

A View from Serenity Hill



La Hacienda's Newsletter for Alumni

September 2013

La Hacienda Opens New Special Care Unit

By Art VanDivier, Executive Director

I started working at La Hacienda while in graduate school in 1979. Opening in 1972, La Hacienda was already established as a drug and alcohol rehab center and has remained so for the past 41 years. As a new counselor I volunteered to sit with a patient that was having a difficult withdrawal from heroin. That was my first exposure to the "old SCU".

The Special Care Unit (SCU) was licensed in 1972 by the State of Texas as a 10-bed Specialty Hospital. Several years ago when the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TCADA) merged with the Texas Department of Health, La Hacienda was issued a certification for a detoxification unit. At that point, we began to entertain the idea of building a new SCU. The old unit had served us well, it was always clean and presentable and people from all walks of life had gotten sober within its walls, but it was *time* to upgrade.

We are very proud of how all of this came together. Three years ago our architect drew some impressive plans that nestled a new 2-story building against the side of the hill incorporating our old SCU; but joining the new and old buildings presented some unique challenges. One day as Frost Readell and I were walking the campus, Frost looked at the visitor parking lot and said "You know, I think that's the ideal place for the new SCU." It was an instant "ah ha" moment. We



Click on picture
to see a 30 second
construction video

called our architect and he said "that sounds like a promising idea but I need to come out and measure as I'm not sure the building will fit in the space." The following week we took our proposal to the owners. They listened attentively, took a deep breath and said their classic phrase, 'it's all just a matter of stepping out in faith, let's do it'.

We are so proud of this addition to La Hacienda and it also allows us to be of service to the community. Intensive Outpatient Programs are designed to help people that do not need the structured environment of residential treatment, but may require monitored detox services. This is an opportunity for La Hacienda to provide those services and we are very excited about expanding available services within the local treatment community.

Being a part of La Hacienda's growth into one of the finest chemical dependency treatment centers in the nation has been a lifetime reward for me. All of this has happened because of the commitment of the employees and the willingness of the owners to sacrifice and invest back into La Hacienda. We are all part of the family that has kept La Hacienda strong and I just cannot emphasize enough how important that is!

Did you know...

The DFW Alumni Group has changed nights?

The San Antonio Outreach Office has moved?

See page 7 for more details!

Speaker Swaps - September

Austin	Sept. 11	Nikki S., Kerrville
Beaumont	Sept. 30	Alan A., Kerrville
Bryan/College Station	Sept. 19	Kenny K., Waco
Dallas	Sept. 17	Cade S., Kerrville
Houston	Sept. 24	Jane O., Waco
Midland	Sept. 26	Nash G., Dallas
San Antonio	Sept. 9	Jeremy S., Austin
Waco	Sept. 18	Joe M., San Antonio

**Save
the
Date**

**42nd Annual
Alumni Reunion**

**May 2-4
2014**

Thoughts from our Alumni Leadership

I've been affiliated with the Dallas/Ft. Worth "chapter" of La Hacienda alumni since 2008. We are not an AA meeting. Our aim is to be of service to La Hacienda alumni and their invited guests by providing a support network as they get out of treatment. This network is designed to help you get plugged in with an AA/CA/DAA/etc. group, find a sponsor, find a service commitment, or share a struggle you're facing in going through the Steps.

If you are asking yourself these questions, you should attend the alumni meeting!

- What do I do and where do I go to get crankin' in this deal?
- Where can I find a group to which I can be accountable?
- Which AA groups are solution oriented and recovery focused?
- Is it even possible to leave treatment and stay sober?
- As a young person in recovery, where do I find sober people to connect with?

- So why come back to the alumni meeting every Tuesday at 7 pm if I've recovered?
 - ♦ To give back? To be nice? Ha!! No!
 - ♦ Because we need to find drunks to help! If we're not doing that, we have no business saying we're working "The Program."

