

caron chatter

Resource for Recovery & Healthy Living

Spring 2011

In This Issue

Message from Alumni Staff

Recovery Toolbox

Page 2

Recovery for Life

Page 3

National Alumni
Leadership Council

Event Review

Page 4

Alumni Profile

Spirituality

Page 5

Family

Youth & Recovery

Page 6

Breakthrough at Caron

Page 7

Event Calendar

Page 8

A Message from the President

As many of you may know Caron's *Chatter* newsletter began long before Dick Caron founded the Chit Chat Foundation in 1957. In the early 50's Dick's family business took him far and wide and on his travels he met many people who shared a common bond – recovery. Dick realized the importance of staying connected with those who shared that common bond, and with that end in mind, he started a newsletter as a means to stay connected.

Today, we too realize just how important it is to stay connected with our alumni and their families, as well as our compassionate friends and loyal supporters. The *Chatter* newsletter continues to be a key element in our efforts to stay connected with all those on their journey of recovery and all those who support our charitable mission. I am delighted to introduce our new *Chatter* format. Hopefully, you will find it to be a useful and informative resource for recovery and healthy living. In addition to the traditional print format, the *Chatter* is also available online.

Dick Caron intended his newsletter to be a way to share his experience, strength and hope with others. He encouraged his readers to stay connected by writing him at least once a year. In fact, that was his condition for staying on the mailing list. Although we realize that this would be an unmanageable task today, we would certainly love to hear from you. We encourage you to write to us and let us know how you are doing. Perhaps you would even allow us to share your story with others. Please feel free to email Caron's Alumni staff at alumni@caron.org.

In closing, I want you to know that Caron is committed to staying connected with you. We are striving to look at ways to improve our connectivity. Our "Recovery for Life" philosophy is more than just a slogan or tagline – we want to be a part of the journey of recovery with those we serve.



Douglas Tieman
President & CEO



P.O. BOX 150 • WERNERSVILLE, PA 19565 | 800-678-2332 | CARON.ORG



Caron Alumni & Friends



@Caron Treatment

BLOG: CaronChitChat.org



www.YouTube/CaronTreatment



Message from Alumni Staff

Connecting the Dots

As we move forward in our recovery journeys, we look to our maps for direction. Caron alumni and families are represented on these maps by dots. Each one of these dots represents one recovery, one life touched by Caron. We find our direction by asking, “How do we reach out to you, to help you stay connected to this place that made such a difference in your life? How do we connect your dot to the next one?” We can connect in sorrow and joy, laughter and tears, strength and weakness. We can grow in recovery through our connections in spirituality and fellowship.

Fellowship is one of the ways alumni stay connected to Caron. Our job, as Alumni Coordinators, is to help each alumnus and family member to connect to the next one on the map. Each dot is like a piece of a much bigger picture; ***we can't complete the picture without each one of you.*** That's why our alumni and families are so important. The more alumni we connect, the more beautiful the picture that is created. This happens by attending the Fellowship and Parent Groups, coming to Caron events, sharing your story, attending Chapel services, and ultimately, making a difference in another person's life.

The disease of addiction isolates individuals from their families, and families from their communities. The more we reach out to others in our recovery, the more resources we have and the greater our chances of staying in recovery. We can't build fellowship on our own. We need each of you. Through your service, the network and the bond of Caron grows. Together we are connecting dots, and creating a picture of Recovery for Life. *We would love to hear from you!*

Your Alumni Relations Coordinators,

BK McDonough, Adult Services
(bmcdonough@caron.org)

Joi Honer, Youth and Parents
(jhoner@caron.org)

Karen Curtin, NYC Region
(kcurtin@caron.org)



Joi Honer, BK McDonough
and Karen Curtin

Recovery Toolbox

Connection, Intimacy, Trust and the Process of Change

We hear about these in treatment, in the 12-step rooms and in most human relationships. But how important are they? How do we start to trust a world that we have used and abused or that we feel has used and abused us? Furthermore, how can we trust ourselves when faced with the disease of addiction or codependency – a disease that constantly distorts and manipulates even what we believe to be our own truths?

