

# The Family Voice



A newsletter by  
and for Caron  
Renaissance  
families

Dear families and friends,

So quickly the time flies. Here we are, already well into 2013. Our passion directs us to give families the best and most comprehensive family services possible, and we cherish the initiative and support of our family alumni throughout the country.

This year, we hope to offer additional Caron Renaissance Family Support Groups outside of Florida; planning is underway. Likewise, the November family and alumni annual Gratitude Weekend is already in the planning stages and, if it is even possible, this year's event will top last year's festivities. We look forward to you joining us in these and other initiatives.

Enjoy the spring issue of The Family Voice and if you'd like to contribute to future issues, just give us a call or email.

With gratitude,  
Mary, Yasmin, and the Caron Renaissance team

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# Message from a Family Member: "Let It Begin With Me"

## Life after family workshop at Caron Renaissance

By Francesca F.

In thinking over this past year, 2012, this very difficult year, I am remembering many things.....but one thing that stands out in my mind is: MEATBALLS.....yes, I said 'meatballs', or rather one of the wonderful staff at Caron Renaissance said 'meatballs' and I have never forgotten it.....it has become my touchstone.

The background story to this began in one of the first groups at our Family Weekend when the residents made lunch for their families. My son was, per usual, the only one to miss the bus and therefore missed the entire morning session. What else was new? But when family lunchtime came, my son had managed to get our lunches to us through another resident - who hadn't missed the bus. And my son had made my favorite dish, meatballs and spaghetti. Now this young vegetarian had never cooked anything that had previously been alive let alone made a truly delicious meatball, something which I, his Italian American mother, am renowned for as all our friends and family will attest to.

When lunch was over and the afternoon session started, my son arrived. It was the first time we had seen him since the devastating intervention which brought him to Caron Renaissance. I was so emotionally moved to see him and that my son had made meatballs for me..... it meant so much to me.....that he knew what I liked, who I was, and that he was a good cook..... yadda, yadda, yadda. The group session started and as I began to speak words of gratitude to him through my tears, the group leader spun around to me and with considerable passion pointed out that I was "happy" with and "grateful" for these MEATBALLS from my drug addicted son, whose addiction had so threatened to destroy his own life and our families.

And so the journey began for all of us.

I feel as if it was an "awakening".....I have no idea why that was so very profound for me but it was. Profound. I suppose many of us have those moments when we realize on such a different level how crazy things really were. I felt as if I had come out of a coma.....and I began feeling my way around life and the world in a different way.

Despite the fact that I only agreed to go to AlAnon meetings to quiet our wonderful social worker, (wonder where my son gets this from) who felt it would be good for me AND despite the fact that when I first saw what I thought were those dumb slogans ("one day at a time", "progress not perfection", "let go and let God") at my first meeting, I thought, "soooo not for me", I have become something of an AlAnonic. I have found a most incredible 'home' group where I have learned and grown and laughed and cried and come to know others in their journeys as well throughout this most difficult year. I haven't looked at a meatball in quite the same way since. And it's a good thing. Because I have also begun to see so many things differently. Which is also a good thing. And, I happily share my meatball fame with my now sober son who will be celebrating one year on February 2nd, 2013. And it started with MEATBALLS.

*(Francesca is an active family buddy and is always willing to share her message of hope to other family members.)*

**"Are you accepting crumbs?"**

*Best Advice Given to Me by a Caron Renaissance Therapist*

**One big thing we have learned is that "NO" is a full sentence.**

*-- Michael and Karen*



## Message from an Alumna: Finding the Comfort in the Uncomfortable

By Jenn L.

It is hard to express in words how amazed I am by how my life has changed since arriving at Caron Renaissance. When I was asked to recount my experience as a patient at Renaissance, I had a hard time remembering specific details of my time there. Looking back it seems like the four months “flew” by but I know that living through each day felt like an eternity. I resentfully agreed to extended treatment in Florida with the expectations of sunny beaches and an Olympic-sized pool. **What I thought would be a short 84-day vacation from my alcoholic and eating disordered lifestyle turned into an eye-opening, self-reflective experience** that has helped me build a foundation for a life I could have never imagined for myself.

