

The GATEWAY

A Quarterly Newsletter from Fellowship Hall

Nationwide Search Taps Pittsburgh Native to Lead Hall

By Ogi Overman

Brad Marino could not have picked a finer time to start a new job. As Fellowship Hall's new President and CEO, no sooner had he gotten his boxes unpacked than it was time to break out the golf clubs and participate in the E. Raymond Alexander Memorial Golf Tournament, the unofficial kickoff to the Hall's Annual Conference. After meeting numerous friends and supporters at the 18-hole fundraiser at Bryan Park, that evening, it was time for him to deliver his introductory remarks to the conference, as well as meet as many of the facility's alumni as time would allow. By Sunday's conclusion, the new President and CEO felt he had been thoroughly immersed in the Hall's mission, quality of care, and depth of conviction. "I had

met the staff and board members, of course, but getting to meet former guests who've turned their lives around as a result of the excellent treatment received at the Hall reinforced my decision to come here," he said. "It was an eye-opening weekend, the perfect way to begin what I hope will be a very long relationship."



Elizabeth Ladd and Brad Marino

Obviously, from an administrative standpoint, Marino's credentials were above reproach. His most recent position was as Vice President of Surgical Services and Physician Network for Stanly Regional Medical Center in Albemarle, N.C. Previously he served in two similar Vice Presidential capacities - at West Penn Allegheny Health System and Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, both in his native

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Serenity Fountain Dedication

A Conference to Remember

By Ogi Overman

To the surprise of absolutely no one, the 2013 Fellowship Hall Annual Conference was a smashing success. It always is.

friends and families, plus the Hall staff and five splendid speakers from around the country.

Held at its semi-permanent home, the Downtown Marriott, August 2-4, the 63rd gathering was attended by 683 alumni,

The speakers, naturally, are the main attraction. Voice of the Conference, Chip Wells, and the Hall Council are to be

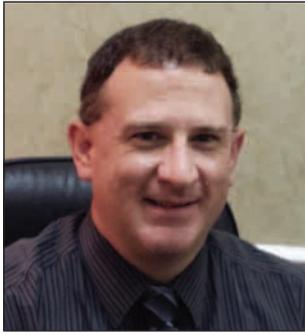
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A Message from the President & CEO



*Brad Marino
President and CEO*

After being fortunate enough to have had a 20-plus-year career as an administrator at several hospitals and as department head at a university medical school, I truly believe I have found my calling. I believe that my career up to this point has been in preparation for the job I began in August as President and CEO of Fellowship Hall.

I had performed the due diligence and knew Fellowship Hall was among the best and most respected treatment facilities in the nation. I realized that to be able to join the ranks of such a valued organization would be an honor, and I felt that I was ready for the career challenge that this position would afford. I came knowing firsthand the effect that addiction has on a family. Sadly, after many years battling addiction, I lost my brother to alcoholism. Even so, it is difficult to truly comprehend until you are here, how genuinely important the work is that is being done at Fellowship Hall. Obviously, all hospitals are doing vitally important, life-and-death work, and I have been honored to be a part of that process at several outstanding institutions. The vital work that is being done at Fellowship Hall is equally important, but in a different way. You see something that you simply do not see in a traditional hospital setting. Yes, you see people getting well, but you don't have an opportunity as you do here to see the allegiance, the loyalty, the passion, and the love from former guests, and the way in which an entire family unit can be transformed. The gratitude that I see goes deeper and lasts much longer. Fellowship Hall is saving lives in a different way. It is restoring our guests to physical health, but also to spiritual and emotional health, which are every bit as important. It is giving people and families a second

opportunity at life, and it is remarkable to watch. Having the opportunity to participate in the Family Program in September allowed me to personally connect my memories of my family's struggle with addiction with the challenges currently being faced by our guests and their loved ones. This is a formidable disease without a cure, but I feel deep in my heart that our guests and their families could not be in a better place to stabilize and learn how to move forward with a successful life free of drugs and alcohol.

The fortuitous timing of my employment was not lost on me. Being able to join Fellowship Hall on the eve of the Annual Conference and the E. Raymond Alexander Golf Tournament allowed me the opportunity to meet so many alumni and to be a witness to the powerful journey of the recovering alcoholic and addict. The enduring love that these former guests have for Fellowship Hall is striking and palpable.

