

## **Hooked On Recovery**

August 6, 2004

*Recovery Walks!*

Four years ago, CCAR envisioned recruiting 50 people to walk near our state capitol to "put a face on recovery". The idea, born from the recovery community, centered on the belief that if we could show Connecticut "living proof" that recovery is real, that there is a solution to the alcohol and drug problem, then people would be more inclined to support recovery. A simple yet powerful concept that still holds true today. That first year, the purpose of the walk struck a chord that resonated with the heart of the recovering community and amazingly, 700 people showed!

Three years ago on a picture perfect Sunday only five days after 9/11, *Recovery Walks!* drew over 2000 people, not only to stand firm in their support for recovery, but to stand firm as Americans. For the last two years, more than 3000 individuals have showed up to publicly declare their support for recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction. For four consecutive years *Recovery Walks!* has painted the recovering community in the light of respect using broad strokes of courage, healing, hope and love.

CCAR is now organizing the 5<sup>th</sup> annual *Recovery Walks!* Again it is our major national Recovery Month initiative. We have a major challenge in front of us. We are looking to top 5000 persons in Bushnell Park on Sunday, September 19<sup>th</sup>. Yes, over the years we've generated some noise, some respect, even an epiphany or two. Yet, can you imagine how the state would take notice if 50,000 people showed? Or 100,000?!? We have a long way to go... but we can do it, one walk at a time.

This year, in order to get more people into the park, we're trying something new. In the past we have asked agencies, organizations, businesses, etc. to form teams, collect pledges for CCAR, display a banner and walk. Now we are offering these same recovery organizations the opportunity to collect funds for their own program. In return, we are asking for a donation (a tithe, if you will) to help cover our costs. And of course, we are hopeful these same recovery organizations can bring large numbers to Bushnell Park. This event is about recovery, not about one agency or program. Together we can generate the momentum necessary to have a dramatic impact on all of us and our common cause.

Please consider giving the recovery community an outstanding effort. Together, through this walk, we can begin to help remove barriers to recovery and open new doors for those still struggling with alcohol and other drug addiction. And let's share a vision.

- Let's be optimistic that we can draw 10,000 people in recovery and in support of recovery from all over Connecticut and beyond into Bushnell Park on September 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Let our hearts desire that every media outlet; news station, radio station and newspaper not only cover the walk, but help us promote it.
- Let's earnestly long for that point in time where every family member, legislator, judge, prosecutor, employer and key policymaker that sees or hears of Recovery Walks! will

completely understand that recovery is a reality in the lives of thousands upon thousands of individuals, families and communities.

- Let's yearn for the day when the hearts of every family member, legislator, judge, prosecutor, employer and key policymaker are mightily moved to make a solemn vow that all existing barriers to recovery must be removed and that every person still struggling with addiction to alcohol and other drugs must be given an opportunity to recover.
- Let our prayer be that every person in early recovery and every person not yet in recovery who attends or hears about Recovery Walks! will be saturated with the healing power of recovery.
- We can envision Recovery Walks! 2004 as being the most dramatic and most powerful large-scale, high-profile **Intervention of Hope** ever hosted anywhere, any time or any place.
- And let's begin to dream of an even larger day, possibly on the Mall in Washington DC, where millions of individuals in support of recovery gather to declare to the world that recovery is alive and that every human being born has an inherent right to live happy, joyous and free.

*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 (expecting number five) and just another surf fisherman. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him at [phillip@ccar.us](mailto:phillip@ccar.us). Or visit the website at [www.ccar.us](http://www.ccar.us) to get more information on this year's *Recovery Walks!* and to see previous articles.