



The GATEWAY

A Quarterly Newsletter from Fellowship Hall

Construction Begins On Expansion Project

The ceremonial groundbreaking for Fellowship Hall's most ambitious expansion project in its 43-year history was trumpeted with great fanfare. Purposely scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 2, during the Hall's annual conference, it allowed the several hundred picnic attendees and their families, staff, and board members to take part.

The actual groundbreaking, however, was done with no fanfare whatsoever. The heavy equipment moved in early in September and the operators simply started working.

The \$6.2 million project will be done in two phases.

Construction on the 24-bed men's extended treatment lodge will be first, followed by concurrent construction of the 16-bed women's extended treatment lodge and the new outpatient building. The extended treatment lodges will be built overlooking the pond, while the outpatient building will be in the field to the left of the main building.

General contractor for the project is Rentenbach Constructors, and the architect is Triad Design Group. Tentative timetable for completion of the entire project is spring of 2016.



Members of the Fellowship Hall board conduct ceremonial groundbreaking during annual conference weekend



Men's Extended Treatment Lodge now under construction



Women's Extended Treatment Lodge to be built concurrently with Outpatient Building



Site prep underway for construction of the Men's Extended Treatment Lodge



Outpatient Building slated for completion in spring 2016

In This Issue



Construction Begins	1	Ogi & The Old-Timers	4	Golf Tournament Supporters	5
Addiction is Addiction	2	New Medical Director Hired	4	Judge's Jug Sets Record	6
Change in Air at Conference	3	Recovery Month Events	5		

Addiction Is Addiction

By Ogi Overman

The overarching mission of Fellowship Hall is and always has been to make the guest a better, healthier person when they leave treatment than when they arrived. Founded in 1971, it has incrementally augmented its primary treatment program with a family program, intensive outpatient, continuing care, a halfway house, and, most recently, a 90-day extended treatment program.

And now, in keeping with its core principles, it is about to embark on another evolutionary change in its treatment model. Effective January 1, 2015, Fellowship Hall will become a completely smoke and tobacco-free facility and campus. No designated smoking areas, no e-cigarettes, no smokeless tobacco, no smoking at off-campus meetings, the extended treatment houses, the halfway house or the Meditation Trail. This applies to staff, guests, and visitors.

“We will, of course, alert potential guests of the change, and it will apply to guests already in treatment,” said Hall President Brad Marino. “We will make patches available so that they may taper down, and we will have a smoking-cessation program in place to assist them.”

This was obviously not a step that was taken lightly or without extensive research, both clinical and anecdotal. It has been discussed and debated since Marino assumed the presidency of the Hall in August 2013, when he and then-medical director Dr. Harrison began researching whether a more holistic approach to treating the whole patient was a path worth pursuing.

“We talked to other facilities that had already gone smoke free,” explained Marino, “and pored over literature that suggested there are higher long-term success rates when people quit alcohol or drugs and tobacco at the same time. We also factored in our own surveys from departing guests who commented that they smoked more while they were here and some who even began smoking here.”

Late last spring they took their findings to the Medical Therapy Committee of the board, which recommended that the full board take up the matter. After a lengthy and spirited debate, the board voted unanimously for staff to draft a policy that the Hall become 100 percent smoke free by the beginning of 2015.

“We are an addiction treatment hospital, but a hospital nonetheless,” stressed Marino, “and we should be consistent in our focus on helping the whole guest improve their health status, not merely the challenges of addiction, but to be well nourished, to get more physically fit, and take better care of themselves overall. If, for instance, someone comes in with diabetes or hypertension, we are obviously

going to treat that while they’re here. So there is no logical reason why we wouldn’t help them address something that has such an adverse impact on their health as nicotine addiction.”

Of course, no one is more aware than Marino that this decision is fraught with controversy, that there will be criticism.

“Oh, believe me, I am well aware of the counter-arguments,” he said. “No question, there are some cons, but it’s hard to argue the pros, when there is such overwhelming evidence of the negative consequences of smoking. Should we treat one addiction and let them possibly face a terminal illness from another?”

The president also visited other treatment centers that have already taken this step, and noted that each one has seen positive results and would not reverse their decision, saying, “They all felt it did not impact admissions and that it quickly became a non-issue.”

It may also become a moot point in the not-too distant future.

“The Joint Commission (on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations) has suggested that facilities become smoke free over time,” noted Marino. “They have not mandated it yet, but I expect they will in the future to maintain accreditation.”

As for the thorny issue of monitoring, a committee headed by Business Development Director Debra Bergman and Clinical Director Jim Fenley is in place, currently drafting the policies and procedures to ensure a seamless rollout Jan. 1.

