

Hooked On Recovery

June 11, 2004

Recovery Anchors in the Hearts of Communities

This woman had a tough time keeping any clean time together. She would stay sober for a while, attend support group meetings, but always seemed not quite to connect and she'd be out there again drinking, hurting, getting in trouble. Now she's been sober for over thirty days, a milestone in recovery circles. You know what she's been doing that's been different this time? Volunteering. Volunteering in a Recovery Community Center. It's kept her busy, kept her mind off the first drink, given her some responsibility and given her an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution. She has been embraced by the recovery community and in turn has embraced it back.

One example from a hundred. One example from thousands to come. CCAR envisions Recovery Community Centers (RCC) as being recovery anchors in the hearts of communities, hope-filled nurturing environments where recovery thrives, where people can turn their lives around and help others to do the same. They are places for the recovery community to call their own where they define, develop and design peer-to-peer recovery support services. They are safe, secure, stable places. They are recovery beacons in the community where people can access recovery resources. By being visible, an RCC helps reduce stigma associated with addiction and recovery and in turn "softens" the community for those initiating recovery. We see an RCC in every town. There are other reasons why I love Recovery Community Centers.

The RCC concept aligns perfectly with CCAR's two main things; "putting a face on recovery" and "building recovery capital".

Nothing reduces stigma or promotes recovery more than a visible, active, welcoming Center in the heart of a community. For example, the Windham RCC is in downtown Willimantic on Main Street. And I'm sure that its neighbor, Dunkin' Donuts, is very happy to have the Center next to it. ? The presence of an RCC shouts, "Recovery is possible, hope lives here!" That's putting a face on recovery.

The RCC is a hub of recovery activity with a variety of onsite peer-to-peer recovery support services. These include: a variety of support groups, treatment system navigation, resource dissemination, trainings, faith-based partnerships, employment coaching, peer-led social activities, recovery fellowship and more. It's all about building recovery capital the internal, relational and community resources brought to bear on the initiation and maintenance of recovery.

The RCC embraces ALL forms of recovery: 12-Step, religious, medication-managed, co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders, self-determination and all others as well. CCAR has always sought to have a big enough tent for all those in recovery. The RCC is culturally diverse as well, incorporating the makeup of the local recovery community.

The RCC serves as a headquarters for the recovery community to gather and plan strategies to help the greater community. For example, Windham has embarked on asset-

based community development project. This Recovery Assets Mapping Project (RAMP) has tremendous potential and CCAR sees each RCC taking on this project as well. Over 300 individuals have contributed to the RAMP to date. By the way, “Have you been mapped?”

In the RCC, the recovery community has an incredible opportunity to give back. The staff and volunteers have a real chance to offer their support, encouragement, experience, strength and hope to those less fortunate. One cannot underestimate the power in this interaction, not only for the resident but for the person giving as well.

Lives are constantly being improved. And many times saved. People are accessing resources and other treatment when otherwise their chances may have been grim.

I ask you to think about this concept, offer your support and time if you can. I’d be remiss if I did not formally acknowledge the contribution of all the people who have built the Windham Recovery Community Center. You have courageously forged ahead and broke new ground. We might not ever know how many lives have been saved, and will be saved, because of your efforts. I am inspired because of you. Thank you.

Hooked on Recovery is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, father of four and just another surf fisherman. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him [phillip@ccar.us](mailto:phillip@ccar.us). Or visit the website at [www.ccar.us](http://www.ccar.us) to see previous articles.