

# The View

Newsletter of the Ridgeview Alumni Association  
Fall 2004

Volume XVI

Smyrna, GA



*We each have a Ray of Light  
Shining upon us from Above*

Picture is courtesy of Ted M.

## World of Recovery

The Ridgeview Alumni Association  
3995 South Cobb Drive – Smyrna, GA 30080

# Fall Focus: World of Recovery

## Upcoming Events

Halloween Dance – Saturday, October 30, 2004  
The Shrine Feed the Homeless – Saturday, November 20, 2004  
Lighting of the Serenity Garden – Sunday, November 21, 2004  
Gratitude Dinner – Sunday, November 21, 2004  
Carolyn – Sunday, December 5, 2004  
New Years Eve Dance – Friday, December 31, 2004  
Super Bowl Party – February 6, 2005  
The Shrine Feed the Homeless – Saturday, February 19, 2005

## Spring Fling Weekend June 3 – 5, 2005

### Agenda - TBD

### Other events for the year include:

Lake Outing and Picnic – June 2005  
Fall Retreat – September 2005

Contact any Alumni Steering Committee Member for more information.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is moving into the 21st Century. After this current issue the Ridgeview Alumni Newsletter will be posted on our website [www.ridgeviewalumni.com](http://www.ridgeviewalumni.com). The website will carry the full newsletter and archival copies. Furthermore, we will be able to incorporate more color graphics and content. The Newsletter will be in an Adobe PDF format; our website will link to download the FREE Adobe reader, allowing you to read and print the Newsletter at your leisure.

If you would like to be added to our E-mail notification list when a new Newsletter is placed on the site, E-mail us at [steering@bellsouth.net](mailto:steering@bellsouth.net) or contact us thru the Web site, please put "newsletter" in the subject line.

Thank you to all those who submitted articles for this edition of the Newsletter; if we have learned anything in recovery it is that *We cannot keep what we have if we do not give it away!*

### EDITORS:

Marcus B.  
Jane B.  
Dawn B.  
Nancy S.

# *Fall Focus: Working with Others*

## **Filling the Loneliness Void with Structure in Recovery**

*Submitted by: George Mize*

When I was caught up in my addictions, I viewed structure and routine as boring and unimaginative. In my early sobriety, while struggling emotionally and mentally, I found the structure and routine world of volunteering at a school helped me to overcome my loneliness. Without a schedule of activities and a plan for action, I had felt confused and disconnected, easily overwhelmed and lonely. It was almost as if I thought I had to reach a certain threshold of pain before I could release it and try to feel better. To prevent this phenomenon from occurring, it was vital that I plan to have places to go and things to do. For my day-to-day existence, I learned to make a list of goals to guide my progress.

When I intentionally structured the day and week, my mind had less room in which to whirl. I had a purpose. I was a man on a mission of love, not fear. When I thought, "I've got better things to do than baby-sitting some 4<sup>th</sup> graders," I would ask myself, "Like what?? Drinking pitchers of beer and playing pool this afternoon?" Then, I would remember to ask God for those thoughts to vanish from my mind, tell my mind to "Shut up!" and go to the elementary school anyway. I had to prove to myself that I could replace my dysfunctional, self-destructive behavior with humility, a spiritual principle behind the 7<sup>th</sup> step. Or, as I put it, "Is it George's will or God's will???"

There was a time (and still is) when I scheduled something to do every day and night of the week because it was too hard to be alone with myself. I know how hard it is to do anything when my mind is aching emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically. I lived for years in my mental meat grinder with thoughts, "Everything I do always hurts me," "and, who wants to be stuck feeling my feelings???" I was told, "Do it in spite of how you feel," and, "Get over it, George." I wanted to "get it," (whatever that was). I wanted it, not because I needed it (which I did), but because I was attracted to winning, and I was afraid of losing my life, really losing, to alcohol and drugs.

