



Nick's Place Fall 2004 Newsletter

It is with great pleasure and gratitude to report that on October 1, 2004, Nick's Place began its 5th year of serving young men in recovery from addiction and alcoholism. I remember when Nick's Place was only a thought, then a dream. We weren't sure how we were going to do what we set out to do and it was through your faith in us, our determination, and a lot of help from God that we have continued to have the opportunity to serve our young residents.

Mixed with this joy is sadness that I report that Father Jake Powderly one of our founding advisory board members died on October 8. Jake was in recovery for 36 years and was an inspiration and savior to many. We will always be grateful for his guiding hand and loving support. It is comforting to know that Jake and Nick have finally met.

We had a successful summer at Nick's Place and I'm happy to be able to give you an update on some of our residents as we move into the beginning of the holiday season.

Personally, I had a wonderful birthday because I got to share it with my current and former residents, some of whom I have told you about in past correspondence. On my birthday this year, I called George S., one of our former residents and told him that I would expect him for dinner. He called Leigh, Leigh called Alex, Alex called Billy and Jason called us!! We all spent a wonderful couple of hours together, reminiscing, taking pictures and celebrating. At the end of the evening Billy shared with me his thoughts about Nick's Place. He said, "I know I didn't stay the full length of time, but I know for a fact that if I had gone home and not come here, I would not be sober today. Thank you for Nick's Place." I couldn't have had a better birthday present than to see my guys happy and healthy!

As we approach Thanksgiving, the residents and staff at Nick's Place have plenty for which to be grateful. First and foremost of course, is that our residents have found their way to us. The history of our residents suggests that they should be dead. Each of them knows that their life really is a gift and should not be taken for granted. Thanksgiving was Nick's favorite holiday so it is especially a time for reflection and gratitude for me.

It is good to know that Nick's Place plays a role in helping to repair family relationships. It is also terrific to see new relationships taking form and growth and maturity being developed. We believe that our informal alumni group are instrumental in demonstrating to current residents that the changes they are being asked to make result in greater things happening to them in the future. I'd like to take a moment to share with you some of those "greater things". I think many people will remember George from two years ago who wasn't sure if he'd be welcome home for Thanksgiving. I am happy to report that George celebrated two years sobriety this summer and is beginning an electrician apprenticeship.

Another of our former residents, Leigh P., also celebrated two years in July and is sponsoring two of our residents. You might remember Alex from our last newsletter. In his year at Nick's Place, Alex P., earned his computer certification, moved out from Nick's Place and now shares a townhouse with four other young people in recovery.

Jason was at Nick's this time last year. He has studied for and earned his real estate license and is working with his mother in her real estate business, while also working at Starbucks. Before he left, he had to show us his business cards that he was so proud of. I don't know who was prouder, Jason or us!

Our current residents are reporting to work on time, beginning to "work" the 12-step programs and starting to practice good decision-making. In speaking with their family members, I have learned that they too are seeing positive changes in their son's behaviors.

These stories are just a sample of what sobriety can bring. Hopelessness and helplessness are replaced with optimism and enthusiasm for life. We continue to be convinced that replacing old friends, places and things with new experiences and a fresh perspective are key to recovery. It is obvious that residents who embrace our structure and begin living the 12-steps of AA/NA will have a far greater chance for long-term recovery after leaving Nick's Place. Our biggest challenge is reinforcing to them that their approach hasn't worked in the past and that they should give something different a chance.

Recovery begins with the willingness to change. Our guys must be willing to examine what's working in their lives and what's holding them back. Then, little by little they need to trust that making small changes in habits and behavior will lead to BIG successes in the future. This is the miracle of recovery that we get to witness everyday. I don't know about you, but when I have to change something in my life, I get a little nervous. That's why I believe our guys show courage beyond their years and for those that can put together months of sobriety, their accomplishment must be celebrated.

The need for Nick's Place is greater than ever. We recently learned that the state of Maryland is building a 150-bed treatment facility in Sykesville, just for 18-25 year olds. We want to continue to be a resource, a place for healing for our guys. I know I sound like a broken record, because each time I write, I talk about the rewards we receive by witnessing the growth and change in our residents. Barry and I are truly grateful for this opportunity to serve.

I hope we can continue to earn your faith and support. We are excited about the progress we are seeing and the in-roads we are making in helping to restore hope and happiness to our residents and their families. Please tell your friends about us, and the important work we do. They too, may want to support our efforts. It is my pleasure to wish you a safe, happy and healthy Thanksgiving and holiday season.

Nick's Place is a 501 (c) 3 organization and solely depends on public support. We receive no Federal, State or Local Funding. Your contributions are 100% tax deductible. For further information: Rhea McVicker, 4604 W. Caroline Avenue, Beltsville, MD 20705 - 301-937-0455