If you notice, the first three of the twelve steps encompass the need for surrender. This leads us to consider surrendering to the power of spirit; whether that is an entity we call God, a 12-step group or some other power greater than ourselves. Notice it does not say “Trust yourself, or another single human power.” Once we surrender to these first three, we can begin to trust. We

see evidence of this trust every time we witness another's sharing. We may see it in a sponsor relationship, in which we begin to disclose our worst fears, our secrets, and our insecurities. We may experience it walking out of treatment and, for the first time, walking into a room of other alcoholics/codependents and feeling “at home.” As these connections strengthen, and we embark on one of the greatest change processes known to humankind, when can we begin to trust our own judgment and instincts?

Growth is a process. As we grow, we begin to move into relationships with God, self and others. As a result, we begin to be able to differentiate between the addiction/codependent voice and the voice of recovery. We must be careful, though, as we do remain vulnerable. It is good to develop trust with ourselves, but even then,

to verify our thinking with others. In all times of change and transitions, we remain vulnerable. The supports and connections we make during any of these periods of change are critical.

Protect your recovery. Whether leaving treatment, moving to a new area, going on vacation, quitting smoking, grieving losses, or starting any new program of change, be mindful and remember to protect your recovery. This may mean calling peers/alumni, calling sober supports, talking to your sponsor more often, attending extra 12-step meetings, attending a Caron alumni or recovery event/activity and certainly attending to your connection with your Higher Power. Extra prayer or increased meditation time is an added insurance policy toward serenity.

Kate Winters, BA, CAC
Clinical Recovery Care Specialist

Remember these important things:

- Life is a process of constant change. Recovery requires this.
- Stay connected; don't go alone.
- Don't make important decisions on your own.
- Love people, trust your Higher Power.



Recovery for Life

Depression in Recovery

One of the most common co-occurring diagnoses for recovering addicts is depression. This is not surprising, given the depressant effects of many drugs, and the impact of detoxification and post-acute withdrawal. There is often a period of reckoning with the consequences the illness has created. This alone can create a great deal of pain to a person new to sobriety.

Some early depression is related to the feelings of shame and guilt about one's active addiction. While taking responsibility for one's behavior, it is also important to recognize that the disease impairs people's ability to make positive decisions. Primary treatment involves learning that addiction is a disease. One's integrity and worth is not compromised by the disease of addiction. As one internalizes the disease concept, the shame of addiction diminishes to a more realistic level. The process of making amends and taking a personal inventory are also powerful tools for dealing with the shame of one's addictive behaviors.

What is gratifying is the frequency with which depression dissipates during treatment, without any additional psychological or psychiatric intervention. The process of self-acceptance, the hope offered by the program, and community support are often sufficient to address this level of depression. It is one of the gifts of working in this field to see so much improvement so quickly.

Sometimes, however, the depression may linger, or even worsen, as the person moves into a recovering lifestyle. While the havoc of the addictive lifestyle is gone, the physical, psychological and social healing may lag further behind. Patience is a key in allowing the body and psyche to heal.

Sometimes depression may be more severe than the kind of blue mood that may accompany early recovery. Similarly, the persistence of depression may also signal another secondary problem. When a true depression is present, separate attention must be paid to it, either with psychotherapy or psychiatric consultation. Simply telling the person that they are "not working the program hard enough" is not only misleading, but can be shaming and destructive in its own way.



*When a true depression is present,
separate attention must be paid to it...
treatment of depression can begin
at any level.*

Treatment of depression can begin at any level – negative cognitions, social withdrawal or somatic symptoms. Cognitive therapy, aimed at correcting dysfunctional underlying beliefs, provides relief from depression, and other disorders. Other forms of psychotherapy (interpersonal therapy, mindfulness) are also useful. It also helps to push oneself to resume pleasurable activities, turning the negative cycle around. Finally, antidepressant medications are invaluable in addressing the somatic aspects of depression, including sleep and appetite problems. Many people benefit from one of these, or from a combination of these treatments.