Fellowship Hall, like the 12-Step Programs themselves, is a self-perpetuating, fully functional, well-oiled machine. Yes, there is always room for improvement, but with its 42-year track record of excellence, my role will be one of oversight and growth rather than overhaul. From the moment that I arrived, my family and I were embraced by everyone associated with this facility and the Fellowship Hall family. I am excited about the road ahead, and while I know that we have much to accomplish, we have far more to offer. Thank you for the warm reception, and I pledge my very best efforts on your behalf.

Employee Employment Anniversaries Third and Fourth Quarters 2013

Deborah Andrews	23 yrs	Brian Franco	2 yrs	Warren Margulies	1 yr	Sandra Self	6 yrs
Diane Batchelor	7 yrs	Naimy Gonzalez	4 yrs	Diane McCraw	10 yrs	Jessica Sheetz	3 yrs
Jenny Belter	9 yrs	Susan Hardison	12 yrs	Rudy Murphy	7 yrs	Christina Tucker	1 yr
Jena Brady	2 yrs	Cindy Harrill	11 yrs	Terry Nelson	1 yr	Holly Testerman	2 yr
Paul Carter	13 yrs	Adele Harris	24 yrs	Connye Post	31 yrs	Joni Whaley	26 yrs
Esther Combo	19 yrs	Jennifer Harrison	1 yr	Shane Pugh	2 yr	Mike Whaley	23 yrs
Susan Cook	15 yrs	Catherine Kempainen	1 yr	Gordon Rayle	11 yrs	Todd Williams	3 yrs
Jackie Davis	6 yrs	Elizabeth Ladd	25 yrs	Missy Reed	2 yr	Willie Williams	22 yrs
Demetrius Dillard	2 yrs	Harold Ledford	20 yrs	Ashley Ross	2 yr	Brenda Woodring	1 yr
Tammi Enoch	2 yrs	Thomas Link	3 yrs	Mat Sandifer	10 yrs		
Joanna Faw	8 yrs	Warren Lowder	1 yr	Patricia Scott	21 yrs		

Hall Hosts Delegation from Russia

By Ogi Overman

A group of young Russian leaders spent nine days touring central North Carolina in mid-September. The delegation was sponsored by the Summit Rotary Club in Greensboro as part of Rotary International's Open World Program, which is sanctioned by the U.S. Congress.

The five-person group included a newspaper editor, economic development specialist, Chamber of Commerce representative, attorney, and the director of a substance abuse treatment center, plus a facilitator and a translator. Ranging in age from 28-35, they met with several area city councils, foundations, the UNC School of Government, state legislators, public/private partnerships and businesses. On September 17, they also paid a two-hour visit to Fellowship Hall.

On a sun-splashed late-summer afternoon, the three-woman, four-man ensemble (and host, Rotarian Mike Sigmon) were greeted by five of Fellowship Hall's principle staff members: President and CEO, Brad Marino, Medical Director, Dr. J.D. Harrison, Clinical Director, Jim Fenley, Director of Outreach, Mike Whaley, and Director of Development, Murphy Sullivan. For over an hour the two groups met in the library and informed each other about the similarities and differences in their respective country's approach to treating addiction, after which they toured the campus. Above all, it was clear that there are far more similarities than differences and that the problem is every bit as acute, if not more so, in Russia than the U.S.

While each of the Hall directors took turns informing their guests of the various aspects of stateside, 12-step treatment, Sergey Kiselev, who is the executive director of a facility called (in English) Seven-Way Intersection, did most of the talking (through a translator) for the Russians. He began with an overview of the difficulties of living in an environment where drinking is socially

acceptable at an early age, drugs are plentiful, and no public money or insurance coverage is available for treatment. Also, he noted that heroin has made a comeback, and as a result, hepatitis and HIV rates have risen.

"Alcoholism and addiction have been recognized as a disease," he said, "just not by the insurance companies," adding, "there is also still more of a stigma attached to it. Even

after people are able to quit, they are still considered somehow inferior, which makes our job tougher, because there is less incentive to get help."

One area that seems different is in aftercare. Russia seems to believe in the concept Sergey called "social readaptation," in which those in recovery are taught new skills and given training in new trades.