So I was given a gift, a blessing, from my Higher Power that I had not expected: HUMILITY. You see, I became a Partner in Education, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, my church, and Chase Street Elementary school (the very same school I had attended), with the goal of teaching 4<sup>th</sup> graders to win the Science Fair. This behavior was definitely egotistical and grandiose, two characteristics of high achievers and addictive personalities. When actually happened was that I could not make "Jell-O" or "Silly

Putty," with the gifted, after-school kids, even though my background is in pharmacy and laboratory compounding.

Subsequently, I was relegated to "coloring pictures of tropical birds with crayons," with the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. Demoted, as it were. I could not color "between the lines," due to my PAWS, which made me really popular with the teachers and students. To compensate for my powerlessness, I collected all the "tropical bird colors" at my table, so my bird pictures would be more colorful than "my classmates". What happened was that the students gathered at "my" table, and our efforts to improve my "drawing outside the lines," became the students' project (and mine, too). When the pictures were finished, they were affixed to a bed sheet, shaped into a "tropical rain forest" with a humidifier and bright lights shining from the outside to create the filtered sunlight through the trees environment. It was awesome.

"Apply the spiritual principles of the Steps to your life, and watch it change," my sponsor wrote in my daily devotional book. Fear brings me to the doorstep of faith (the spiritual principle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Step) to the beginning of a belief in a Power greater than myself (hope, the spiritual principle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Step). Success may be defined in many ways. In my previous life, success was measured in terms of having a million dollars, two cars, a swimming pool and season football tickets. But I have come to believe that success means staying clean and sober, living an honest life, and relying daily on my Higher Power. When material success was taken away, my inner void was filled with the genuine sustenance of a daily commitment to the quality of my recovery and improving my relationships with God and myself.

I did not choose the circumstances to be reborn until the elements of my life caused me to become broken: physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. I am learning how to participate in activities without exerting much effort. I do not have to bow out because I feel overwhelmed. I can just show up. I do not have to carry the conversation. I can listen. "What's the point, George?" The point was to find companionship. I had to "do, in spite of how I feel." Other fellowships have given me the choice to feel appreciated, boosting my self-esteem and providing opportunities to help others through service. These include volunteering in my AA home group, church, nursing home, hospital and sponsorship.

*I know how hard it feels to set goals or make plans when your brain is trying to squash you, but I believe in you 100 percent. You can do it.*

# *Fall Focus: Working with Others*

**Addiction Beware***Submitted by: PCY*

Forever, we must be aware of the addiction that never cares.  
 Today, I ask myself, what would my disease want me to do?  
     Whatever it wants.  
 I will not allow it to have, for it has had its way, way too long.

**The Strength of Angels***Submitted by: Nikle S.*

The Angels in my life have shown,  
     That never do I walk alone.  
     Their breath has given life to me,  
     Their life has helped for me to see.

When darkness fills my heart with fears,  
     I shed an ocean made of tears.  
     With hope that God will heed my cries,  
     I pray to Him to save my life.

“Forgive me, Lord”, and “Thank you”, too,  
 “Oh God”, I plea, “Please guide me through...”  
 “This pain brings turmoil and much fright,”  
     I cry to sleep, ‘most every night.

The mornings come and I can feel,  
 For God and Angels make me heal.  
 They give me what I have to have,  
     To make my life no longer sad.

More tragedies will come to pass,  
 But happy days shall come to last.  
     Since Angels in my life, I know,  
 Will always come to guide me home.

**Why Does It Rain?***Submitted by: NSR*

The Angels cried for us today  
 Their tears I saw come down as rain  
 They sobbed for hardships we had known  
 Their cries as well for times to come  
     We hear a truth inside our hearts  
     Sure promises whispered to us  
     Our God creates a life like art  
 The lives are worth the pain and strife  
     At times we all come to despair  
     We make it through in unique ways  
     All struggles for some greater plan  
 With courage, strength when wise we'll see

Whatever God wants us to need  
 God's will is worth all we do feel  
     For life is growing spiritually.

So when you ask, “Why does it rain?”  
     I'll answer, “Angels are for us.”