The good news is that most antidepressants do not interfere with recovery. This is not true of some anti-anxiety agents, primarily benzodiazepines such as Xanax, Valium or Ativan. Often anxiety can be treated with a safer antidepressant medication. A psychiatrist knowledgeable about addiction can prescribe medications that help depression without risking a relapse. As Bill W. wrote in the pamphlet Medications and Other Drugs, "Just as it is wrong to enable or support any alcoholic to become re-addicted to any drug, it's equally wrong to deprive any alcoholic of medication which can alleviate or control other disabling physical and/or emotional problems."

Should you experience depressed moods beyond the first few months of sobriety, or should the level of depression cause significant distress, it is very important to seek additional help for this problem. In particular, never fight suicidal thinking on your own. Find a doctor who is familiar with addiction to help you plan a course of action. Be sure they understand and respect your recovering status. Reach out to others for support and help. Reading books on cognitive therapy can be helpful. David Burns' *Feeling Good* is a great place to start. Finding or resuming some enjoyable activity can also be a way to jump-start the healing process.

Mark Schenker, Ph.D., Lead Psychologist for Adult Services



National Alumni Leadership Council

Helping Alumni and Families Stay Connected to Caron



*Scott S. Green
Chairman
National Alumni
Leadership Council*

In February 2011, the National Alumni Leadership Council (NALC) gathered at Caron's Wernersville, PA campus for a weekend retreat of education and strategic planning sessions.

The participants included representatives from Caron's Fellowship and Parent Groups. This year we were joined by a representative from the Young Adult Recovery Network (YARN), with groups in New York City and Philadelphia. Caron's Fellowship, Parents, and YARN groups support recovery and help people stay connected with each other in their communities, as well as continue their bond with Caron. These groups typically meet monthly and are primarily located in the northeast.

During the NALC retreats there are opportunities for the participants to provide service, learn about Caron's programs and future plans, and share what is happening with our local groups. On Friday afternoon, the NALC participants were able to share their experience, strength and hope with the patients. In the evening we enjoyed listening to Dr. Ken Thompson's insightful presentation on "Neurobiology of Addiction." Members of Caron's clinical staff presented information on the Family Education Program, the new Children's Program, and Recovery Care Services on Saturday. The afternoon was devoted to strategic planning sessions that led to some great ideas. Each of us had the opportunity to share our thoughts about ways to encourage alumni to become involved with the regional groups and help them feel connected with Caron.

My role as the chairman of NALC is to understand the needs of Caron, the needs of alumni and families, and to work toward developing goals and objectives to meet those needs. The NALC chairman also serves a two-year term on Caron's Corporate Board of Trustees representing alumni and families at the leadership level.

It is an honor to serve on Caron's National Alumni Leadership Council. I am looking forward to the year ahead, working with alumni and families as we grow together in Recovery for Life.

*Scott S. Green, Chairman
National Alumni Leadership Council*

For more information about Caron Fellowship and Parent Groups, go to caron.org/alumni

NYC YARN, visit caron.org/caron-new-york-city

Philadelphia YARN, email jhoner@caron.org

Event Review

Look Who's Moving In...Caron DC! Sweet!



The famous DC Cupcake sisters, Sophie and Katherine, with Alumni Coordinator Joi Honer (center), generously donated Georgetown Cupcakes benefiting Caron treatment scholarships!

Caron Treatment Centers is no stranger to the greater Washington, DC area. In fact, the DC area boasts over 5,000 alumni, strong relationships with local clinicians and recovery facilities, and an active advisory board. But now with an actual office being launched in DC, Caron alumni will be better served, and more people will know about Caron as a treatment option and as a resource for awareness and education about addiction.

Caron DC kicked off its first of many alumni events this year with the 13th Annual Comedy Night. This time the event had a special twist – cupcakes! Caron's Alumni Services scored delicious sponsorship from popular Georgetown Cupcake of TLC's hit series, DC Cupcakes. Present were Georgetown Cupcake co-owners, Sophie LaMontagne and Katherine Kallinis; Christina Caron, granddaughter of founder Dick Caron; Caron DC Board members and donors, and most importantly, many alumni, family members and friends. After light snacks, cupcakes and an auction, attendees enjoyed the sober comedic stylings of Caron alumnus Richard Weiss and LA-based comic Bob Perkell. Recovery, sweet recovery!