If you're recently home from treatment and need to know what to do next, come. If you've been out of treatment for some time but haven't applied a solution and need to grow past being just a dry drunk, come. If you're rockin' and rollin' in this deal and need to find people to help, come. We need you. All of you.

Much has changed since 2008, but the focus has remained the same — find and help the next drunk (or addict, if that's your bag) who wants it.

Godspeed!
Nash

Greetings from Alumni Service Staff

Hey guys, Krystle here!

Wow, I can't believe that August is already over. Here's a little recap of what I have been doing since you last heard from me. Back in June, Pam (your Follow-up Coordinator) and I went to Houston for the Texas State Convention. It was so awesome getting to see so many of you out and about experiencing life in sobriety. It was a spiritual experience in itself! Several Houston alumni and friends volunteered to help Pam and I with our hospitality suite and we really appreciated the support. It is so cool to be involved in service with our alumni.

August is always exciting because we have the Hill Country Round Up here in Kerrville. Just like every year, we had our good ol' hot dog cookout. Several local volunteers helped and I could not have done it without them! This year we had about 900 people at Round Up. What a turn out! I got to see several alumni that are out there doing the deal and, as always, I got to meet several alumni that were here before my time. It is an amazing experience every year!

In sobriety we are always growing and changing - having new experiences with life, what the book says, and with recovery in general. I always look forward to growth. This is about continuing to seek the Power. We stand in the Sunlight of the Spirit together; we walk this journey together, shoulder to shoulder, in fact. Remember we all have one primary purpose, "That of carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic or addict." Until next time, get out there and do the deal!

Happy, Joyous, and Free,
Krystle Conner

I hope this newsletter finds you all reasonably content and engaged in the sometimes very difficult search for sobriety. I personally know that at times all is not well and I am not on the plateau of a spiritual hilltop, but I have consistently seen these times are a path leading to a new level of understanding "as you trudge the road of Happy Destiny." (p. 164) Although it is not always apparent to me at any particular time, there is the hope of "continuing to grow in understanding and effectiveness, this is not an overnight matter." (p. 84) This is usually tempered by commitment, responsibility, and a willingness to help others; everyone needs a hand up and a pat on the back.

To that end, a simple and effective way is to encourage the support and use of the alumni outreach groups in order to initially engage and find authenticity in the 12 Step recovery process. This is not to depend on the alumni group as a substitute for the 12 Step fellowship, but a resource to help, share, and direct others to the recovery process post discharge. Many of you have expressed a desire to speak at the La Hacienda campus setting. We encourage this any Sunday at 11 am. But, equally important, is to speak at alumni meetings with a sense of service, enthusiasm, and purpose for helping those recently discharged, and by encouraging participation and/or events that bring the local group together.

Also there is an opportunity to help those having difficulty to return to La Hacienda if indicated, much the same way you would have helped a struggling peer in treatment. Some people need a lifeline thrown to them. You have that capability and opportunity. "When we see a man sinking into the mire that is alcoholism, we give him first aid and place what we have at his disposal." (p. 132)

This month of August has been full and fulfilling. I had the opportunity this month to attend two AA conventions - one in College Station and the other in Beaumont. Both events were full of opportunity for sobriety in action, good speakers, fellowship, and an opportunity to visit with our alumni who attended. I wish to thank you all again for my time with you and your efforts to welcome me to these gatherings.

This month is also significant for the recognition that 8/14/97 marks the date I began to work at La Hacienda. I am grateful for the opportunity and God's grace that has allowed me to observe, engage and participate in the recovery process beginnings for and with some 12,000 plus who have passed through here since then. It has been my privilege to acknowledge the attendant struggles and successes that accompany our effort to achieve long term and contented sobriety.

I hope to see and hear from you as I go about the state and I encourage you to attend and participate in your local alumni groups if you are near them, as well as 12 Step fellowships. Please attend the reunion in May.

Take Care and God Bless,
Louis



Brain Food for the Recovering Soul

I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.