**Hello...just in case you forgot me...I am your disease...***Submitted by: Mike & Terry's House*

I hate meetings...I hate Higher Powers...I hate anyone who has a program. To all who come in contact with me, I wish you death and I wish you suffering. Allow me to introduce myself; I am the disease of addiction. I am cunning, baffling and powerful. That's Me. I have killed millions and I am pleased.

I love to catch you with the element of surprise. I love pretending I am your friend and lover. I have given you comfort, haven't I? Wasn't I there when you were lonely? When you wanted to die, didn't you call on me? I was there. I love to make you hurt. I love to make you cry. Better yet, I love to make you so numb you can neither hurt nor cry. This is true gratification. And all that I ask from you is long term suffering. I've been there for you always. When things were going right in your life, you invited me. You said you didn't deserve these good things, and I was the only one who would agree with you. Together we were able to destroy all the good things in your life. People don't take me seriously. They take strokes, heart attacks and even diabetes seriously. Fools. Without my help these things would not be possible. I am such a hated disease, and yet I do not come uninvited. You choose to have me. So many have chosen me over reality and peace.

More than you hate me; I hate all of you who have a 12 step program. Your program, your meeting, your Higher Power. All of these things weaken me and I can't function in the manner I am accustomed to. Now I must lie here quietly. You don't see me but I am growing bigger than ever. When you only exist, I may live. When you live I may only exist. But I am here...

And until we meet again, if we meet again, I wish you death and suffering.

**Faith**

When we walk to the edge of all the light we have and take the step into the darkness of the unknown, we must believe that one of two things will happen: there will be something solid for us to stand on or we will be taught how to fly.

## *Fall Focus: Working with Others*

### **Story of Relapse**

*Soberly submitted by Patti P.  
Houston, Texas  
Wednesday, August 25th 2004*

I am so glad to report that I have now 7 1/2 years of happy recovery since 2/17/97.

Upon returning to the program there was a need to record the experience on paper as best as possible about the relapse and hence the return to the program of AA.

This is that attempt. I hope that it helps someone and that you can relate to this.

Every time I read it, I still thank my Higher Power (whom I choose to call Jesus Christ) for allowing me another chance to "GET IT". I am still getting it One Day At A Time on this road of happy destiny, AMEN!!!!!!

### Where Did I Fail?

After 9 1/2 years of sobriety I took a drink. I am a real alcoholic with an alcoholic mind. The real reason why I took that first drink was - I didn't get my way. With that much time behind me I thought I should get some kind of big reward.

My failure was because I failed to follow the Program of AA

My failure was due to the fact that I forgot that my reward is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of spiritual condition.

I failed to maintain a spiritual condition, insanity returned, and I got drunk.

I had to ask myself a few simple questions upon my return to the fellowship of AA. These questions were:

1. What did I learn from the slip?
2. Where had the program failed?
3. When did the insanity return?

The answers to these questions took some time for me to understand. I had forgotten that this progressive disease has all the patience in the world. It will wait for a lifetime just for the chance to get its way.

One thing that I now tell newcomers is that while they are sitting in a meeting their disease is doing push-ups in the parking lot, waiting for them. And it will wait and wait...The first thing I had to discover was that the program does not fail - we do.

The main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind. The delusion that we can drink like other people had to be smashed. (pp 23, 30 B.B.). I had

forgotten that this is a disease and that the main problem was in my own mind.

I thought after 9 years of sobriety I could control alcohol and the effects it had on me. Before I knew it I was SMASHED!

When an alcoholic fails to follow the path thoroughly, they will drink because they have no defense against their disease. The Program helps establish the defense but that in itself is not enough. The true defense is in the spiritual growth and spiritual tools that we are to pick up DAILY.

When we stop enlarging our spiritual life we stop going forward on the road of Happy Destiny. It is only by spiritual means that we are able to stay on the path and be happy, productive people.

Self-knowledge did absolutely nothing for me. Nothing stopped the decision to drink.

