



# PHIL VALENTINE UK VISIT

## OCTOBER 2011



Phillip Valentine is the Executive Director for the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR). He has been an integral component in this Recovery Community Organization since January 1999. An accomplished speaker and presenter, he has gained recognition as a strong leader in the recovery community; in 2006 the Johnson Institute recognized his efforts with an America Honours Recovery award. In 2008, Faces and Voices of Recovery recognized CCAR with the first Joel Hernandez Voice of the Recovery Community Award as the outstanding recovery community organization in the country. In 2009, the Hartford Business Journal named him the Non-profit Executive of the Year. Currently, he is spearheading CCAR's effort to build a state-wide network of Recovery Community Centres that feature innovative peer recovery support services like Telephone Recovery Support, All-Recovery Groups and Recovery Works! He has been instrumental in the development of CCAR's highly-acclaimed videos "Putting a Face on Recovery!", "The Healing Power of Recovery" and "Legacy of Hope: Recovery Elders Video Project" all produced by Jim Mattingly of [Rapid Exposure, LLC](#). He served as CCAR's point man for the first seven "Recovery Walks!", annual walks held for those in support of recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction and he has designed and facilitated several training including the "Recovery Perspective - Beyond the Treatment Episode" and "The Language of Recovery".

### **MONDAY 3 OCTOBER: BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL - Café Hub** (Kerry Farrar)

Café hub hosted an event with the Recovery Community and were extremely excited by the prospect of having Phil as our guest especially having followed the journey of CCAR and of my own inspirational visit to California. The event itself was a rip roaring success with 200 people attending from the NW with volunteers mucking in on the evening. Blackburn with Darwen Recovery Communities put a face to their recovery and the "Raucous Caucous Recovery Chorus" from Liverpool put a voice to theirs and an art exhibition from Dave Tierney a local artist who runs one of Café hubs mutual interest groups: "Freedom of Expression" art group. Phil spoke with poignant passion and emotion as he told us of his personal journey and of the CCAR story so far. It was encouraging to see people attending from a wide range of backgrounds and the final contributor, the Cathedral itself, played a major part. Café hub is a recovery "hub" concept based in Blackburn and provides: social activities, alcohol free café nights, mutual interest groups for anyone in recovery and their supporters and are a "virtual concept" with not yet having any premises to have a "visible café" but the recovery within us is very real and incredibly visible. Future plans are to establish a social enterprise recovery centre and social hub in the near future and aim to strengthen the recovery community by assisting and encouraging people to strengthen their recovery capital and fulfil their potential - working with the solution "recovery" and not the problem "addiction".



Blackburn Cathedral



Raucous Caucous Recovery Chorus



David Tierney

**TUESDAY 4 OCTOBER: MANCHESTER - PHOENIX FUTURES** (Sara MacGregor)

Phoenix Futures were delighted when Phil Valentine agreed to be the guest speaker at the "Recovery is Visible - Service User Conference" in Manchester with a very powerful opening speech by 'Phil Valentine'. Phil in his own words was "recoveree" of 24 years which in itself was such an inspiration to many. Phil clearly set the tone for the day; touching many with his powerful and empowering speech which is still being talked about. He spoke with great passion in particular about the annual 'Recovery Walks' which take place in Connecticut and plans are now afoot within the NW for this great event to take place in 2012. From this event many took "took a piece of Phil Valentine away with them" and we thank Phil for giving up his time to join us. Personally approaching the end of my programme with Phoenix Futures, Aftercare and as a 'recoveree' myself to hear the testimony from Phil with that length of sobriety behind them just reinforced beliefs in long term sobriety - especially as Phil stood right before me with 24 years of the stuff - Wow!!



Phil's words were just as inspiring as his presence and spoke about how during his recovery he had found that people outside of the therapeutic community tended to discriminate the word 'recovery' and the people in it. Due in part to a lack of knowledge but by sharing his story - standing proud and firm in his sobriety Phil enabled others to do the same, while aiding the understanding and acceptance within the wider population. So how has that impacted on me? Well I have the tools to maintain my sobriety, thanks to Phoenix Futures, the tools to inform the unaware also to stand tall and own my sobriety and recovery: YES I am a 'recoveree'. Maybe then there may become a growing acceptance and understanding of recovery here in the UK. Thank you to Phil Valentine and Phoenix Futures.

### **WEDNESDAY 5 OCT: NEWCASTLE GATESHEAD RECOVERY CENTRE** (Oli Batchelor)

Phil expressed a wish to visit the centre which is modelled on the Hartford Recovery Community Centre, run by Phil's organisation CCAR. The Cyrenians were keen to replicate the service in the UK following a visit by two members of staff to The Centre in Sept 2010 and wanted to see the same sense of belief and hope that recovery from addiction is possible within the North East of England. As part of his visit the two centres were officially twinned and his visit was marked by the exchange of plaques which will hang in both centres to symbolise the twinning and the significance and benefits of recovering people helping another.



**Stephen Bell & Phil**



**NE Recoveree's**

The ceremony saw a coming together of people in recovery and friends of the recovery community. Phil shared his experiences and many others shared something of their journeys of recovery and children ran through the event on the belief that the cycle of addiction can be broken was clear. The Newcastle Gateshead Recovery Centre like the centre in the United States aims to show that recovery from addiction to drugs and alcohol is a real and achievable goal by supporting people into healthy lives, free from addiction, full of hope and is about visible recovery. Staffed by people who themselves are in recovery from addiction, the Newcastle Gateshead Centre offers a confidential service and helps to direct people who recognise that they have a problem into the most appropriate sort of treatment services: all-recovery meetings, volunteering opportunities, a telephone recovery service, an employment orientated recovery course including work placements and links with employers, recovery coaching and numerous positive social networks. Phil spoke about his visit to the Newcastle Gateshead Centre <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp6SFbXaFEY>

### **THURSDAY 6 OCTOBER: SSAS CONFERENCE, SHEFFIELD** (Michelle Foster)

The Team from The Basement Recovery Project attended a number of Phil's gigs over the course of the week. Adi Williams was one of Sheffield's Community Recovery Organisers and said "Phil speaks a lot of

sense, I especially felt moved about the reference to 'Warrior Down' and we take this approach at TBRP and our door is always open. I also identified with Carl Cundell's story, seeing a lot of similarities and what I think works best at these events, is the power of the story and narrative and we got that from both Phil and Carl." The afternoon saw Adi and the group attend workshops, one of which looked at Virtual Recovery with the legendary Michaela Jones, "Building a Recovery Community", utilising the social networking routes to recovery is empowering and on the whole, we found it a tool that can inform and rally the emerging community. During break, Adi was approached by Phil Valentine who took a liking to the Rainbow Mohican that he sprouts and asked for the picture below for his album - which was an honour to Adi. He commented "People like me don't usually get asked for their pictures, people usually avoid us but Phil showed his generosity and kindness that day in more ways than one."



Aid Williams & Phil Valentine

#### Further Info:

[http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/White/2011\\_UK\\_Recovery\\_Tour\\_Phil-Sandy\\_Valentine.pdf](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/White/2011_UK_Recovery_Tour_Phil-Sandy_Valentine.pdf)  
[www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XafbdLM1mQ&feature=share>



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