From day one, my therapist at Renaissance told me that I did not know the first thing about recovery and that my fundamental problems were in my distorted thinking and behaviors; I disagreed. **When I arrived at Renaissance, I was a shell of a human being, masking low self-worth with a huge ego.** I struggled to find the humility to accept that I knew nothing and I needed help. I struggled to find the willingness and the courage to be honest with others and myself. I blamed everything and everyone around me for the way I felt inside.

My recovery did not begin until I recognized that the person who needed to change was me, and that I had to turn my intentions into action. At first, I was too scared to admit how broken I felt on the inside, so I resisted when the staff and my peers challenged my thinking and behaviors. **When I found the willingness to put down my guard, I started to listen and relate to other patients,** and began realizing that the situations and circumstances of others may have varied but the underlying emotions were the same. I began to process the guilt and shame surrounding my past and learned to address the secrets that kept me sick. Taking emotional risks was challenging and scary, and when faced with the hard work and uncertainties that came with recovery, I often regressed to old behaviors. I did not like being wrong; I hated asking for help and I strongly disliked feeling uncomfortable, all of which bruised my ego. The therapists and my sponsor remained passionate with me

and repeatedly challenged me until I became a little more comfortable with feeling uncomfortable.

As I started to internalize the clinical philosophy and work the 12-Steps, **I learned that integrity meant doing the right thing, even when no one was looking.** I learned that **self-esteem meant doing esteem-able acts,** especially when no one was looking. I learned that living a sober life meant matching the words that came out of my mouth to the actions that I took with my feet. While I try my best to apply the lessons I learned at Renaissance and align them with the principles of the 12-Step programs, I recognize that I am still a baby in recovery and appreciate all the continued support that I receive.

One of the hardest decisions I had to make for myself, and my recovery, along the way was to relocate and rebuild my life down in South Florida. I had to be open-minded enough to accept that the therapists had always had my best interests at heart and have enough faith that they had not steered me in the wrong direction. I also could not deny the notion that transitioning into South Florida’s sober community was a lot less daunting than trying to build a new sober life somewhere else.

As an alumna, I have been fortunate enough to remain a part of the Renaissance family and an active member in the AA community. I have been gifted with the opportunity to continue growing while sharing my experience with other women along the way. Today, I am learning to be content with my progress and to be accepting of my imperfections. I have been given a new way of thinking and living that is intimidating at times but extremely fulfilling. I continue to face the challenges that come with early sobriety and life, but I now know that I no longer have to face these challenges alone because I have people in my life that I can rely on for guidance and support. I am starting to regain the trust of my family and friends that I had once lost. I have also been blessed with new unconditional friendships with people who I can trust like family. This last year has been difficult to say the least, but I am so grateful for everyone who has helped me along the way and I am looking forward to seeing what will unfold in my future.

*(Jenn continues on her journey of self-care and recovery while remaining an active alumnus and strong female support for Caron Renaissance patients and other recovering women.)*

### The Spiritual Shift: Good Light

By John Baudhuin, MA, CAP  
Director of Spiritual and Auxiliary Services

Recovery literature is filled with stories describing dramatic epiphanies, **"moments of clarity"** when "it all comes together." While I never rule out such moments in anyone's journey, I believe that for most of us, it's more of a gradual process which may sometimes include dramatic breakthroughs.



What I like to look for is a **spiritual "shift"** rather than a dramatic change. Even weather forecasters will say that some huge event, like a hurricane or blizzard, usually starts with a slight change in the wind, temperature or humidity. It's like that with spirituality.

I was driving across Florida with my favorite uncle after taking him to visit my father on the west coast of Florida. He was 92 at the time, but still taught art classes for the local adult education center. We were talking about life in general, old age and spirituality. As we rounded the long, lazy curve south of Jacksonville, he looked out in the late day at the beautiful St. Johns River. Artist that he was, he reflected simply: "Good light." He then went on to say what every artist, photographer and writer knows: "You never see the same light twice." **He suggested that recognizing "good light" was an important part of spirituality.** Finding "good light" in others and in ourselves is the beginning of a spiritual shift for many of us who may have spent years focusing on the darkness of addiction.

Families in recovery have to learn where to look for that light and also **when to stop looking.** Much of finding the truth we need in recovery is based on that simple spiritual shift. With that basic determination, hope begins to emerge and someone will be able to say: "Good light."

