I didn't drink for three years, I kept smoking pot, then eventually stopped going to meetings and returned to full-blown alcohol and opiate addiction. He and I stayed together eight years – relapsing, fighting, and trying to raise three children.

We separated in spring of 1990, two months before I completed my undergraduate degree. I slept on friends' couches while the three girls stayed with their unemployed dad/step-dad. I graduated college and worked two jobs, but seeing my kids only for visits gave me tremendous reason to stay wasted, and I hit bottom again a year later, in December of 1991. I crawled back into AA and soon, NA, and did my last drug in February of 1992, thanks to God and the twelve steps.

I married for the third time a man I had known since I was a teenager who was also in recovery, when I had eighteen months clean. He was a good stepfather to my older children, and we had a son and daughter together. We gradually stopped going to many meetings, allowing the pressures of our life to overwhelm us. Our marriage was unhappy. I was diagnosed with clinical depression. We divorced in 2010 after separating for two years while I went to graduate school.

To start over with yet another man I met in the program, I moved from Illinois to Albuquerque, New Mexico, in May of 2010. The boyfriend went back to drinking and drugging, so I ended the relationship. I had a teaching job, but needed to economize, so I was looking for housing I could afford when I was told by another member of A.A. to call Jeff Hunt, who had just opened an Oxford House for women and was looking for women to live there.

I moved into Oxford House Juan Tabo in Albuquerque in March 2011. Although I had 19 years sober, living in Oxford House has set in motion a new phase of my recovery, from codependence. I know the secret of staying sober is service, and I have participated fully in Oxford House New Mexico's first Chapter and in all three of the current women's houses. Through a grant from the Daniels Fund and another from the State of NM, I became an Outreach Services Representative August 1 of this year. I am challenged to grow Oxford House, to do this job I feel is a gift designed for me by God to keep me clean.

Oxford House Convention Themes Then To Now		
<b>1999</b>	If Not Us, Who?	Washington, DC
<b>2000</b>	Recovery Not Relapse	Kansas City, MO
<b>2001</b>	If Not Now, When?	Washington, DC
<b>2002</b>	Changing the Culture of Recovery	Seattle, WA
<b>2003</b>	Recovery, Responsibility, Replication	Washington, DC
<b>2004</b>	Back to Basics	San Antonio, TX
<b>2005</b>	Family, Freedom and Fellowship	Washington, DC
<b>2006</b>	Oxford House Comes of Age	Wichita, KS
<b>2007</b>	What If?	Washington, DC
<b>2008</b>	Time for Recovery	New Orleans, LA
<b>2009</b>	Together We Can	Washington, DC
<b>2010</b>	Celebrating 35 Years	Chicago, IL
<b>2011</b>	Oxford House: Saving Money – Saving Lives	Washington, DC
<b>2012</b>	Oxford House: Good Neighbors – Good Citizens	Oklahoma City, OK

## Oxford House Good Neighbors – Good Citizens

## Tom Dugan

Last month the Oxford House family lost an important member at too young an age – Tom Dugan. Tom was a pioneer in the development of strong networks of Oxford House. Along with Myrna Brown, Tom took the good news that Mark Spence brought to Washington State and turned Mark’s good beginning into the biggest network of Oxford Houses in the whole country. That suited Tom just fine. He thought big and had a big heart. Dozens of newly recovering individuals in Oxford House looked to Tom for long-term guidance. He was an army man and an advertising man at the Seattle newspapers. All of those who



knew Tom realized that he was a special man – full of life, full of love for his fellow man and dedicated to Oxford House. He was also a dye-in-the-wool Democrat. When John McCain picked Sarah Palin to be his running mate, Tom called the Oxford House Republican and said, “I hate to tell you this but when we opened the Oxford House in Wasilla Sarah Palin defended our right to do so – even though the house was next door to her own house.” It did not change Tom’s politics but it did show his openness – even to Republicans!

Our sympathies go out to his son, Michael, and Janet, his wife. We have all lost a good friend but we have the wonderful memories of his radiant life and uncommon common sense. The box below – taken from Gino’s story – shows how a pragmatic man in recovery can put together whatever is necessary to get alcoholics and addicts on a path that led to recovery through Oxford House Living.

Tom’s own story on the opposite page appeared in the 2008 Convention program.

### From Gino’s Story

Two and half years after I left I got back to the Seattle area only to be arrested for burglarizing a garage. When in jail my family sent Tom Dugan bail money to get me out of jail. Tom decided it would be good if I stayed for a while and after 30 days he came to explain that he was my uncle and would post bond. He was just opening another Oxford House in Mount Vernon and said I could come help get the house started. I did and in March 1995 – following my 30-day detox in jail – I moved into my third Oxford House. Since I moved into my first Oxford House I have watched the number of houses in Washington State increase from three to nearly two hundred. Early on I learned that I could help new houses get started and my mentor, Tom, often volunteered my services to help start houses all over the country

Tom Dugan was one of the first residents in the Edmonds, Washington Oxford House. His upbeat attitude kept the landlord and lawyers optimistic as the case of the City of Edmonds versus Oxford House, Inc. worked its way to the U.S. Supreme Court. He never doubted that the Court would find that the Federal Fair Housing Act protected residents of Oxford House – Edmonds. He was right!