*I stopped enlarging my spiritual life. When I did that, insanity returned and then I drank.*

I justified my actions because of EGO. I wasn't getting my way. I wasn't getting my reward for staying sober.

My behavior became absurd and incomprehensible. With respect to taking that first drink my actions became insane with no regard to myself, and yet I was being and acting selfish. I found a new Higher Power, with tight blue jeans and big green eyes. Some may find a new higher power in other forms. Higher powers come in different forms, you know?

I stopped associating WITH AA members; I stopped going to meetings, calling a sponsor, reading my Big Book. I eventually had no time for prayer and meditation and my spiritual maintenance came to a halt.

I went barreling right on through the fog! I became dry. With my alcoholic mind I kept telling myself I was okay. After all I was tired and had worked all day and needed to rest! Blah-blah-blah-blah! Insanity was my best friend at this point. Even before taking that first drink I had cut myself off from the Sunlight of the spirit. I was spiritually dead and didn't know it. I was in the middle of a self-imposed crisis and bought him a bass boat! I couldn't see the truth; I refused to think that I had made a wrong choice, again! I was once again trying to control people, environments and situations to the best of my talents and was failing miserably. All my attempts to right the wrong were met with grief, frustration and failure. Again!

My only possible next step, due to self-will run riot was to take a drink to stop the insanity. I could no longer see the next right thing. I could have picked up a phone at any time, but I didn't. I could have run to a meeting, but I didn't. I could have gotten down on

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my knees and prayed to GOD to help me, but I didn't. I wanted to find the solution myself. But I didn't.

GOD did not fail. AA did not fail.

I made a half-ass attempt at sobriety for nine years. Half measures got me nothing. Imagine that! I failed to follow the path. I failed to grasp and develop a manner of living that demands rigorous honesty, a 24-hour plan for living. I had not paid the premium on the insurance that guards against my taking a drink. I was spiritually bankrupt. I was powerless. Living in incomprehensible demoralization for the next three months was a nightmare. With diabetes, I still drank from early morning to evening. I found myself at the gates of death. Sick and in an emergency room in Beaumont, Texas, I called out to GOD, "Please forgive me, Father. Help me, please. I am so stupid and wrong. Please don't let me die!", and I meant it this time.

Bargaining, you bet! I gave my life over to GOD and began a very long journey back home. Somehow I got myself moved to Houston, Texas, with some help from a life-long friend. I was sleeping on her couch and drinking in her back yard for three weeks. Finally one day I said to her that I needed to go to AA. She was taken aback because she didn't think I was alcoholic, so I told her a story she didn't know about. About how I had been sober for 9 1/2 years and threw it away because I got stupid. She helped find a meeting just a few blocks from her house.

I went to a meeting where I took a desire chip, February 17, 1997. It was the beginning of a journey into a new spiritual life and a higher plane. It was the discovery of a new way of living that not only included AA, but it revolves around the conscious contact with my Higher Power DAILY! I thank GOD for being there for me always.

Every day is a day that I realize my reward is sobriety itself. Every day is an opportunity for me to draw closer to my Higher Power and live in His glorious light and love.

Every day is an opportunity to share the message of AA with others, instead of the mess of living without it or GOD in my life. For that I am grateful.

### **The First 69 Days Journey To My Recovery for The Rest Of My Life**

*Submitted by: Ed Brown*

In the beginning I wondered if I would or could or even wanted to make it through. There were periods of anger, sadness, pain and grief: even thoughts of suicide. There were times when I wondered, "Why me, Lord?"

But one day not so long ago there was a glimpse of life and light that appeared to me. Then there were other glimpses.

The clouds began to break apart and I started to see though them one by one - one day at a time. The times when I felt happy and safe began to outnumber the times when I felt sad and frightened about my gambling addiction.

New friendships were being formed; feelings of hope and trust and self-confidence began to replace past feelings of loneliness and self-doubt. I seemed to emerge from the darkness into the light with a new sense of confidence. Sometimes someone else's doubt or lack of trust would shoot down that confidence. I would allow that setback for only a short period of time. I would then climb back on my great horse of self-confidence and reliance on my Higher Power (God) and continue to climb.