"We take a vocational approach but we don't necessarily find them jobs," he explained. "We have found that the odds for success improve dramatically for those

who participate in these programs, from around 35 percent to 75 percent."

The encouraging news from our counterparts is that AA and NA are every bit as vital there as here. The 12-step model is used by Sergey's center and is widely accepted by society.

"We work the steps exactly like you do," he smiled, "and they work exactly the same for us. The steps are the steps, period. We have some religious sects that try to dispute our methodology, but we have the track record that proves otherwise. We are making inroads into getting into the high schools and prisons, because we have a high rate of teenage alcoholism, and we find that 90 percent of the prison population is in there because of something related to alcohol or drugs."

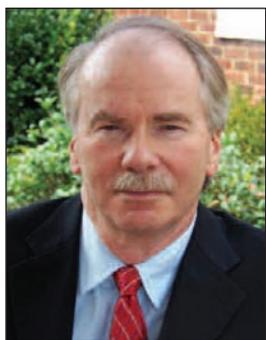
Sound familiar?



Russian Delegation

One area that seems different is in aftercare. Russia seems to believe in the concept Sergey called "social readaptation," in which those in recovery are taught new skills and given training in new trades.

Shame



Jim Fenley

By Jim Fenley, Clinical Director

I bounced around many different topics before deciding on this one. I mean, what topic is appropriate to follow “Gratitude”? I ended up with this one because it just wouldn’t leave me alone. It kept saying “me, me!” So here it is.

In paraphrasing the literature, it says: “Resentment is the #1 offender. It destroys more addicts and alcoholics

than anything else.” These are powerful words. The important thing here is that deep resentment shuts out the “Sunlight of the Spirit” and in order to stay clean and sober, we need to grow spiritually, so these obstacles need to be removed. Shame should be called “the #2 offender” because of the misery that it causes for many recovering addicts and alcoholics. So, if this article resonates with you either presently or from your past, then I’m confident that this is the right topic.

What is shame? It is an internal message that some of us, especially early in recovery, carry inside and repeat to ourselves, messages such as: I am bad, I am weak, I am unwanted, I am stupid, I am defective, I feel ashamed, I’ll never amount to anything, I don’t belong. If you identify with any of these messages, then listen up. Addicts and alcoholics, who are deeply shamed, have these thoughts with regularity. In fact, they assume that most people think this way – that most people view themselves as fundamentally flawed, bad, and shameful. They are also pretty sure that others agree with how they view themselves. People who are shame based are very self-conscious and hypersensitive to criticism. They are always alert to the possibility of impending humiliation. They expect to be judged by others since they spend so much time critically judging themselves. The shame-based person views criticism that they receive as deserved, and they regard any praise they receive as phony or not true. They compare themselves with their friends, their peers, and partners; the problem is that they usually focus on how they are inadequate and not on the fact that they are as good as everyone else. People who are shame based sometimes unconsciously seek relationships that confirm their shame which sets them up to be shamed in their most important relationships.

The shamed-based person can develop defenses to their shame that are attempts by the person to get rid of the feeling or to hide the feeling from awareness. Of course, none of these defenses work, and they usually result in furthering the depth of the shame. Here are some common ones:

Paralysis – When feeling shamed, people may feel paralyzed, unable to say or do anything. Their mind goes blank. They may want to run but there is no energy.

Escapism – When feeling shamed, people want badly to escape. They feel overwhelmed in the current social situation and, if they can’t escape, will attempt to withdraw in any way they can.

Perfectionism – Shamed people may reason that they will never have anything to feel ashamed about as long as they never make a mistake. Human beings make mistakes but, to the perfectionist, any error advertises their shame.

Arrogance – This can be either grandiosity or contempt. Grandiosity is when a person inflates and exaggerates their sense of self-worth so that they believe they are better than others. This is an attempt to compensate for their low self-worth. The contemptuous person belittles others, trying to make them feel weak, incompetent, and shameful. They feel better about their self only when they put other people down.

Rage – One way to fight against shame and humiliation is to attack the supposed attacker. By attacking the personalities of others, they protect their own fragile personality.