Tara Handron, DC Regional Vice-President; thandron@caron.org



Alumni Profile

Giving Back – An Important Part of Recovery



Gretchen P.

It was Thanksgiving Eve, 1999, when Gretchen called Caron for help and was admitted to the Women’s Primary Care unit. “I had lost everything on the inside – it was so dark. I felt this shroud of depression. I was tired of carrying around this big pack of lies. I wanted help so badly and I was willing to do anything the counselors asked me to do.” One of the most crucial lessons Gretchen learned while in treatment was that nothing is more important than her recovery.

Caron gave Gretchen the tools to have the life she never thought she could have. The gratitude she feels for Caron and her recovery come shining through. Gretchen expresses her gratitude every Thanksgiving Eve when she comes to Caron and gives flowers to the nurses on the Medical unit. “They are angels and I want them to feel appreciated.”

Gretchen believes in doing service and always says ‘yes’ when someone asks her to volunteer. **“Giving back is an important part of my recovery and helps me to stay sober.”** Gretchen shares her recovery story with the patient community at Caron on a regular basis. She attends the monthly Berks Fellowship Group and volunteers at many Caron events. Gretchen became a member of Caron’s Chit Chat Society in 2009 and recently began serving on the Planned Giving and Endowment Council. She also contributes annually to Caron’s Scholarship Fund to help those who cannot afford the full cost of treatment.

Her life today is a miracle. “Every single day I wake up and I’m grateful I didn’t drink last night. Even when it’s raining, it’s sunny inside.” When describing her recovery, Gretchen speaks of freedom, honesty, and a power greater than herself who takes care of her all the time. In her recovery, Gretchen knows she’s a responsible, productive, lovable, and fun person to be around.

When asked what she would like to share with those new in recovery, Gretchen offers, “Follow direction and believe you can do it. You never have to live in the darkness again or be afraid. Don’t give up, the miracle will happen!”

To learn more about how you can help, email shendrickson@caron.org, or go to caron.org/alumni.

Spirituality

Spiritual Experience that Unites Us

Many Caron alumni are known for maintaining widely varying opinions on the subject of spirituality. However, one spiritual experience most of us seem to regard with fondness is the Chapel service here at Caron. What is it that makes this a connection point? Why do alumni come back for the Chapel service long after they’ve completed treatment? Why do some alumni who have never visited the Chapel listen to the podcasts of the service?

I’ve attended thousands of religious services in many parts of the U.S. and in various countries. I have never attended a service like the one we have here at Caron. What makes it different? Why is it so well

accepted by addicts, alcoholics and their families? Perhaps what we have in common as recovering people is a deep appreciation for the devastation of addiction and the miracle of recovery.

During the Chapel service we so often see the drama of recovery played out in the reuniting of families as they share about changes in their family relationships. We witness the celebration of recovery in expressions of immense gratitude by patients and alumni. We experience a sense of community – whether it is by hearing the comments of Fr. Bill or Rev. Jack, or the sharing of participants, or the communion of the “Circle of Love” at

the end of the service. We experience the community of recovery.

The recovery community is one thing we share and surely one thing that bridges that place between the hell of active addiction and the freedom of on-going recovery. Whether that sense of being a member of a recovery community is experienced at Chapel in Wernersville, at one of the churches, mosques or synagogues near Renaissance, at a service in Caron Texas, or at your local 12-step meeting, it is there. It is vital to recovery. Many of us see the recovery community as a Higher Power that can keep us sober.

Rev. Carl Andrews, Chaplain

Save the Date! Caron’s Fourth Annual Fall Spiritual Retreat

Come join us for a weekend of spiritual workshops, activities, yoga, drumming, nature hikes, campfire meetings and more!