I now realize that there are things about my past that I cannot change, but that I can stop them from controlling my life. I know that this part of my life will never go away entirely but it has begun to take a less prominent place in my existence. I have begun to allow other things to enter my mind instead of my addiction to gamble or use, I am beginning to enjoy life again. I am setting some limits and beginning to think about the future. I can now begin to look beyond these old times for what they were: a period of growth, self-discovery and healing. Now I am beginning to carry on one day at a time.

Thanks to Ridgeview, the staff, and especially to my wife and Dr. Gordon who have been so patient and caring. Thanks also to Doug and Jack to whom I owe my life.

### **My Recovery! My Recovery!**

*Submitted by: P & P*

It's another day in recovery, I'm sure I'm doing fine. Trying to get a handle on this baffling disease of mine.

People coming...people going. Yet we are all the same.

Just give me five minutes and I'm sure to forget your name.

You see I am here for my recovery, that's what I care about.

Oh well...if someone becomes angry when I take time out.

I'm told that my recovery is to be as selfish as I can be.

I'm considerate and loving to others. However I'm focused on me.

I'm learning to deal with things that come my way

I have to remember to live just for today

I'm assured that I cannot work this program alone.

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So I need interactions with others just to carry on.  
Today I'm here for my recovery, that's as simple as I  
can put it.

My recovery! My recovery! I'm willing to learn how to  
do it.

Keeping in mind...I yet have a long way to go  
I pray to God, my Higher Power, to help me keep my  
feet on the floor.

So where I go from here, everyday is another round  
Every good moment in recovery makes my disease lose  
ground.

Today I put a lock and chain on my disease  
And I throw away the key.

I carry a mirror around, just to keep the focus on me.

### **Give Me Strength**

*Submitted by: Jessie Yearta*

Lord, will you take just a minute to hear this prayer to  
You?

I'm not sure how to start it...only who to address it to.  
You blessed a marriage for me with my husband so  
many years ago.

And even as much as I wanted it to...the love would  
never grow.

There were good times, bad ones...You've probably  
heard this a lot before.

But I guess what I'm saying is that I just can't take  
anymore.

You see, Lord, it is hard to stay when I dread every  
moment of every day.

It is hard to hold back tears as he tears at my heart with  
words he'll say.

I don't want to stand back and watch him destroy my  
life with his own.

To see him happy with himself and sober is something  
I've never known.

I've prayed to You about this, to help me work it  
out...to help me to stay.

But I guess I've finally come to realize...maybe You  
don't want it this way.

So will You take my hand and guide me...show me  
how life is supposed to be?

Stay with me, don't give up on me...help me find the  
strength so I will see.

### **Saints & Sinners**

*Author Unknown*

When some fellow yields to temptation,  
And breaks a conventional law,  
We look for no good in his makeup,  
Oh Lord, how we look for the flaw!  
No one asks, "Who did the tempting?"

Nor allow for the battles he's fought.  
His name becomes food for the jackals,  
The saints who have never been caught.

I'm a sinner, O God, and I know it.  
I am weak, and I blunder and fail  
I am tossed on life's stormy ocean  
Like a ship that is caught in a gale.  
I am willing to trust in your mercy,  
To keep the commandments you have taught.  
But deliver me, Lord, from the judgment  
Of the saints who have never been caught.

### **Letting Go**

*Author Unknown*

To let go doesn't mean to stop caring. It means I can't  
do it for someone else.

To let go is not to enable, but to allow learning from  
natural consequences.

To let go is to admit powerlessness, which means the  
outcome is not in my hands.

To let go is not to try to change or blame another. I can  
only change myself.

To let go is not to care for, but to care about.

To let go is not to fix, but to be supportive.

To let go is not to judge, but to allow another to be a  
human being.

To let go is not to be in the middle arranging all the  
outcomes, but to allow others to affect their own  
outcomes.