So what is the solution? First, be aware and notice the condemning messages that seem to come almost automatically. These messages symbolize your shame. Examples: I never do anything right, nobody could really love me; there is something wrong with me, etc. The first task, in halting shaming messages, is to become fully aware of how you harm yourself with these self-statements. Relief and healing begins to occur when we address our shame in the context of the Steps. We need spiritual help to deal with this problem. Our Higher Power will help us in our identification of how we shame ourselves and in using affirmations to counter these negative self-messages. We need help and that is why we address our shame in the context of the Steps.

Be kind to yourself. Many of us have been brutal to ourselves. Be aware that perfectionism is one of the hooks that can throw us back into shame. Being gentle with ourselves is the first step toward healing. This may mean giving ourselves a wide berth when it comes to making mistakes. We may repeat the self-shaming behavior over and over again even though it’s not our intention. Think of each act, both negative and positive, as a way our Higher Power has arranged for us to heal. As you start to develop self-forgiveness, you will find that you have to do it over and over again until you get it right and reach a place of inner peace about it. But, you will get there.

*Shame should
be called
the #2 offender*

Life on Life's Terms

Ogi & The Old-Timers



Ogi and Janet Overman

By Ogi Overman

I rarely, if ever, fail to mention it in my talk, but it occurs to me that I've never written about it in this forum. "It" is hardly the proper pronoun, though, since the subject is my wife, Janet; let's go with "her."

Oh, I've written numerous columns about her in other publications over the years, but in the interest of anonymity, have never broached the subject of our mutual alcoholism.

My wife's and my sobriety are so intertwined that it's hard to mention one without the other. Although the first four years of our marriage centered around drinking and partying, we were relatively, if superficially, happy and content — provided, that is, neither got in the way of the other's drinking. The love was always there, even if it did at times take a backseat to the booze.

Then one day, out of the blue, she announced that she was going to check herself into Fellowship Hall. Stunned though I was, I had no choice but to go along with her decision. What I had not bargained for was that abomination called Family Week. Knowing that I could not possibly go a whole day without a drink, I tried every way I could think of to lie, dodge or weasel my way out of it, but she was insistent. So I devised a plan to sneak a little vodka in — since, as everyone knows, vodka leaves no telltale odor — and off I went.

I made it a little over half a day before getting intervened.

As a result, I checked into the Hall the day after she got out. In a few more months, that will have been a quarter century ago. So, it is no exaggeration to say that I owe my sobriety

to my loving wife. Had she not had the courage to admit she needed help, I dare say I would have died drunk years ago. In essence, I also owe my life to her.

It even goes deeper than that. A year and a half into recovery, Janet was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, not the prevalent relapsing-remitting type but the far less common and much more debilitating chronic-progressive. She has been completely wheelchair bound for about 12 years.

While there is no way to sugarcoat the severity of the disease, nor the adjustments we have had to make to compensate for her loss of mobility, we have learned to cope with it. What we have learned is to not dwell on the negative but be grateful for the life we have, to concentrate not on what's been taken away but on what's been given, to give thanks for the joys of the journey.

MS is a disease of a different sort, but the lessons are the same as in recovery. We deal with them both the exact same way, through spirituality. We take it one day at a time; we find strength through surrender; we apply the steps to our everyday lives; and we continue to believe in miracles. In

those rare dark days when it seems too bleak to carry on, we turn it over to God and let Him lighten the load.

One of those rare dark days could've happened in July, when I was fired from my job. I came home to break the news to Janet, and her words were, "Don't worry, Sweetie, this is a blessing in disguise. We both know that when God shuts a door, He opens a window."

That window opened almost instantaneously. The folks in the small town where I worked took it upon themselves to organize a benefit to buy Janet a new

wheelchair. Our insurance would have almost paid for a new one, but the one she really needs was way out of our financial reach, so they are going to make up the difference. We are both overwhelmed at the outpouring of love and support. Needless to say, our recovery family has rallied around us over the years, their love never wavering.

Nor has our love for each other wavered. When she was diagnosed, Janet gave me the option of leaving, which I politely declined. Through it all, we both can honestly say that never once has drinking over our ill fortune seemed a good option.

That in itself, brothers and sisters, is nothing short of a miracle.

What we have learned is to not dwell on the negative but be grateful for the life we have, to concentrate not on what's been taken away but on what's been given, to give thanks for the joys of the journey.