Caron Renaissance has the goal of assisting all patients and families to move ahead spiritually in ways uniquely suited to their backgrounds, spiritual needs and life purpose goals. To that end, the "Spiritual Friday" program offers a unique opportunity to discuss spiritual issues in a safe setting led by local, sanctioned spiritual leaders, among them rabbis, ministers, ministry leaders, and a former Roman Catholic nun. This diversity itself sends the larger message to patients that spirituality, while possibly involving religion, is about finding a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Spiritual services also include a spirituality assessment for each patient that is reviewed by the patient's primary therapist and the director of spiritual services. Patients have access to pastoral counseling from the director of spiritual services and the Caron Renaissance chaplain, Rabbi Meir Kessler. In addition, patients may meet with other clergy or spiritually oriented professionals as needed.

Patients also attend structured, spiritually oriented retreats of a non-sectarian nature, and patients are free to pursue local spiritual venues on a voluntary basis, including the nearby Shabbat Recovery Services and Celebrate Recovery. Many patients also attend local worship services in the area on a voluntary basis.

Families may get involved with spiritual services as part of their involvement with Residential Family Restructuring, and some may attend Shabbat services or Celebrate Recovery while at Caron Renaissance for clinical purposes.

### A Businessman Tries "One Day at a Time"

Residential Family Restructuring at Caron was one of the most profound and intense periods of my life. I believe it was the beginning of my son's recovery, as well as mine. The fog finally started to lift from my brain. One of the hardest concepts for me, a concept that is so basic to recovery yet so foreign to me, is the "one day at a time" idea.

I am a businessman, an entrepreneur who has started a number of businesses, some successful, some not. The key to my businesses has always been risk assessment and solid long-term planning. Looking at the odds for any course of action, cost benefit calculations and then pursuing that course to optimize the chance of achieving my goals has been my training and history. This approach has always served me well, not just in business, but in my personal life as well.

This approach to business and life, I now realize, has almost no relevancy to the problems of addiction and recovery. Total unpredictability is the normal state. Controlling the future is a crap shoot. The concept of "powerlessness," which previously had no place in my life, now is the ruling credo.

Slowly, gradually and with great difficulty, I am making some headway to accepting and living with this concept of one day at a time. What it really means to me is that my son's fate is totally out of my hands. No long-term planning here.

**There is little I can do to affect his outcome. I cannot write a business plan for him. I cannot utilize my contacts to help him. I cannot ease his pain.**

What I can do for him is to help him understand how much I love him and support his efforts at recovery. But his future is in his hands, for better or worse.

How am I learning to "let go?" There was no silver bullet. No "aha" experience. Just painful experience and gradually realizing, through trial and error, that nothing I could do would influence his addiction or recovery.

Not quite true. Sending him to Caron was the best thing I could do for him. Going to Residential Family Restructuring was the second best thing I could do for him, and the best thing I could do for me.

-- Mike



My turning point on my road to recovery was family week. When I got home and had time to process, I was stunned at all the courage, honesty and humility I witnessed. At times it was heart wrenching and other times it was a celebration of the soul. At this point I knew I was not alone in this battle and that I could get through this life-changing experience and feel at peace with myself and my family.

This poem was given to me by my therapist during my darkest days. I did not understand at the time why she would give me such a sad poem. I now understand that this was a "gift" from her.

**The Uses of Sorrow, by Mary Oliver**  
**Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness.**  
**It took me years to understand that this, too, was a gift.**

-- Margaret

## Submissions from the Heart

### *A submission from my heart:*

July 21st, 2012 was set to be a day filled with nerves, emotions and a life-long commitment. The day ended up being just that, but in a very different way than I had anticipated. It was 11:00 a.m. We were supposed to be exchanging our wedding vows. Instead, after an early morning intervention, I was sitting in a room in Wernersville, PA exchanging information about my fiancé's history of addiction.

### **The decision to call off the wedding was all mine, and I'm pretty certain it's the best decision I've ever made.**

I met this man of mine when he was just a boy in 1989. I was 8, he was 9. Ours is a love story many years in the making. In my early twenties, I used to look forward to running into him at bars in our hometown when I was home for the holidays. Oh the irony.

My gut had been telling me for a long time that I would wind up with this guy, and now it was telling me to send him far away, and for a long time! I knew his stay in Wernersville would be short-lived and that he would soon be transferred to Caron Renaissance in Boca Raton for an extended period of time, which was a huge relief.