To let go is not to be protective; it is to permit another  
to face reality.

To let go is not to deny, but to accept.

To let go is not to nag, scold or argue, but to search out  
my own shortcomings and to correct them.

To let go is not to adjust everything to my desires, but  
to take each day as it comes and to cherish the moment.

To let go is not to criticize and regulate anyone, but to  
try to become what I dream I can be.

To let go is not to regret the past, but to grow and live  
for the future.

To let go is to fear less and love more.

### **My Medallion**

*Author Unknown*

I will always carry my medallion,  
A simple reminder to me  
Of the fact that I'm in recovery  
No matter where I may be.

This little medallion is not magic  
Nor is it a good luck charm  
It isn't supposed to protect me  
From every possible harm.

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It's not meant for comparison,  
Or for all the world to see,  
It's simply an understanding  
Between my *Higher Power*, you and me.

It reminds me to be thankful  
For my blessings day by day,  
And to practice the principles  
In all I do and say.

It's also a daily reminder  
Of the peace and comfort I share  
With all who work *The Program*  
And show they really care.

So I carry my medallion  
To remind no one but me  
That the Promises will unfold  
If I practice *The Program* in my life.

### **What Life is Like Now**

*Submitted by: Pat S.*

On Monday, December 22, 2002, I was sure my life was over. My drinking and drug use was out of control. I attempted suicide and my family brought me to Ridgeview.

I was 52 years old and for the last 34 years I had abused alcohol and drugs. I was also extremely depressed. My treatment at Ridgeview changed my life. I am now living a happy, fulfilling life.

When I left Ridgeview, I chose to stay in Marietta with my daughter so I could be close to Ridgeview and the friends I met in recovery. My husband stayed in South Georgia where we had lived for many years. We saw each other on weekends.

In July 2004, my husband Gary decided to move to Marietta so we could be together as a family. We went to South Georgia, packed, and began our trip back to Marietta. What should have been a 3 hour trip turned into a 12 hour nightmare because the truck kept breaking down. When we finally arrived home we were exhausted. However, we got through the trip without fighting because we are both different people now.

The next day we were unpacking, and I was very tired. As I was cleaning out the kitchen cabinets, I came across a bottle of alcohol my daughter had left there. (Her family moved into a new house.) My first thought was how good it would be to have a drink. That's the cunning, baffling part of this disease. My cell phone rang and it was a Ridgeview Alumni friend. Her phone was in her purse and she had accidentally hit the redial button and it called me. That stopped all thoughts of drinking, and I quickly poured out the alcohol. God was doing for me what I couldn't do for myself.

My husband and I are beginning a new journey in our lives. He supports me completely and if I get lazy about attending AA meetings, he gently nudges me to go! As he recently said, "I did not move here to be with the person you were, but to make a life with the person you are now!"

I am now happy and look forward to an exciting new life with my husband in sobriety. One day at a time.

### **Balance**

*From the Book: Help for Helpers*  
*Anonymous*

When my ambitions take over I can get lost in my own shuffle. Busy-sickness can cause pain and confusion. When my work is the only important thing in my life, I get off balance.

Work addiction is similar to other addictions. A general definition might be: Work becomes a problem when it creates an ongoing pattern of disruption in one or more major life areas. Is my physical health affected by my work? Is work the only way I validate my self-worth? Has work become more important than relationships? Do I find it increasingly difficult to take time off from work and/or leave work at the office? Have my family and friends complained that I don't spend enough time with them?

It takes courage to evaluate my professional life. If work has become out of balance, then denial might cause me to be the last to know. Checking with others can give me more accurate information. Today, I'll aim for balance in my life. And I'll ask others for help in recognizing my out-of-balance lifestyle.

### **Gay Folks CAN get recovery!**

*Submitted by: Kelly L.*

I used to believe that the Gay society—and I will refer to it as a society—was very large, and it seemed to grow every moment. I became aware of my feelings for other men at a very early age. Now this article is not meant as a fifth step, but you know a drama queen must set the stage a little!