—Albert Schweitzer

Medical Rounds

Sugar

by Katie McQueen, MD

How sweet it is...Americans consume about 130 pounds of sweetener per person per year. One half in refined sugar and one half in corn sweeteners. That is a lot of sugar. That is ¼ of the recommended 2000 kcal per day diet. As consumption of sugar has increased so has obesity, diabetes, and depression. Research in 2012 suggests that a diet high in sugar slows the brain and hampers memory and learning.

When I transitioned from academics to private practice years ago I didn't give much consideration to the impact of sugar on recovery. But when a favorite patient three months sober from alcohol came in to tell me that he had eaten a five pound bag of gummi bears the week before, and that he had gone to buying gummi bears in bulk because his wife was annoyed by the little wrappers everywhere from the small bags, I started to investigate. Here are a few interesting facts I found:

**Eating refined sweeteners releases opioids and dopamine*

**Sugar and sweetness lead to reward and craving comparable in magnitude to that caused by addictive drugs*

**Animals fed a diet high in refined carbohydrates have withdrawal symptoms when the refined carbohydrates are removed from their diet*

**Children of alcoholics have an increased sweet preference*

Here are the medical guidelines I have adopted for those in recovery: limit significantly your use of refined carbohydrates – sodas, cookies, pasta, and white rice would be examples. If you find a food that lives up to the "Bethcha can't eat just one test" – don't eat one. Eat a diet full of lean proteins, vegetables, and whole fruits.

Book recommendation: The End of Overeating by David Kessler, MD. Dr. Kessler hit home the fact that the food industry is working overtime to increase overeating in the same way the tobacco industry has worked overtime to keep smokers smoking.

So visit your local farmer's market and get some amazing fresh produce and locally raised meat and share it with friends. Go to a meeting before or after the meal, or have the meeting right there. End the meal with fresh berries and a bit of whipping cream without sugar – that will get your dopamine going.

Happy trails – Dr. Katie

Focus Group

Step Five: Kenosis

by Charlotte Safir, LCDC

"Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

The 4th Step is done, the inventory is completed, we have written all that we can. The patterns are starting to come into our awareness. If this were all that is required, our work would be complete but the Spiritual action necessary to arrest our disease has only begun with the writing of the inventory. Now comes the admission to another in the Presence of Power what we have actually done, the acknowledgment to oneself and to another of the driving forces of our disease. This is where we begin to get a clear picture of the wreckage of the past and the disease's impact on our lives and the lives of others.

The 5th Step is the process of kenosis—a self emptying—which continues to create an internal space for more Power to flow in. This part of the work generates more willingness, more energy to move forward into our Higher Power's will as we gain awareness of the lies, misperceptions and delusions we have been living out in our lives. We begin to get our first taste of living into the truth about ourselves, the disease, this Power and our connection to everything and everyone, awakening more to the reality of how life works.

In doing a 5th Step, we open ourselves up, maybe for the first time, becoming vulnerable to another human being. As we continue to place outcomes in the hands of our Higher Power, we risk, we trust. In doing this, doors are blown open, the covers are pulled on our secrets, hidden shame, fears and patterns that we have kept in the dark unconscious about how our disease has progressed and has been running our lives. The clear light is shined on how we have been trying to live life out of our own will, stubbornness, resistance and rebellious tendencies. We begin to stop blaming others and the world for our present circumstances and see we have been the originator of our problems. We have been acting out pain, fear and shame rather than owning it, feeling it and healing from it.

It has been said that doing a 5th Step is like having an internal shower which washes away the lies and shows us the truth about ourselves and the disease. The peeling back of the overgrown delusion of our lives by mustering the courage to say out loud what we have kept hidden is part of the key to our freedom. Having written it all down in Step 4 and now said it all out loud in Step 5, we are ready to look at what is objectionable to us so we might ask that it all be removed in Step 6.



JOIN  **TEXAS
RECOVERS!** for the

3rd Annual BIG TEXAS RALLY FOR RECOVERY

LET'S MAKE HISTORY IN TEXAS!