## Tom's Story

My story as an alcoholic is not a whole lot different from millions of other addicts. My drinking began early in my teen years. It wasn't long before I realized that I drank differently than most of my friends. I drank more. The interesting thing was the high tolerance I had to booze. I could drink twice as much as most of my friends and still function. I figured that meant that there was no way I was an alcoholic. It turns out that a high tolerance of alcohol is the first sign.

My real drinking and drugging career became full blown in the late 60's. I was in the Army, overseas at the time where drinking and drugging became an everyday thing. When I got out of the Army, I went back to work at the Newspaper selling Advertising. What a perfect job for an alcoholic. They actually paid me to drink.

Some years later, I ended up in my first of four Treatment Centers. I managed to stay sober for a few years after my first treatment but that was in the 80's. Who needed booze when you could have cocaine? The only good thing about cocaine is that it brings you down to your knees real quick. I started drinking again to get off the cocaine (sound familiar?) The second and third treatment centers came shortly after.

I don't think I have to go into great detail about the destruction this disease not only does to us but to our Families as well. I was part owner in a small Printing Company at the time of my next relapse. It didn't take me very long to run that business deep into the ground. One good thing that happened at that time was that my former wife and family learning the term "Tough Love". Everyone stopped enabling me and I ended up on a "cot" outside the house. My former wife had Detox pick me up and I ended up in a County run 90-Day Treatment Center. After all this, my denial and lack of surrender was still in full force. AA had not yet become part of my life and recovery. When my 90 days were up, my counselor suggested I go to this new place called "Oxford House". I had been in "Half-Way Houses" before so you can imagine my surprise to see this really nice Home in this very expensive neighborhood. It was in this Home where I first learned what the word "Recovery" really meant. It was like living with 9 Sponsors.

The guys in the house made a game out of getting me to AA Meetings. Every night, someone would invite me to go with them to a meeting of which I had 100 excuses of why I couldn't go. Finally, they would invite me out to dinner, which I immediately accepted. We would get into the car, they would lock the doors and inform me that YES we were going to dinner, but we were going to one of those "Damn Meetings" first. It wasn't long before I was going to those "Damn Meetings" all on my own.

There were only two Oxford Houses in the State of Washington at that time. Every time we had an opening, there would be 9 Or 10 applications to get in. I remember calling Paul Molloy, telling him he needed to get someone out here to open more Houses. His response was, " Open Houses yourself."

Myrna Brown, who opened the first Oxford House in Vancouver, came up to get us started. Pitching-in and helping open the Houses became an intricate part of my recovery. I was always told that service work is a big part of recovery. But I still feel that those 9 guys in that Oxford House, who had the patience and tolerance to teach me what recovery was really all about, that was my real "Gift".

I'm retired now. I'm back with my wife and family, and very grateful. When I hear people talking about Oxford House, they all say how "Oxford gave them their life back". I remember Sherry Burrows story about how Oxford House didn't give her life back, but that Oxford House "Gave her a Life". That's my feeling. Oxford House "Gave me my Life" and I'm very grateful.

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From 2008 Convention Program

# Oxford HOUSE

**GOOD NEIGHBORS** ♦ **GOOD CITIZENS**



14<sup>th</sup> Annual  
**World  
Convention**

September 13 - 16, 2012  
Oklahoma City, OK

## Notes

# Notes

## **OXFORD HOUSE TRADITIONS**

1. Oxford House has as its primary goal the provision of housing for the alcoholic and drug addict who wants to stay clean and sober.
2. All Oxford Houses are run on a democratic basis. Our officers serve continuous periods of no longer than six months.
3. No Member of an Oxford House is ever asked to leave without cause -- drinking, drug use, or disruptive behavior.
4. Oxford House members realize that active participation in AA and/or NA offers assurance of continued sobriety.
5. Each Oxford House should be autonomous except in matters affecting other houses or Oxford House, Inc. - as a whole.
6. Each Oxford House should be financially self-supporting.
7. Oxford House should remain forever non-professional.
8. Propagation of the Oxford House, Inc. concept should always be conceived as public education.
9. Members who leave an Oxford House in good standing should become associate members

# Oxford House™

1975-2012

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

- Providing Sole Authority for Oxford House Charters
- Providing Technical Assistance to Establish New Oxford Houses
- Providing Technical Assistance to Keep Existing Oxford Houses on Track
- Providing Organization of Chapters to Help Houses Help Themselves
- Providing the Time, Living Environment and Support to Enable Alcoholics and Drug Addicts to Achieve Recovery Without Relapse
- Providing the Legal, Philosophical, and Scientific Framework for a Cost-effective, Worldwide Network of Supportive Recovery Housing.

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