Of course, this was not our first admission into rehab. In fact, the whole cycle of everything was starting to feel a little too familiar. Two 28-day treatment programs ending in relapse had gotten us here. **I was at rock bottom, and this was my fiancé's last chance to pull it together on my watch.** I was angry, hurt, bewildered, worried and exhausted. But I was not without hope.

I hoped for my happily ever after with my best friend and for a better future for our three-year-old son, who through all of this has been very, very patient and brave.

When my fiancé left, I asked him to do one thing: to follow directions. Then, I held myself to the same standard. **If I was expecting him to take advice from the Renaissance staff, then I should do the same.** So I went to Al-Anon meetings, found a counselor, called my buddy and just focused on me (and our son). I'm typically not a self-help, support groupie, but sometimes even us strong-willed, independent types need to admit that we can't go at something alone.

I participated in the family workshop, which was a very intense experience, especially the inner circle work. I was disappointed that my fiancé had not made more progress up to that point and left wishing he had given me more. **I was tired of seeing that "deer in the headlights" look and wondered if my steed would ever turn a corner.**

Then something must have clicked, because he did.

I got to see the change first-hand on December 21st - exactly five months after that morning in Wernersville. Our son and I flew down to Florida, so we could spend Christmas together as a family. I was a little nervous about how our son would react since it had been so long since he'd seen his Daddy, but the reunion couldn't have gone better. I could tell how much my fiancé had changed, even in the first hours of being together. **I can't remember ever having felt so calm around him for such an extended period of time.** I'm positive it helped that I had been doing the work, too.

It was an amazing week. But I cried a lot the first 24 hours we were together. I had been so busy focusing on myself over the past five months that I had forgotten how much I missed being a family. I finally saw that there might actually be an end to the five year roller-coaster ride. It was intense!

Since the trip, we speak on the phone several times a day, often on "speaker" phone, and Skype on the weekends. Our son is getting older, so he is talking more and more about seeing his Daddy.

He's looking forward to having Daddy come home for the first time for a long weekend toward the end of February, and also to spending a week together in Florida in early March.

We also recently decided that our son and I will move to Florida this summer, where we'll live as a family for a while until we get a little further into this whole recovery thing. It will be a big change since both of our families live close by at home, but I'm very excited for our new adventure and a fresh start as a family. **Florida was never on my list, but sometimes you just have to ebb and flow with life.**

This is not exactly where I pictured myself at the age of 32, but I think in the end I'll wind up in a better place. While we have not set a new date, **I do look forward to getting married one day and getting on with our lives.**

If I could offer any wisdom to family members who have not been in recovery very long, it would be **take care of you!** Remember that nothing changes, if nothing changes.

Stay strong,  
C.S.

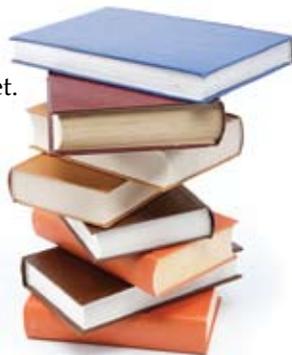
## CR College Bound Opens Sober Dorms: Collegiate Recovery Housing

*By Jonathan Saltzburg, MBA  
Director of College Services*

Under the leadership of Sid Goodman, Robert Johnson and myself, we are pleased to announce the launching of the College Bound Sober Dorms at Caron Renaissance. The Sober Dorms offer transitional living to support our patient alumni who are attending college and desire the structure and support of recovery housing. All students will be expected to participate in continuing care and the Students in Recovery Fellowship Meeting. In addition, students are expected to have individual sessions with their therapist on a regular basis as outlined in their individual educational plan.

We are excited to see that our students have earned their way to this point. In addition, we want to support them in the next journey of their life. As we all know, college can be challenging, presenting a number of temptations. Our hope is that the Sober Dorms at Caron Renaissance will help foster a safe collegiate recovery environment of like-minded individuals working together on a daily basis to practice the principles of recovery and abstain from using alcohol and drugs.