Friday, Saturday and Sunday, October 14-16th, 2011
Camp Conrad Weiser, Wernersville, PA

Look for more information soon at caron.org/events and in upcoming Caron Spiritual E-Newsletters



Family

Caron Formula: Family + *Connections* = Hope



When I think of *connections*, I often think of the LEGO® toys we build with our six grandchildren. These LEGO® blocks have a special place in our home. They provide support, balance, and quality time for our visits with the kids. *Connections* at Caron mean the exact same thing – support, balance, and quality time with folks we trust. It means providing support for our patients and their families, mentoring a balanced life, and healing relationships to improve quality of life in recovery.

It all begins when a family first contacts Caron. An admissions specialist provides a voice of empathy and compassion. This begins the *connection* process with the family. It gives them hope that their loved one will be open to

help and find their way in recovery. During the treatment process, families are able to *connect* with a primary counselor and the staff of the respective units. Throughout the course of the Family Program these *connections* become even more enhanced. Families learn that they, too, are our patients – not just the individuals in treatment. We are here for them, just as we are here for the patients. Family members discover and understand their own need for recovery.

Before discharge, family members are provided with a Continuing Care Plan that includes a family therapist for their own needs, plus locations of Caron Alumni and Parent Support Groups, and Al-Anon schedules in their local areas. These *connections* are most important to help facilitate a smooth transition between the treatment experience and recovery for life. Family members must take action to build their own support systems. The path of recovery is not always a straight one, and it is a family's support system that will sustain them when the path becomes challenging. As families experience *connections and hope*, there is comfort in knowing they are not alone anymore.

Thomas E. Deitzler, Jr., Director of Adolescent and Young Adult Services

Youth & Recovery

Young and in Recovery

Youth and recovery are two things that haven't always gone hand-in-hand. The image of an older man, down on his luck and at the mercy of the bottle has been perpetuated as an easy stereotype. As we know, this image is still alive and well today. However, with hundreds of thousands of young people in recovery, the images of abstinence, sobriety, and recovery have taken on new faces.

Living as a young person in recovery in the modern age means freedom. Today the world and its vices are more confusing and complicated than ever. Fortunately, just as the nature and variables of addiction have evolved, so too have the various outlets and networks for young sober people. If one looks hard enough, a plethora of young people choosing a way of life with like-minded individuals can be found. Young adults are finding those in recovery who share common values such as peace, humanitarianism, respect, clean moral living, the tenets of various 12-step programs, and honesty (just to name a few). Those in their teens or twenties would be hard pressed to find such sincerity and acceptance in any other place. Through the advent of social media and other various technologies, young people have a chance to connect and to share their common goal of living life to the fullest and looking forward to the future together, while enjoying all that being young and sober has to offer.

As discouraging as some blemishes on a legal record or time missed from traditional education can be, the young, sober and working have a distinct advantage over their non-recovering colleagues. The time spent "out there" combined with their new way of life gives them a perspective on the world that is truly unique. Though the path may have been arduous at times, the outcome is often an elegant, refined individual who has already experienced life on a level that few of their contemporaries could ever understand.

Truly a movement, youth are recovering in waves. We are choosing a sober lifestyle, embracing each other and approaching the "easier, softer way" with a cheerful, heartfelt enthusiasm. Join us!

Thad T. – Caron Alumnus, a founding member of the Philadelphia Young Adult Recovery Network (YARN)



Breakthrough at Caron

From Surviving to Thriving

Beth's connection to Caron started in August of 2007 as part of the Family Education Program (FEP). It was then that she realized a need to achieve her own recovery. That was also the time when she first learned about Breakthrough at Caron. Beth states she felt, "Participating in this program would give me the opportunity to confront my authentic self and not only tell my story, but maybe, just maybe it would help someone else."

While at Breakthrough, Beth feels she got exactly what she wanted and needed. In her words, "I needed to begin the process of putting all of the sadness and grief that I had been carrying with me where they belonged – in the past. This is not to say that they are gone forever, but I can now make a conscious choice as to when and how I deal with them. My Breakthrough experience also gave me the permission I needed to reclaim my life." Beth says, "I learned first-hand about the 'beauty of group' and also learned about 'trusting the process.' As if that wasn't enough, I was also blessed through the work of the gifted and talented staff of Breakthrough to bear witness and be a participant in the other miracles that were occurring with my fellow group members."