Brady Brothers Tapped As Annual Fund Honorary Chairs

By Ogi Overman

When choosing its honorary chairs for the Annual Fund, Fellowship Hall typically finds a deserving married couple. This year, however, marks a bit of a departure, in that the first brother combination has been selected. By unanimous decision, the Board of Directors has named Sandy and Patrick Brady to fill the post.

Both the Brady's are alumni of Fellowship Hall, Sandy, 46, six and a half years ago and Patrick, 50, two years ago. Both have been sober continuously ever since.

"When Murphy Sullivan (Director of Development) told me, I was sitting in my office and I started to cry," admitted Sandy unashamedly, "because six and a half years ago I wanted to die. That was the only way I could stand myself, and now I'm able to look in the mirror and actually smile."

Echoed Patrick, the older of the pair by four years, "We are both very, very grateful and humbled by this honor. We didn't see this coming at all."

The natives of Reidsville are co-owners of Earthstone Products, a granite recycling business. Sandy is also partners with Bob Timberlake in marketing and distributing Timberlake's own brand of dog food. He is a nationally known hunter and

outdoorsman who used to host a hunting program on ESPN, while Patrick is known up and down the East Coast for his golfing ability.

"The fact that their foursome won this year's E. Raymond Alexander Memorial Golf Tournament had nothing to do with their selection," quipped Murphy. "They were selected on their merits, as two men who go out of their way to do anything for both Fellowship Hall and AA. If you need something done, call the Brady brothers."



Brady Brothers with winning team (L to R): Preston Lilly, Patrick Brady, Scott Bankhead and Sandy Brady

...because six and a half years ago I wanted to die. That was the only way I could stand myself, and now I'm able to look in the mirror and actually smile.

The Annual Fund has set a goal of \$50,000 for 2013-2014. The campaign kicks off in November. Annual Gifts are an important source of operational support, including financial assistance for our guests and their families in need, family programs and building maintenance.

Commented Sandy, "Fellowship Hall saved both our lives, so if we can give back, we take every opportunity to do it," adding, "I know some of the folks who've chaired the Annual Fund in the past and these are some big shoes to fill."

Those Brady boys have some pretty big shoes themselves.

2013-2014 ANNUAL FUND



Gifts to the Annual Fund are an important source of operational support, including financial assistance for our guests and their families in need, clinical and family programs, capital improvements and building maintenance.

Gifts to the Annual Fund may be made in memory or in honor of a relative, spouse, child, parent, co-worker, friend, and/or loved one this Holiday Season.

Gifts to the Annual Fund must be made by December 31 to count toward this calendar tax year. We guarantee that 100% of your tax-deductible gift goes directly to help the people who need it the most.

Thank you for your Annual Fund gift. Together, we can provide hope, answers and a new life.

Now you can make a gift using the enclosed envelope or giving on our secure website at: www.fellowshiphall.com

Continued from page 1: Nationwide Search

Pittsburgh, and as Executive Administrator of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. After a yearlong, nationwide search, he was approved unanimously by the board as the Hall's new President and CEO.

While Marino plans no sweeping changes at the Hall, he does envision what he calls "opportunities" for expanding and perfecting its mission. The first of those will likely be an upgrade to the Hall's information and billing systems. "The conversion to an electronic medical record and electronic billing was already underway, and we will continue implementing these systems," he noted. "There are also some outdated payer reimbursement structures in place, and we are working to get those updated."

"From the clinical side, Dr. Harrison and I have already talked about tapping into some of the developments in telemedicine, as a way of outpatient follow-up, among other areas."

Other than keeping up with technological advancements, Marino foresees several areas which, over the long haul, may require a bit of attention. Among them are potential expansion of outpatient services, extended treatment, name recognition, and the physical plant. "I definitely want to address outpatient services of the continuum sooner rather than later," he remarked. "And expanding extended treatment is something I'm interested in doing. I think there are some opportunities for us to expand our levels of service in those areas. We want to look at the clinical and business models and see who would most benefit from extended treatment, and see how we can best set ourselves apart from other facilities from a programming point of view."

