

# Next Step Peer Support Program

## Winter 2021 Newsletter



*A hearty welcome to Grant, who joined us in October! He says that since staying sober is the key for him, and so the clean and sober influence of Next Step and Quixote House will help further his hopes for the future.*

I had an average childhood. There was drinking involved and I can't say that I was neglected but there were a lot of people in the house. Dad got abusive to my mom and she moved back to her reserve. Us kids were distributed to foster homes. First I was put with a woman who couldn't have children. I sure got a beating a lot from her. But I did learn to chop wood and shovel. I did whatever it took though I eventually got into trouble. It was 70% bad and 30% good, and always hectic. My mom eventually collected all her kids together except for me because she felt sorry for the childless woman. This is when I rebelled and felt that no one wanted or loved me.

I quit listening to the rules, ran away more and really got in trouble with the law. I complained that my foster mother beat me and for that, got a lickin' of a life time. When I was 12 years old, I ran back to my mom. I explained what was happening to me. My mom pushed me to forgive and almost sent me back to her. Being home with my family didn't change things much and I was put into Green Pastures Christian Home, a place for youth.

I straightened out there and appreciated the animals. It was life changing because I finally saw that God was always present in my life. I learned that drinking and violence were not the way to go. I also started to see it was important that I change for me, not anybody else. A German family took me in for 7 years where I did good. I saw the rewards of doing well and that it was worth the effort.

The family took me traveling around the world to the USA and to Switzerland. When I got older, I thought that I had let go of the past and my issues were resolved but they all came back. Drinking caused a rift between me and the family and I had to leave. I moved to BC to make it on my own where I explored the mountains and worked. Loneliness overcame me and so I decided to go home. All the evil spirits came back. I blacked out after drinking and in that time, pulled something out of a hat. It wasn't a bunny rabbit but a snake.

To sum it up, I've treading water ever since. I want to learn to trust and know that it is there. In prison I went to AA and realized I built walls when I drank. When I'm sober I see the pain and am learning to stop putting myself down. I'm at 60% good and 40% bad now. In March, I leave the halfway house to move to Quixote House. I want to go to school to learn an electrical trade and hope my reserve will sponsor me. Eventually want my son to come live with me.

Next Step is about integration and I feel accepted there. Even though the group is multicultural, I am curious about the Catholic aspect. Also there have been experiences of confidences broken in my life and so hoping to build some trust here. Since staying sober is the key for me, the clean and sober influence of group and Quixote House will help further my hopes for the future. Thanks for supporting the group.

With gratitude, *Grant*

Hello from all of us at Next Step!

It's so good to be able to connect safely with you this way! Never before has this newsletter seemed as important as it has over this past year. Like those in Next Step, we all need connections to the community to help nurture our wellbeing.

This is the first time ever that we do not have a report on our annual family Christmas gathering. Due to the restrictions, the participants who come in from Stony Mountain couldn't attend nor could family members. Instead, we had a small, virtual gathering with our community members and volunteers. Fr. John read a passage from the bible and gave a short sermon which focused on the shepherds who were the first to see baby Jesus. We sang carols and everyone opened a small present. Eva, one of our volunteers, played a game with us and one lucky person won a big tin of cookies! The size and format of our meeting did not deter the warmth we felt in our hearts as we celebrated this Christmas together.

In a time of uncertainty, Next Step meetings have been an anchor for many of us. We meet every single Thursday night, whether we are 9 or 15 Zoom squares! Although it doesn't compare to meeting together, we have found ways to make it work for us. We had our first virtual graduation in November when we wished Mel the very best. We celebrated on the anniversary of his release from prison exactly 2 years ago! He was honored by the caring words of our group members and received gift cards to his favorite places, Walmart and Canadian Tire. And best of all, he is willing to become a volunteer and continue to come to group to support those coming out in the future.

With Mel leaving, along with a new member who was hired on for two jobs and had to leave group, we have 5 members who attend weekly. There are another two who are waiting to meet in person again because it is difficult to participate in Zoom with a flip phone. (Be rest assured that we do stay in touch with them via phone calls and texts.) Also this fall, Bart and Hamilton went back to prison for a short time and both were released for a second chance. Sadly Hamilton breached his parole condition again so he will be staying in longer this time. He stays in touch with us and for that we are grateful. As Hamilton has left Quixote House, Frank has now moved in. He says he is content and feels good getting his life in order. Grant and another member will be moving in to join Frank this spring.

This pandemic has really had an impact on the ability of our donors to give their financial support but we are very grateful for the prayers and good will during this time. For those who were able to give, we thank St. John Cantius Parish for supporting us in January. In addition, we are thankful for donations from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish and two anonymous supporters. The funds really helped us get through these months. Every prayer and every penny has made a big difference to us. Many, many thanks!

Good health to you and yours in 2021,

*Kathleen*