I discovered how good sex could feel at an early age and got the message at that same early age that it was something to be hidden from sight and that there were certain sexual behaviors that should be condemned. Well, guess what? My sexual pleasures, along with those from alcohol, prescription meds, shopping and eating, began to define me.

I spent—as I believe many Gay Folks do—my entire life trying to find things to make me feel OK. I got the message loud and clear that straight men were

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good and that they were supposed to have sex with as many women as they could capture. I also learned that men were men and were never supposed to pleasure each other or Love each other. They were only to impress each other. I soon came to believe—love that phrase—came to believe that my definitive claim to life was that I loved men and having sex with men. Well, if that defined me, then it also told me that I was simply by that very definition to be condemned. I then concluded that I should simply do everything I could to feel better from that affliction which I couldn't be healed from anyway.

I discovered that if I isolated myself with a protective barrier around my homosexuality, that if I was the most on-edge, self-indulgent, well dressed and the best bed partner I could be, then the Right wing, Christians, Rednecks, or the zealots of any other kind could not hurt me. Oh My God!!! A total insulation from reality! That would do it. I don't remember making this choice, but I did. When I got to my third treatment, a counselor told my spouse that I was so far removed from reality and so rejected reality that he didn't believe I would make it. This diagnosis was made after my world, as I knew it, had already been shaken by hustlers, drug dealers, prostitutes, two previous treatments, and a group of STRAIGHT men who chose to love me when I couldn't or wouldn't myself.

I have now completed a fourth treatment and have a sobriety date of June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2003. I am currently working on my first eighth step. I have an awesome sponsor and a group of mostly straight men and women who love me and help me strive for acceptance of reality. Accepting was the key. There are many realities such as group conscience, God's love, intimacy, truly loving others and not abusing anyone—me included!

Those are the realities that have helped me begin to get and keep recovery. I must struggle every day to check with a sponsor or a physician or a loved one or a buddy in recovery and ask, "Is what I am thinking real?" If I don't do that, I will drink, use, or act out again. It is painful to know that I am different from my fellows. The big book of AA tells us that. I have come to believe that there is a group of fellows who celebrate our challenges in life, glorify the differences, and herald the flaws. They accept me "Warts and All." Thank you, God, and thank you to all who have helped me. "God, please show me someone to whom I can be of help today." Thank all of you who have helped us. I Love You, Chris H. Thank You! And Thank You, Rick A.

### **Enabling**

Many times when family and friends try to "help" alcoholics, they are actually making it easier for them to continue in the progression of the disease.

This baffling phenomenon is called "enabling," which takes many forms, all of which have the same effect – allowing the alcoholic to avoid the consequences of his actions. This in turn allows the alcoholic to continue merrily along his drinking ways, secure in the knowledge that no matter how much he screws up, somebody will always be there to rescue him from his mistakes.

What is the difference between "helping" and "enabling"? There are many opinions and viewpoints on this, some of which can be found on the pages linked below, but here is a simple description:

- . **Helping** is doing something for someone that they are not capable of doing themselves.
- . **Enabling** is doing for someone things that they could, and *should* be doing themselves.

Simply, enabling creates an atmosphere in which the alcoholic can comfortably continue his unacceptable behavior.

### **Are you an enabler?**

Here are a few questions that might help determine the difference between helping and enabling an alcoholic in your life:

1. Have you ever "called in sick" for the alcoholic, lying about his symptoms?
2. Have you accepted blame for his/her drinking?
3. Have you bailed him/her out of jail or paid legal fees?
4. Have you avoided talking about his/her drinking out of fear of reprisal?
5. Have you paid bills that he/she was supposed to have paid?
6. Have you tried drinking too in hopes of strengthening the relationship?
7. Have you given "one more chance" then another, then another?
8. Have you threatened to leave and didn't?
9. Have you finished a project the alcoholic failed to complete?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you at some point have enabled the alcoholic to avoid his/her responsibilities. Rather than helping, you have made it easier to get worse.