“We are already informing callers of the change, and I am working on communication for referral sources and family members,” disclosed Bergman. “All the department heads are working on the aspects that fall under their respective areas. We have all been in communication with others in the field who are experienced in this area, and we will have a clear, reasonable, fair policy in place when we go tobacco free.”

Added Marino, “This is an instance where the committee and the board made the right decision. People are going to feel so much better when they leave here. Let’s get well.”

Change In The Air At Annual Conference

By Ogi Overman

The first tip-off that something was a bit different at this year's Fellowship Hall Annual Conference was a large banner hanging from the second floor walkway overlooking the Downtown Marriott lobby. It read: "If nothing changes nothing changes." Heretofore, the three-day event sometimes had a theme, but it was never as visible as this, perhaps heralding a new era in the 43-year-old organization's history.

64TH FELLOWSHIP HALL CONFERENCE
ON ALCOHOLISM AND ADDICTION

If nothing changes,
NOTHING CHANGES!



*Fellowship
Hall*

Banner displayed at the Marriott showcasing conference theme

Then, upon walking into the Southern Crescent Ballroom, it was impossible for any of the 734 official attendees to miss that the room was configured differently, with the seating rotated 180 degrees and the dais facing the doors. Voice of the Conference Michelle Thompson, who has visited many similar events, said that this would help both sight lines and hearing ability. And she was correct.

But one thing that was unchanged was the caliber of speakers, from beginning to end — Laura A. from Seattle (NA), Carla R. from Tujunga, CA (AA), Debbie G. from Des Moines, IA (Alanon), Doug R. from Tujunga, CA (AA) and Paul Mc from New York (AA) — all of whom delivered powerful and inspirational messages of using the tools of AA, NA and Alanon to overcome their addictions and create a happy, prosperous, and rewarding life for themselves and their respective families.

The Saturday afternoon picnic at the Hall is always a highlight of the weekend, but this year was made even more special by the ceremonial groundbreaking for three new buildings. As the Board of Directors, shovels in hand and sporting hard hats, lined up in the field beside the Hall, Board Chairman Tom Smith and Hall President Brad Marino explained to the assembled crowd the significance of the campaign to add three new buildings to the campus. (See related story page 1.)

The third annual Spirit of Ray Award was presented to Jerry Shelton for his tireless efforts on behalf of the Hall. Shelton is vice chairman of the board, a member of the golf committee for its 13-year history, former Voice of the Conference, and active Hall volunteer. The award is named in honor of district court judge E. Raymond Alexander Jr., who passed away New Year's Eve 2000. Alexander remains the exemplar of selfless contributions and devotion to Fellowship Hall and the cause of recovery from addiction.

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy moments of this 64th conference happened with little fanfare Friday during President Brad Marino's opening remarks. As always, the president mentions the number of guests the center has served as of that moment. That morning, it so happened that the Hall welcomed its 25,000th guest. Let that sink in for a second — twenty-five thousand! Imagine the societal impact that figure represents, not to mention the lives saved, the families restored, the careers salvaged.

Next year's conference will again take place at the Greensboro Marriott Downtown, July 31–Aug. 2. Voice of the Conference will be Chris Matthews.



Jerry Shelton, winner of the 2014 Spirit of Ray Award

Jeter And Me



Ogi Overman

By Ogi Overman

Like most sports fans, even the peripheral ones, I followed Derek Jeter's retirement tour for several reasons, but mostly out of respect for the way he handled himself, on and off the field. Not only was the future first-ballot Hall of Famer one of the greatest hitters of his era, he was, and is, one of the classiest gentlemen ever to don a uni-

form. And even though that uniform was adorned with Yankee pinstripes, this Red Sox diehard secretly wished his uniform had "Boston" stitched across the front.

But there is also another reason I've kept abreast of his exploits over the past two decades. You see, although we never met face to face, Jeter and I are linked for posterity. Oh, he doesn't know it, but quite a few locals and a number of national baseball writers do.

Here's the skinny: During Jeter's first full season of pro baseball in 1993, he was a member of the Yankees farm club, the Greensboro Hornets. That year he set the South Atlantic League record for errors by a shortstop, with 56. The official scorer for the Hornets, the guy who gave him the bulk of those E-6's, was yours truly.

By that sheer quirk of fate, I have become known as "the guy who gave Jeter all those errors." I have been quoted in two books, including "The Captain," tracked down by collectors wanting Jeter memorabilia, and interviewed by reporters from New Jersey to Tampa. I was even cursed

Ogi & The Old-Timers

out by the Yankee brass for giving Jeter, their prized bonus baby, all those blankety-blank errors.

While all that has been fun, that's not really the story. The fact is that none of that would've happened if that faceless scribe in the press box had not quit drinking a few years prior. The closest I would've been allowed to the press box was the beer line beneath the bleachers.