Join thousands of people from across this great state at our State Capitol in Austin for National Recovery Month, Saturday, September 28th, 2013, to show your support for people living in and seeking Recovery in Texas from addiction and co-occurring mental health conditions. Join people in recovery, their family members and friends, addiction treatment professionals and allies in Texas. National Recovery Month celebrates people in recovery, lauds the contributions of prevention and treatment providers, and promotes the message that recovery in all its forms is possible. Let's spread the positive message that people can and do recover!

Saturday, September 28th, 2013
State Capitol Grounds, South Steps
3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

For more information go to www.texasrecovers.org

Outcome Statistics for La Hacienda's Alumni

Pam Searfoss, whom you heard from in our Featured Staff section, makes follow-up phone calls to all of our alumni at the 1 week, 90 day and 1 year post-treatment mark. We keep up with the information Pam gathers and review it periodically. Those considering treatment for themselves or a loved one frequently ask about the outcomes of our patients. Of course there are many variables that influence the answer to that question: following the Continuing Care Plan; becoming active in a 12 Step fellowship; working closely with a sponsor through the Steps; and a solid support system are some. We know having a lot of accountability in early recovery is very important. That is why we make these follow-up calls. We want our alumni to know we do care what happens after they leave La Hacienda and that we are here to help if they begin to struggle.

I frequently receive newsletters from other treatment centers and they sometimes include outcome statistics of their programs. I am always proud of how our contact rates and recovery rates compare to other quality programs around the country. These are our most recent outcomes for the past year.

For patients discharged –

Aug 1, 2012 – Aug 4, 2013 at one week post-discharge – we were able to contact 81% and 94% were sober.

May 15, 2012 – May 14, 2013 at 90 days post-discharge – we were able to contact 70% and 82% were sober.

Aug 1, 2011 – July 31, 2012 at 1 year post-discharge – we were able to contact 65% and 66% were sober.

We have three categories for sobriety status: 1) sober since discharge; 2) brief relapse but back on track; and 3) in relapse. Our "sober" number includes those who have been sober since discharge and also those who had a brief relapse but are back on track. We also ask about meeting attendance, continuing care follow through, working with a sponsor, and how family life is going.

Treatment outcomes is a hot topic in the addiction treatment and recovery industry. La Hacienda is not a new kid on the block in this arena. We have been active in conversations calling to standardize outcome studies across the industry so we can share what we know with a stronger voice – treatment works, recovery is possible, lives are recovered, and families are restored.

How Can We Help You?

Frequently Dialed La Hacienda Phone Numbers

800-749-6160

Billing/Collections

Insurance Accounts

Last name begins: A – K

Ext. 671

Last name begins: L - Z

Ext. 673

Self Pay Accounts

*(from admission or balance
after insurance payments)*

Ext. 674

All IOP Accounts

Ext. 670

Medical Records

Ext. 605

Alumni Support

Ext. 515, 516

Alumni Followup

Ext. 519

Inquiry Call Center

Ext. 550

Operator

Press 0

Greetings, Alumni!

Do you wonder, "Who is that lady that calls me to see how I'm doing?" I'll take a few moments away from the phone to introduce myself. I'm Pam Searfoss and I joined the Alumni Services Dept. as the Alumni Follow-up Coordinator just about a year ago.

I have been at La Hacienda for almost five years in a variety of positions. For two years prior to my current position I was at the Front Gate during the day, welcoming you and your family to treatment, Family Program and saying goodbye when you left.

I started my recovery journey in a small town in Pennsylvania in 1983 and have been sober since. I have been blessed in recovery to see the promises come true in my life on a daily basis and to know a way of living that brings me a true sense of serenity, joy, and freedom. I moved my life and recovery to Texas in 2001 and joined the La Hacienda family in 2009.