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you have not only enabled the alcoholic; you have

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probably become a major contributor to the progression of the process and are part of the process yourself.

As long as the alcoholic has his enabling devices in place, it is easier for him/her to continue to deny that a drinking problem exists. Only when he/she is forced to face the consequences of his/her own actions does it begin to sink in how deep these problems have become.

But there are options. Taking the children to friends or relatives or even a shelter, and letting the alcoholic live alone in a cold, dark house is an option that protects the family and leaves the alcoholic face-to-face with the real problem.

Those kinds of choices are difficult. They require "tough love". But it is love. Unless the alcoholic is allowed to face the consequences of his/her own actions, will he/she ever realize how the drinking has affected him/herself and those around him/her?

## Moving Forward

*From the Book: Food for Thought  
By: Elisabeth L.*

Time past is gone forever, and we can never go back to it. Even our disease progresses forward. We cannot expect to control it by a return to measures which may have worked for a time in the past. Those methods eventually failed, and trying them again will only bring us to the same point of failure.

The only way to avoid repetitious failure is to move forward creatively as our Higher Power leads us. Each day is a new creation, and each day brings new lessons and opportunities. We build on what is past, but we do not need to repeat it.

Moving forward involves risking what is unknown. The old, familiar rut, depressing as it is, is a known quantity. Moving out of it requires that we have courage and that we trust in One who knows and cares. To move on, we must act. Insights do not produce growth until they are accompanied by specific actions.

*May I risk new actions as You lead me forward.*

*We can act ourselves into right thinking easier than we can think ourselves into right acting.*

--Anonymous

## Letting Go of Old Beliefs

*From the Book: The Language of Letting Go  
By: Melody Beattie*

*Try harder. Do better. Be perfect.*

These messages are tricks that people have played on us. No matter how hard we try, we think we have to do better. Perfection always eludes us and keeps us unhappy with the good we've done.

Messages of perfectionism are tricks because we can never achieve their goal. We cannot feel good about ourselves or what we have done while these messages are driving us. We will never be good enough until we change the messages and tell ourselves we are good enough now.

We can start approving of and accepting ourselves. Who we are is good enough. Our best yesterday was good enough; our best today is plenty good too.

We can be who we are, and do it the way we do it - today. That is the essence of avoiding perfection.

*God, help me let go of the messages that drive me into the crazies. I will give myself permission to be who I am and let that be good enough.*

## My Prayer for You

*From the Book: The Twelve Step Prayer Book  
Anonymous*

I thought of you so much today

I went to God in prayer,  
To ask Him to watch over you  
And show you that we care.

My prayer for you was not for rewards

That you could touch or feel,  
But true rewards for happiness  
That are so very real.

Like love and understanding  
In all the things you do,

And guidance when you need it most  
To see your troubles through.

I asked Him for good health for you  
So your future could be bright,  
And faith to accept life's challenges  
And the courage to do what's right.

I gave thanks to Him  
For granting my prayer  
To bring you peace and love.  
May you feel the warmth in your life  
With God's blessings from above.

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## Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund Campaign

- Yes**, I want to contribute to the Alumni Endowment Fund. I've been in Recovery \_\_\_\_\_ years and would like to give back \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- Yes**, I am not an Alumni, however, I wish to contribute to the Endowment Fund. As a family member, friend, business owner or corporate representative/sponsor. Here is my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name\_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

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The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

**Make checks payable to:** Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund

**Mail to:** Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, Ga. 30080-6397.

## Serenity Garden Memorial Brick Order Form

Name\_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_

Message to be engraved on brick: (2 lines / 14 characters per line)

(Line 1) \_\_\_\_\_

(Line 2) \_\_\_\_\_

\$25.00 per brick

\* Please fill out name and contact number, even if you wish this to be an anonymous contribution, so we may contact you in case any questions arise about the inscription.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

**Make checks payable to:** Ridgeview Alumni Association, Bricks

**Mail to:** Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, Ga. 30080-6397

## *Fall Focus: Working with Others*