To give it some context, I was the guy who would show up at the ballgame, with several of my cohorts, and mothers would grab their children and move from the first to the third baseline. We would gamble on every play, bait the umps mercilessly, curse profusely and loudly, and generally be as obnoxious as possible. It's a wonder I didn't get mauled by fans there to actually watch the game who'd heard about all they could stand.

That year he set the South Atlantic League record for errors by a shortstop, with 56. The official scorer for the Hornets, the guy who gave him the bulk of those E-6's, was yours truly.

Then, in the spring of 1989, all that changed. When I ventured into the ballpark that summer, folks noticed a different person, a guy who smiled and was courteous and spoke in a normal voice. Apparently the front office noticed, too, because the following year they asked me to be their official scorer, a job I kept for the next 13 years. I sat up in that old press box many a night and marveled at how that worthless

drunk in the bleachers could wind up in a responsible position, making decisions that could affect a kid's career.

Obviously, though, it didn't affect Jeter's much — he got a lot better. And, I'd like to think, so have I. May he enjoy his post-baseball career as much as I've enjoyed my post-drinking career.

Dr. Michael Washo Hired As New Medical Director

Fellowship Hall is pleased to announce that Michael Washo, MD has been hired for the position of medical director. Dr. Washo, who is board certified in psychiatry, completed his undergraduate degree at Duke University, medical school at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, and his residency in psychiatry at Duke. He rotated through Fellowship Hall as a Duke resident in 2006.

Dr. Washo has been employed since 2007 by R.J. Blackley Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Center in Butner, NC, a 62 bed inpatient treatment facility.

We welcome Dr. Washo to Fellowship Hall!

(An interview with Dr. Washo will appear in the winter/spring issue of The Gateway.)

Two Hall Alums Featured in TV Ads



September was Recovery Month and, not surprisingly, Fellowship Hall participated in it locally and statewide. It was a sponsor for the Capital Area Rally for Recovery, which took place in Raleigh Sept. 6. The rally was a program of the

Recovery Community of North Carolina, which is under the auspices of the Governor's Institute on Substance Abuse. Fellowship Hall board member Jake West attended the event.

Locally, the Hall partnered with WFMY TV, the local CBS affiliate, to air a series of advertisements during September. Two 15-second ads were produced, featuring Hall alumni Michelle T. and Sandy B. Each gave a heartfelt and powerful testimonial of the depths to which their addiction took them and the redemption that recovery has brought them. Alcoholics Anonymous was never mentioned, nor was the Hall, only a superimposed graphic of the Hall logo.

This marked the 25th year that Recovery Month has been observed. This year's theme was "Join the Voices for Recovery: Speak Up, Reach Out." According to the SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) website, the theme was chosen to "encourage people to openly speak up about mental and substance use disorders and the reality of recovery, and promote ways individuals can use to recognize behavioral health issues and reach out for help."

Recovery Month itself "spreads the positive message that behavioral health is essential to overall health, that prevention works, treatment is effective and people can and do recover."



The 13th Annual E. Raymond Alexander, Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament

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Contact Mary Kay Snyder at 336.621.3381
or marykays@fellowshiphall.com
for 2015 sponsorship opportunities.

Judge's Jug Sets A New Record

By Ogi Overman

If nothing else, the 2014 E. Raymond Alexander Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament proved one thing: You don't have to have perfect weather to have a successful tournament.

As dawn broke the first morning of August, the gray skies above Bryan Park erupted in a downpour that at times became torrential. Making matters more ominous, this happened to be the 13th annual event, and in all those years it had never rained. But, as if by judge's decree, as the shotgun starting time approached, the rains relented and play got underway as planned. Although it did sprinkle intermittently throughout, all but a couple of foursomes among the 36 who started managed to finish their rounds.

The event, which funds scholarships for Fellowship Hall guests in need, was won by the first-time team of John Coyne, Josh Simmons, Michael Kocheckian and Rocky Manning, who shot a sizzling 19 under par. But more importantly, it raised a record \$47,280 for the scholarship fund, over \$2,000 above the goal set by tournament chairwoman Sue Norris.

"We sold out the tournament three weeks in advance, with all 144 slots filled," said Norris, "and almost all of them persevered under some adverse conditions. And I would be remiss if



Winners of the 13th Annual E. Raymond Alexander, Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament

I didn't offer a sincere thank you to all our generous sponsors and donors who helped ensure the success of the event, as well as the volunteers. As always, this is a true team effort."

Next year's event — euphemistically called the Judge's Jug, after its namesake, who was a district court judge and enthusiastic supporter of Fellowship Hall — will be held July 31, as always, the Friday kickoff to the annual conference. For the third year, it will return to luxurious Bryan Park, generally considered Guilford County's finest public course.



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

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Greensboro, N.C.
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