I look forward to talking to you all, being a contact person for La Hacienda, sharing with you what recovery has to offer, and hearing your recovery experiences. I feel I have the best job here at La Hacienda because I get to talk to so many people on a daily basis, just sharing our experiences on the "happy road of destiny".

Talk to you soon,
Pam

For the most
up-to-date
alumni info



follow us on
twitter



#laharecovery

You should be on the lookout for a call from Pam at the following post-discharge intervals:

- ◊ 1 week
- ◊ 90 days
- ◊ 1 year

If you need to touch base in between those calls, don't hesitate to call her at 800-749-6160 ext. 519.

From Leonard's Kitchen to Yours

Ranger Cookies

1 cup margarine
1 cup sugar
1 cup brown sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp vanilla
2 cups flour
1 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp baking ower
1 tsp salt
2 cups oatmeal
2 cups corn flakes
1 cup coconut

1/2 cup walnuts, chopped or
1/2 cup chocolate chips

Cream margarine and sugars. Add eggs and vanilla. Sift flour, baking soda and baking powder together. Add creamed mixture. Stir in oatmeal, corn flakes and coconut. Stir in nuts or chocolate chips. Drop by spoonful onto a slightly greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees until brown — 10-12 minutes.

TAKE NOTE OF DFW AND SAN ANTONIO CHANGES!

ALUMNI MEETINGS

AREA	DAY / TIME	LOCATION	MORE INFO
AUSTIN	Wednesday 7:30 pm	La Hacienda's Solutions 2100 Kramer Ln., Suite 300 Austin, TX	512-835-1994
BEAUMONT	Monday 6:30 pm	St. Andrews Presbyterian 1350 N. 23rd St. Beaumont, TX	409-296-3653
COLLEGE STATION	Thursday 6:00 pm	La Hacienda-College Station 702 University Dr. East, Suite 100-D College Station, TX	979-846-9500
DALLAS/FT. WORTH	Tuesday 7:00 pm	La Hacienda Community Outreach 1320 Greenway Dr., Suite 135 Irving, TX	214-968-9858
HOUSTON	Tuesday 6:30 pm	La Hacienda Community Outreach 2650 Fountain View Dr., Suite 120 Houston, TX	713-805-5115
HUNT	Sunday 11:00 am	La Hacienda Treatment Center 145 La Hacienda Way Hunt, TX	830-238-4222
KERRVILLE	Tuesday 6:30 pm	La Hacienda Community Outreach 429 Earl Garrett St. Kerrville, TX	830-238-4222
MIDLAND	Thursday 7:00 pm	La Hacienda Community Outreach 206 N. Midkiff, Suite 1-D Midland, TX	432-697-0272
SAN ANTONIO	Monday 7:00 pm	La Hacienda Community Outreach 7400 Blanco Rd., Suite 129 San Antonio, TX	210-692-0001
WACO	Wednesday 6:30 pm	2508 Washington Ave. Waco, TX	254-662-3439

FAMILY MEETINGS

AREA	DAY / TIME	LOCATION	MORE INFO
AUSTIN	Monday 8:00 pm	La Hacienda's Solutions 2100 Kramer Ln, Suite 300 Austin, TX	512-835-1994
BEAUMONT	Tuesday 6:30 pm	St. Andrews Presbyterian 1350 N. 23rd St. Beaumont, TX	409-296-3653
COLLEGE STATION	Thursday 6:00 pm	La Hacienda-College Station 702 University Dr. East, Suite 100-D College Station, TX	979-846-9500
DALLAS/FT. WORTH	Tuesday 7:00 pm	La Hacienda Community Outreach 1320 Greenway Dr., Suite 135 Irving, TX	972-637-6300
HOUSTON	Wednesday 6:30 pm	La Hacienda Community Outreach 2650 Fountain View Dr., Suite 120 Houston, TX	713-545-9788
SAN ANTONIO	Monday 7:00 pm	La Hacienda Community Outreach 7400 Blanco Rd., Suite 129 San Antonio, TX	210-692-0001