Beth was a participant at Breakthrough during the time of filming for **Dateline NBC's "Back from Nowhere"** segment. Beth feels that Dateline NBC was able to capture and communicate the spirit and essence of what she experienced at Breakthrough with integrity. Beth describes Breakthrough's mission and message as "not about assigning blame, but affirming one's own personal perception of reality and empowering individuals to move forward through life." Beth goes on to state, "In essence, John's story [the focus of the Dateline segment] was also our group's story – John is our brave messenger. I think we all, individually and collectively, felt honored and privileged to be participants and bear witness to each other's work and have each other to share the journey with. I believe that we all felt that we had become a part of an experience that would become greater than all of us combined as individuals."

Beth describes Breakthrough's mission and message as "not about assigning blame, but affirming one's own personal perception of reality and empowering individuals to move forward through life."

On the last day of filming, Beth says the crew presented the Breakthrough participants with tokens of their appreciation for allowing them to be a part of the Breakthrough process. Beth has a framed picture of everyone together on the last day – the caption on the matting says: "Some people come into your life and end up changing your world."

Breakthrough at Caron is a residential, 5-1/2 day program specifically designed for individuals impacted by family or relationship dysfunction in childhood or adult life. With each day, defenses are gradually lowered and honest feelings emerge. Group activities and experiences in addition to the relationships developed in the group setting enable participants to identify and release painful feelings of the past and reveal old dysfunctional patterns. Experiential action methods and techniques such as Psychodrama, role play, and family sculpture are important program components. Each person leaves with specific direction for follow-up care and a referral to a therapist, if they were not seeing one prior to attending Breakthrough. The weekly workshops are held in a beautifully restored mansion on the Caron Treatment Centers Wernersville, PA campus. Lodging is a short walk from the mansion in suites called Harmony House.

For additional information about
NBC's *Dateline*
featuring Breakthrough at Caron
visit breakthroughatcaron.org
under News & Events.




Breakthrough
at Caron



Calendar of Caron Events

For event details or to register online (*for most events*) please go to caron.org/events.

MAY

May 29, 2011 – Caron Renaissance Alumni Memorial Day Picnic – Merritt Park, Delray Beach, FL

JUNE

June 4, 2011 – Caron Renaissance Alumni, Family and Friends Regional Event – Teneffly, NJ

JULY

July 16, 2011 – Annual Alumni Homecoming Reunion – Wernersville Campus, PA

AUGUST

August 13, 2011 – 2nd Annual Long Island Summerfest – Mt. Sinai, NY

August 27, 2011 – Inaugural Caron Texas Alumni Reunion and One Year Celebration –
Dallas Campus, TX

SEPTEMBER

September 9, 2011 – Caron Texas – Caron Cares: A Day of Discovery and Recovery, Dallas, TX

September 10, 2011 – 11th Annual Richard Kelley Memorial Golf Tournament – Wernersville, PA

September 18, 2011 – Adolescent Recovery Celebration Day – Wernersville Campus, PA

September 24, 2011 – 6th Annual Boston Hope and Healing Breakfast – Boston Area, MA

September 30-October 2, 2011 – Recovery Renewal Weekend – West Cornwall, CT

OCTOBER

October 9, 2011 – Caron Young Adult Program 5th Anniversary Reunion – Wernersville Campus, PA

October 14-16, 2011 – 4th Annual Fall Spiritual Retreat – Wernersville, PA

October 22, 2011 – Cooking for Caron – Norwalk, CT

NOVEMBER

November 19, 2011 – 9th Annual Philadelphia Gratitude Breakfast – Malvern, PA

A BIRTHDAY BASH you won't want to miss..



**Celebrating
Father Bill's
80th Birthday at
the Annual Alumni
Homecoming
Reunion!**

Date: Saturday, July 16, 2011

Place: Caron Treatment Centers, Wernersville, PA

Time: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Cost: Adults \$15.00 in advance
\$20.00 after July 13, 2011
Children 15 and under FREE!

Order tickets online at caron.org/events or
call Jamie Demmi at 800-678-2331 ext.6110