It is extremely important for the well-being of the entire community that all members know that their apartment is a "safe" place (free from alcohol, drugs and other destructive behaviors). Therefore, we have created policies and procedures that are aligned with the Caron Renaissance Clinical Philosophy but also take into account that our students are no longer in treatment. For more information, please contact Jonathan Saltzburg, Director of College Services at Caron Renaissance, at [jsaltzburg@renaissanceinstitute.net](mailto:jsaltzburg@renaissanceinstitute.net).



## Meet Our New Clinical Staff Members:

### Lydia Moore, Family Therapist

Lydia comes to Caron Renaissance with a master's degree in social work and eight years of experience in residential treatment. She is both a licensed clinical social worker and a qualified supervisor. Lydia has worked with patients and families with re-integration and recovery and has specialized training in the areas of co-occurring disorders, cognitive behavioral therapy, aggression replacement therapy and motivational interviewing.

### Jim Norconk, Primary Therapist

Jim holds a master's of science degree and is a certified addictions professional. Jim also trained in the Field Model of Intervention and brings to Caron Renaissance over twelve years experience in the mental health and substance abuse field.

### Jason Shaw, Primary Therapist

Jason is a certified addiction counselor and an internationally certified alcohol and drug counselor. He has been working in the field of addiction for seven years including the last three years at Caron Renaissance in various roles. He brings to his new role familiarity of Caron Renaissance and the patient population and his clinical expertise.

### New Caron Renaissance Family Support Group Coming Soon!

We are sifting through numerous responses from our family alumni to help identify interest in starting our second Caron Renaissance Family Support Group. If you haven't responded yet, please do! You can email Mary Davis at [mdavis@renaissanceinstitute.net](mailto:mdavis@renaissanceinstitute.net) or Yasmin Dovas at [ydovas@renaissanceinstitute.net](mailto:ydovas@renaissanceinstitute.net) with your city, state and zip code and thoughts about your involvement in starting a support group in your area.

## Rennie - An Unexpected Guest

By John Baudhuin, MA, CAP  
Director of Spiritual and Auxiliary Services

American writer Kurt Vonnegut once said that "unexpected invitations to travel are dancing lessons from G-d." In keeping with this idea, following is another such invitation.

Caron Renaissance recently purchased a baby doll with life-like features and, more importantly, a computer program that would cause the baby to cry intermittently, need feeding, rocking and even have its diapers changed. The computer could "read" whether these things were done properly, and upon completion of a period of care-giving, the baby could produce a computer-generated report essentially giving the parent a "grade" on parenting skills!

Staff realized that this type of intervention could be used to help patients who have parenting issues, have neglected a child or carelessly fathered children and even grandparents who are thinking about "taking over" care of a grandchild. Even for those who are not parents, the "baby," we hoped, would enable patients to attach to childhood and generational issues and nurture character traits such as other-centeredness, responsibility, patience, tolerance and empathy. Surprisingly, the "baby" did all of this and so much more.

Family Services Director, Mary Davis, helped us out with creating a name that could be male or female, derived from our program: "**Rennie.**"

When the "baby" arrived, car-seat, blankets, bottle, diapers and computer chip included, the "ooo's" and "ahh's" were strangely like the real thing. Even the seasoned staff among us were about to be surprised by what happens when one responds to an unexpected invitation.



The first patient asked to care for Rennie displayed resistance and argued that the doll was not programmed correctly. When another patient, a parent of a two-year-old, stared at Rennie, on a hunch, I picked up Rennie and placed the baby in this parent's arms. A tough exterior quickly changed as the parent began to speak of dearly missing a child. Suddenly the baby became almost too real. I asked this parent after a few minutes to let someone else hold Rennie, whoever seemed to be the right person. The baby was gently placed in another parent's arms, and then still another. Patients were raising their hands, asking for a turn. The atmosphere became one of deep emotion and reverence as one patient after another discussed missed opportunities with their own children. In a particularly powerful moment, one patient discussed a life of avoidance from anything that even looked like being a parent. "Maybe I wasn't programmed right either," the patient said.

So far, Rennie has enjoyed the care of over half a dozen patients. Additionally, Rennie has never failed to start crying in the middle of a Spiritual Friday Group, I suppose to remind us of what it's all about, an ancient scripture that simply says: "A child shall lead them."

## SAVE THE DATE FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!



Mark Your  
Calendars!

