



Nick's Place
Summer 2002 Update

Hi there friends. Nick's Place is into our second summer of continuing our mission of serving young men new to recovery from alcoholism and addiction. It is incredible how fast the time has gone.

We are happy to report that JJ, who left Nick's Place in December, completed his first semester of college with a 3.8 grade point. JJ is studying accounting with aspirations of becoming a CPA. He is working through this summer and will continue school in the fall. Both JJ and his family has expressed their appreciation for the influence we had on his life.

One of our other long-term residents, John S., recently completed nine months with us. He has found housing with a family who is also in recovery and has started a new job as well. John was nervous about leaving his friends at Nick's Place and the safety, security and familiarity of the routine. He is working with one of our current residents so we still see him frequently, plus we now have his best friend Chris, living at Nick's Place.

John has experienced tremendous growth in his recovery. It is hard to describe his transformation, except to say ...it is clearly the best of recovery at work. From the beginning John was a bit of a challenge. He was discharged from his treatment facility and went home for two days so that he could attend a court appearance. When he got to Nick's Place, we gave him a drug test, which he failed. We had to send him away but assured him that if he went back to de-tox, he could re-interview with us. His mother and father (who works for the FBI) were very disappointed. To be truthful, we didn't think we'd ever see John again...but of course we did. He came back 10 days later and completed nine months at Nick's Place.

John was cooperative and helpful at Nick's Place, but he didn't make it a secret that he had a hard time really practicing the steps of a 12-step program. He resisted getting a sponsor and admitted that he didn't feel any personal relationship with a "higher power". But, he faithfully went to meetings (which are required at Nick's Place) and he began dating a young woman also in recovery (relationships are discouraged early in recovery, but with 20 something's, what are you going to do!)

At Nick's Place, I have meetings with the residents where I ask them to put their goals in writing and then we discuss how they can achieve them through creating a design for living plan. When I recently reviewed John's with him, he had achieved each one. They included: getting his drivers license reinstated, saving money for car insurance, getting a car, purchasing insurance and finding housing. But, I think one of the most important and mature acts that John did was getting his best friend Chris into treatment.

Chris and John used drugs together. They lived together for a while. They considered each other best friends. Chris called John one day and said he had to quit using heroin, or he was sure he would die. He was living in his car. His life was utterly miserable. He had to get help. He told John that he had been watching his progress and wanted what he has. He said that if John could stay clean and sober, he had to give it a try. John took Chris to the hospital for de-tox and Melvin Watson, our house manager, got Chris into Reality House for 28-days of treatment. When it was

time to come to Nick's Place, Chris had to go to court. The judge gave him 45 days in jail. Instead of being angry and upset, Chris told John that maybe his higher power felt he needed more clean time, before getting any freedom; John was shocked by this statement in that Chris, like John, never felt that he had any relationship with a higher power. Chris told John that he decided he'd rather believe and be wrong, then not believe and be wrong! Since those events, John has decided to be open minded and has begun to really embrace the program.

Each of our residents continues to make tremendous progress and the relationships with their families continue to improve. The parents of one of our residents, Ernie, has always welcomed the other residents to their home on the weekend for dinner and cookouts. Our residents have also begun to attend more NA/AA functions such as camping trips, conventions and dances. To think that just months ago, they were in the grips of addiction, not caring about themselves or anyone else and now they have every reason to hope for a bright future. These guys are truly walking miracles. We have expanded our relapse prevention program to once a week at Nick's Place. Like any disease, relapse can occur at any time, so we are educating our residents about the signs of relapse in themselves and each other. We know that each experience with recovery enhances their chances of remaining drug and alcohol free.

We have been awarded two grants this year from the Washington based Arcana Foundation and Abell Foundation. Both are operating support grants that are the hardest to find. I feel it is important to share this information with you so that I can assure you that Nick's Place is working hard in pursuing on-going funding to continue our mission. I want to let you know that by choosing to support Nick's Place your donation is going to an organization that is viable in the eyes of our local funders as well! I believe that more and more people will choose to give their donations to small, local programs like ours, where they can see where their money is being spent.

This past June 14th, Nick's birthday, our website was born. When I opened the site I simply cried when I saw Nick's face on our home page. The site was created for us by Maureen Lawrie, a former high-school classmate, after she learned about Nick's Place earlier this year at our reunion. I hope you will take a moment to visit it at www.nicksplace.org.

Barry and I continue to be enthusiastic about Nick's Place and the progress we have made. When we meet with parents of our residents, we feel good knowing that we can tell them that we are doing for their kids, what we would want for Nick. I always tell parents about Nick, his struggles and ours so that they understand that we have lived their lives and shared their fears. It is important for them to know that even though their child is struggling now, there is hope for a happier, healthier life. We encourage them to not give up hope.

Being able to provide a clean, safe, drug and alcohol free environment to these young men is a blessing. It is certainly not without its challenges, but the rewards are worth it. I am forever grateful that Nick's life and death has provided so much opportunity to the lives of other young men.

If you would like to make a financial contribution, we will welcome your gift. Many times when new residents come on board, they are unemployed and unable to pay their room and board for a few weeks. That is the time we really dip into the kitty. So rest assured, every gift is used to support the residence. I hope you will feel confident in telling your friends and families about us and the lives being changed and saved at Nick's Place.

We are planning a Nick's Place special event for October to celebrate our two years in operation. As details become available, I'll be sure to let you know.

As always, I want to thank you for your generosity, prayers and good wishes. I hope the rest of your summer is safe, happy and healthy.