That latter point ties into name recognition, according to Marino. "Our reputation is very strong nationally," he noted, "but that's not to say there aren't ways to market ourselves, particularly locally, that will increase our name recognition. Our community needs to know what a gem we have right here in their backyard, but there's that fine line between 'attraction and promotion.' There's a certain attractiveness to being tucked away in the woods."

The physical plant and surrounding acreage is actually a part of that attractiveness.



Keeping our programming at the highest level will always be our top priority, whether in extended, outpatient or inpatient. The approach Fellowship Hall has taken is the correct one, and its track record bears that out.

"This is such an aesthetically pleasing facility, that it helps draw guests in and allows us to compete favorably with other facilities," he said. "We have the room to expand if need be, and right now we're looking at options including renovation vs. building. We are the lowest cost program of our type in the country and coupled with our exceptional recovery outcomes, we are proud to be the most cost-effective addiction treatment center while continuing to look for opportunities to improve processes and expand services."

Yet, Marino is well aware that it is the Hall's impressive programming that truly sets it apart, and fully intends to keep that bar set high.

"Our prime objective will always be how best to serve our guests and get them on the road to recovery," he commented. "Keeping our programming at the highest level will always be our top priority, whether in extended, outpatient or inpatient. The approach Fellowship Hall has taken is the correct one, and its track record bears that out. As we change with the times, we will certainly maintain our standards of treatment, standards that assure good outcomes."

Marino and his wife, Michelle, have been married 23 years. They have two daughters, Bethany, 20, a junior at Appalachian State, and Lauren, 18, a freshman at Clemson. Michelle has a degree from Penn State in elementary education and hopes to work with developmentally disabled adults in her new hometown.

Noted the new President and CEO in closing, "This is a wonderful opportunity to step into, because there is such a great management group, an excellent staff, and a committed board. There are so many fantastic things already in place, that it's almost like a perfect situation for someone like myself to be in."

"Being from Pittsburgh, I'm a bigtime Penguins fan," he smiled. "Hockey is my sport. I played ice hockey in college and have coached it and may look for an adult league to play in or youth league to help coach in Greensboro."

And as for his pro football allegiance, his not-too subtle reply was, "Is there another team besides the Steelers? This season is just a fluke. Super Bowl next season!"

Continued from Page 1: A Conference to Remember

commended for bringing in another cream-of-the-crop roster. The speakers delivered their respective messages with power, reverence, humor and poignancy. While some attendees will recall specific details from a certain speaker's address, no one left without being touched by the overarching message of turning one's biggest failing into his/her greatest triumph. The indisputable truth of the veracity of the 12-step recovery programs was on full display throughout.

Aside from the speakers, however, a couple of other things set this conference apart from years past. First, it marked the introduction of the Hall's new president, Brad Marino, whose first day on the job was the Thursday before the event (see related story).

Second, the golf tournament was a huge success of fellowship and fun. E. Raymond Alexander, Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament supporters raised more than \$42,000 for our guests

and their families in need of financial assistance. The winners of this year's tournament were Sandy Brady, Patrick Brady, Preston Lilly and Scott Bankhead.

Third, the project that was announced at last year's conference, the Serenity Fountain, was officially dedicated Saturday afternoon after the picnic. After a yearlong fundraising campaign that was marked by both sizable contributions and the purchase of individual bricks around the circumference of the fountain, the water was turned on for the first time that day amidst the wild cheers of several hundred happy attendees.

Now it is up to next year's Voice, Michelle Thompson, to top this year's event, and no doubt she will, because every year gets better than the last.



Carol Alexander, Jodi Heafner & Ray Alexander



Ogi Overman and Sandy Brady



Stuart Gordon and Sharon DeEsch



Murphy Sullivan and Chris Valauri

The Serenity FOUNTAIN PRAYER



Dear Higher Power,

Please place upon these grounds your blessings.

Please include this Fountain as part of this spiritual place we call Fellowship Hall.

Let it be a permanent memorial to your love and grace and to guide and embrace those who come after us.

Let this fountain be a beacon for those who come to us broken from this disease, so that they may be given the strength and courage to receive the precious gift of recovery and to be free.

Open their hearts to the love that it takes to recover and to heal.

We ask you to bless the addict and alcoholic who still suffers.

Let our prayers guide them home.

Awaken our hearts so that we may love them and support them.