Caron Renaissance's  
Alumni and Families  
**GRATITUDE DINNER**

is scheduled for  
**November 22, 2013.**

You won't want to miss it! More  
to be revealed in the next issue.

SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, May 15, 2013

Caron New York  
2013 Annual Gala

Cipriani 42nd Street  
NEW YORK CITY

HONORING

Juliana Terian  
*The Rallye Automotive Group*

and presenting the Caron Artist's Award to

Paul Williams

*Emcee and Special Guest*

Anderson Cooper

*Auctioneer* Lorna Kelly

to benefit Caron New York

Invitations will be mailed in March.

For ticket, table or journal ad information, please contact  
caronnygala@buckleyhallevents.com or Linda Buckley or  
Ellen Watson at 914-579-1000.

## Emails and Letters...

Dear Friends of Caron,

Sixteen months ago, our son entered Caron Renaissance. He started drinking and using drugs around the age of 15 and was kicked out of school his senior year for drug use. This opened our eyes as to how serious of a problem our son had, and we put him in counseling with an interventionist who referred him to Renaissance.

At the time of the referral, we were in no position financially to afford treatment. We are still fighting with our insurance company today to have Caron reimbursed. We are so grateful to Renaissance for accepting our son on a scholarship. We can't begin to express our gratitude.

Caron Renaissance educated us from the beginning to the end of treatment. They guided us, informed us, counseled us and, most of all, cared for us as a family. Sometimes we didn't like what we heard but we needed to hear it. Because of this, we are better parents. Today, we have a friendship with our son that we never saw possible before treatment. We have developed healthier boundaries and we are a stronger family unit. We aren't perfect but certainly more educated.

We attended Family Week while our son was in treatment. We met other families from all over the world. We were all experiencing the same pain no matter what our ethnic background, sexual preference or financial situation. Addiction doesn't discriminate. The program we attended was extremely helpful for us and helped us address issues with our son to help us heal. For me, this was the best experience, although it was very difficult.

We struggled once our son left treatment during the vocational program. However, he had learned so much in treatment that he knew it was best to return to Renaissance. I am happy to say that he has been sober since he began treatment 16 months ago. He has a job in Delray Beach, Florida, attends 12-Step meetings and aftercare groups, and is giving back through sponsorship and being a sober support to Renaissance patients. Giving back is a key element of his recovery. He has self esteem now. He is trusted by others.

I hope our story can inspire others to seek treatment. Without Caron Renaissance, I don't know where we would be today. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,  
S. M.

Dear Mary and Yasmin,

The Family Voice arrived as an unexpected Christmas gift for our family just as the real, but also imagined, joys of the holiday season were beginning to plummet into the sadness of not having our son with us for the first time. Not only did I read it cover to cover, but I reread it and, in fact, am sitting here this morning reading it again. It was so very helpful.

Thanks to all work we all did during our Family Workshop and the two weeks of family restructuring that my husband and I did, I was able to look back on some of my writings of the past year and realize quite clearly that Christmas never was what I thought it was. It was riddled with my son's addiction and the anxiety and chaos it created. My daughter talked about starting new traditions for our family, ones that really reflect who and what our family is, our new sober family. I think that's a great idea.

Our son is now sober for almost 11 months and looking forward to his one year mark on February 1st, 2013. He has asked us to come down to Florida to attend his anniversary meeting. Just typing the words of that amazing statement brings tears and cautious optimism to my heart.

Our family is all so happy that we have been "ssanced." I don't know if you know that phrase, but we've been "Renaissanced!"

Thank goodness, and to all the staff at Caron, wishing all a healthy, happy, prosperous and sober New Year.

F.F.

Hey Yasmin!

Happy New Year! Just wanted to update you on life as I found out some exciting news! I will graduate magna cum laude in May from Saint Joseph's University (finally!) and found out today I was accepted into Teach For America! I'll be teaching elementary school in the Mississippi Delta, which will definitely be different. It blows my mind that I got in because it is very competitive and four years ago, I was pretty much nowhere. Please pass on my gratitude to all the staff at Renaissance; I wouldn't be here four years sober (my anniversary was Friday) with all these awesome blessings without my time at Renaissance!

Thanks,  
J. H.

## Emails and Letters...

Kim,

Thank you so much for last week. It was life changing in many ways. My gratitude is not only for my loved one but for my husband and me. We are following through on our commitment to each other to better our relationship. The hard work begins now. Awareness of my patterns, assumptions and instincts does no good without the execution of changed behavior.

I offered a prayer of thankfulness to God for bringing you into my loved one's life. Your instincts are good. I admire the energy and focus you give to those in your care. You are helping to transform lives; what better use of our time on Earth?

With much gratitude,  
R. M.

Although I have talked to my son many times during treatment, today's call was much different from the others. After nearly five months of treatment, my son had done the work, found a job and today he called me from his new phone. A phone, to many, may not seem like much, but to him that phone is an accomplishment. It's a symbol of his dedication and hard work. It means much more to him because he earned it. Had I mailed him a shiny new phone, it would hold no value to him and I would have crushed that sense of pride he feels today.

Five months ago, I just may have mailed him that phone, and today, I have Ryan and Tempany to thank for helping me understand just why helping him was actually hurting him.

M.R.

Hey Robert:

You may not remember me but I wanted to drop you a quick line of appreciation. I continue to be sober today (eight years) and happily married. I have been working as a substance abuse counselor for three years now in a state facility and I just opened a small private practice. My areas of focus are trauma history and family therapy.

I find myself laughing sometimes when I think of what you must have had in your mind when I sat across from you all those times. I just wanted to throw you a quick line letting you know how much your help meant to me and that it was not in vain.

Thanks again,  
E. D.

Hi John,

I just wanted to tell you how much those four little words - contempt prior to investigation - have been on my mind since returning from Florida; so simple, yet so powerful and with tons of implications for me. I told Kelsey about it and her response was, "Don't you just love John? Spiritual Friday was always one of my favorite parts of the week and I opened my mind because of John."

I can tell by her letters that my loved one is calling on a Higher Power to help her get stronger every day. As you know, I was raised Catholic, but my father was Jewish (always told everyone, "the best Christian I've ever met") and I was pretty much...nothing. Being at Caron and walking this walk with my loved one has given me reason to believe in a Higher Power again. My loved one is nothing short of a miracle, at least to me, and our whole family has changed and healed from so very much as a result of the important work you all do at Caron. For my part, you add something really special to this experience. I felt a sense of safety and trust as soon as I met you. I can see why the patients love you so much.

Thank you for everything.  
J.

## Emails and Letters...

Dear Jennifer and Brad,

The door has finally closed on 2012 and the window is now open for 2013, allowing me to reflect on the past year. Believe it or not I do not cringe with fear and sadness as I mull over the past twelve to fourteen months. Briefly stated I wish addiction on no one, but recovery on everyone.

It started, as you well know, with my loved one willingly ensconced into your facility for behavior and actions that, to this day, and I'm sure to my dying day, I will never understand. This event was quickly followed over spring and summer with "Four Weddings and a Funeral." I kid you not. The family weddings took up a lot of time, energy and planning which helped me immensely. At the funeral, we paid tribute to my nephew's father-in-law, a gentle man whose life was well-respected and fully lived.

As the months went by my spouse and I kept on course with your help and guidance, Brad. We did our homework. We accepted (maybe, at first begrudgingly) and agreed to the parental detox month, we went to family weekend at Renaissance, we sought out buddies, we had sponsors, we rarely missed a Families Anonymous meeting (and still don't), we conferenced with you every week, we read, we learned, we questioned and we cried. We followed your advice and it paid off. We continue to take it one day at a time and we count our blessings. Our heart felt thanks, Brad, for "hanging tough" with us when it was called for and lending a concerned ear when we needed it most.

Jennifer, where did you come from? When we were at our lowest, you were there to set the course and you kept forging ahead. You were strong, direct, focused and sometimes downright irritating (but, oh, how we ended up loving you). It was too hard for us to see our loved one suffer or need in any way. Our family was a sea and we were capsizing. We were the enablers and we were learning, too. In time, and I know it wasn't easy on you either, we "got it." We saw what happened and what was happening.