With gratitude, we thank you God, for this beautiful fountain and all the words that are testament to this place of recovery.

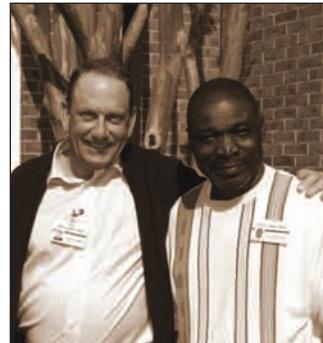
Please place upon all that stand here today your grace, your blessings, and your loving care.

Amen

Jim Fenley, Clinical Director
August 3, 2013
Serenity Fountain Dedication



Administrative Staff



David Spillman & Willie Williams



Jim & Marnie Fenley



Thank you, John Tesh!

Please sign up for our e-newsletter at:
www.fellowshiphall.com

A Walking Miracle



Jimmy Brown

By Ogi Overman

The recovery community does not have leaders, per se, but rather “trusted servants.” If, however, it were to confer titles on its servants, Jimmy Brown would be viewed in the highest regard.

Jimmy, who celebrated 31 years of sobriety June 7, is unrivaled in his service to the fellowship. He has started no fewer than four meetings, all of which are

prospering; sponsored, by his reckoning, more than 50 men over the years; attends conferences all over the country; is on the board of Fellowship by the Sea; and, until a recent health crisis, averaged seven meetings a week. It is generally recognized that he has helped as many people as anyone in Greensboro today.

Jimmy’s allegiance to Fellowship Hall is equally impressive. He is the second most senior member of the Board of Directors, having served since 1984, and generally attends the Sunday morning meetings here. It is so much a part of his life, that he and wife Rita held their wedding ceremony here in 2006.

One crisp November morning in 2011, Jimmy woke up, rolled out of bed to get ready for his normal eight o’clock meeting and felt something different. Rather, he didn’t feel anything at all, at least from the waist down.

“I went to get up and I hit the floor,” he recalled vividly. “Couldn’t stand up, much less take a step.”

Diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease some 15 years ago, he was used to the muscle aches and twitches and cruel tricks the disease plays on your body. But this was something different, much different.

With some effort, given that his weight had ballooned to well over 300 pounds, Rita, who happens to be a nurse, managed to get him into the car and to their family doctor, who referred him to the hospital. After a thorough examination,

the various specialists there could not pinpoint a cause for his sudden paralysis.

“They said they were not sure what it was,” remarked Jimmy, “but that they were sure of one thing — that I would probably be in a wheelchair for the rest of my life.”

The doctors suggested a local nursing and rehabilitation facility, and Jimmy checked in for an indeterminate length of time. The second day there, two physical therapists essentially took command of his life and began the arduous process of getting him back on his feet.

“They wore me out,” he said. “They were merciless; they took me to the limit every single day. But, you know what, those two women saved my life.”

Still, there was work to be done once he was out of the rehab facility, and they suggested a local fitness facility specializing in patients with disabilities and cardiac issues.

“The doctors at the hospital couldn’t find out what was wrong, but the guy who owned the gym, Prince Deese, took a look at me and said, ‘I know exactly what’s wrong.

Your ligaments are so tight you can’t move.’ So we started working on stretching exercises every day, then we worked on arm and leg strength. I went in there stumbling and falling all around, and three months later I was walking normally.”

Putting his struggles in perspective, Jimmy mused, “It’s amazing how close you can come to dying and pull out of it. I had some angels come into my life that turned me around and got me going in the right direction.”

Putting his struggles in perspective, Jimmy mused, “It’s amazing how close you can come to dying and pull out of it. I had angels come into my life that turned me around and got me going in the right direction. The staff at the rehabilitation and fitness centers, that I would likely not have known otherwise, came along and saved my life. They wouldn’t let me give up.”

The parallels of this experience and walking into the rooms of recovery are certainly not lost on Jimmy.

“Prince will tell you how depressed I was when I first came to him,” said Jimmy, now a positively svelte 210. “But he loved me back to health. All that time in the rehab center, I had people bringing meetings out to me and visiting me every day. They all made me wait for the miracle, and it happened.” Twice.

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The Gateway is published by Fellowship Hall
P.O. Box 13890 • Greensboro • NC 27415



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