Regarding our loved one: we sent him to Caron as a young, straggly haired, manipulative, cocky, dope head who had no respect or value for anyone or anything. He came back to us one year later with 30 pounds and an inch added to his physical self while manifesting an insurmountable amount of self-reliance, self-respect and self-esteem. How do we thank you for that? How do we express our gratitude for giving us our family member back? I know it's "your job," but I want you to know that you go way above and beyond the duties of your position. You value these kids. You respect these kids. You get to know these kids and, most importantly, you've got their numbers. I think Thomas Monson says it best: "We can't direct the wind but we can adjust the sails." I am indebted that you righted our loved one's ship.

I thank you unconditionally, Jen, for all you did to enable our son to find his way. I have a special place in my heart for you, always and forever.

My spouse joins me in this expression of gratitude to you both.

With appreciation and love,  
M.A.

Hi Ryan,

Hope all is well with you. I just wanted to let you know that I've had you on my mind. I think of the words you tell me quite often, especially "My loved one will figure it out." I had a call with my loved one this morning and asked about you. I asked my loved one to say hi to you for me. His reply to me was that I should write you a letter. It's amazing to watch my loved one grow as a person. It's like a baby taking baby steps, but every step he takes makes him proud. All of this would not have been possible if you didn't hold the line with all of us. My husband also says hi. If it's God's will, we are all hoping to make the Gratitude Dinner this coming year and hope to see you then.

Take care,  
R.

**We want to hear from you!**  
Please send your updates about  
life after Caron Renaissance to  
[ydovas@renaissanceinstitute.net](mailto:ydovas@renaissanceinstitute.net)

## Caron Fellowship Groups

Caron Fellowship Groups are similar to 12-Step meetings in that Caron alumni and families meet to support their ongoing recovery using an agreed-upon meeting format. There is no charge to attend these meetings. Below are lists of ongoing Fellowship Groups. More detailed information about each group is listed online at [www.CaronRenaissance.org/Fellowship-Groups](http://www.CaronRenaissance.org/Fellowship-Groups).

**Berks County, PA Area**  
*2nd Tuesday of each month*

**Boca Raton, FL (Students in Recovery)**  
*Every Tuesday*

**Boston, MA Area**  
*2nd Wednesday of each month*

**Dallas, TX Area**  
*2nd Tuesday of each month*

**Finger Lakes, NY Area**  
*3rd Saturday of each month*

**Henderson, KY**  
*1st Thursday and 1st Saturday of each month*

**Long Island, NY**  
*4th Tuesday of each month*

**New York, NY**  
*3rd Wednesday of each month*

**Northern NJ Area**  
*1st Tuesday of each month*

**Northern VA Area**  
*4th Thursday of each month*

**Philadelphia, PA**  
*3rd Wednesday of each month*

**Princeton, TX**  
*3rd Tuesday of each month*

**Washington, D.C. Area**  
*1st Thursday of each month*

**Washington, D.C. Area (Breakthrough Alumni)**  
*2nd Thursday of each month*

**Westchester, NY**  
*Quarterly*

**Westport, CT**  
*3rd Tuesday of each month*

## Caron Parent Support Groups

Parent Support Groups are designed to give parents, whose children have been impacted by addiction, a place to find support and encouragement. Below is a list of ongoing Parent Support Groups. More detailed information about each group is listed online at [www.CaronRenaissance.org/Parent-Support-Groups](http://www.CaronRenaissance.org/Parent-Support-Groups).

**Bergen County, NJ**  
*Every Tuesday*

**Boston, MA**  
*1st Thursday of each month*

**Lehigh Valley, PA**  
*Every Thursday*

**Limerick, PA**  
*Every Wednesday*

**Long Island, NY**  
*Every Monday*

**Northern VA Area**  
*4th Thursday of each month*

**Plymouth Meeting, PA**  
*Every Monday*  
*Newcomers Meeting every Thursday*

**Reading, PA Area**  
*2nd and 4th Sundays of each month*

**Southern NJ Area**  
*2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month*

**West Palm Beach**  
*Every Thursday*

**Washington, D.C. Area**  
*1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month*

**West Chester, PA**  
*Every Tuesday*  
*Newcomers meeting every Monday*



## Caron Renaissance Family Support Groups

**Boca Raton, FL**  
*Every Tuesday*

Primarily for family members but alumni may attend. Open to the public on the last Tuesday of the month.

If you need support and would like to talk to alumni of Caron Renaissance, please contact Yasmin Dovas at [ydovas@renaissanceinstitute.net](mailto:ydovas@renaissanceinstitute.net).