



Nick's Place Newsletter Fall 2006

Once again I have the pleasure to bring you up-to-date on the happenings at Nick's Place; a sober recovery home for young men aged 18-25 who are beginning their recovery from the disease of addiction.

On October 1st, we started our 7th year of service. I speak for all of the residents and Nick's Place staff members when I say how truly grateful we all are for the many blessings we've received. And while the bounty takes different forms for each of us, one thing is true for all. None of it would be possible without the generosity of the people and foundations that continue to support our mission. And through your support, we've seen tremendous growth and change in our residents, as well as the programs that serve them.

This time of year traditionally brings families and friends together. And for many of our residents, it will be the first Thanksgiving and Christmas that they spend with their families clean and sober. Nick's favorite holiday was Thanksgiving. He loved spending the day with his extended family of aunts and cousins. What better gift is there than seeing a loved one healthy and happy? A true transformation occurs when treatment is finished and real recovery begins.

Here is a first hand testament of what can happen from Jason S. who has been with Nick's Place since January:

"I've been at Nick's Place for 10 months. I've been to about five out-patient and three inpatient rehabs since I was 16 and I always blew off going into a sober transitional house and went back home and would end up doing the same things. This time, after rehab I didn't want to go to Nick's Place at first but I had no place to go. And, now I don't know where I'd be without it.



Since I have been here I found greater friendships than I could have ever imagined. I've learned how to save money, be responsible and follow through with short and long-term goals and be able to stay clean and have real hope. My

life has turned completely around from where I was this time last year, hopeless, homeless and couldn't go a day without using drugs. I could never repay what Nick's Place has given to me. They've given me a life today. I will never forget it and I will do anything I can to help whoever comes here after me."

Jason will celebrate his one year sobriety anniversary on December 12th. He has stepped up to be a real leader at Nick's Place, someone we have come to depend on to help new residents. His plans are to rent an apartment in nearby Laurel with Oscar P. who has been with Nick's Place since February. Oscar will celebrate one year on January 4. Both of these young men have a very active 12-step program and have worked to immerse themselves in recovery. We couldn't be more proud of them. We know we can count on them to be the "new" alumni at Nick's Place.

And Matthew, who has also been with us since February, will be moving into a sober house at the end of the year with four other young men in their twenties who are part of his 12-step home group. We were really delighted to celebrate Matthew's twelve months of sobriety. It is a real milestone.

Jason, Oscar and Matt will join the ranks of other Nick's Place residents who are still clean and sober today through their determination, our support and the strength of the 12-step fellowship program. Here are the ones we know about. I'll bet there are more!

- George S. - four years clean and sober - George is an apprentice electrician and last year joined the Nick's Place staff as a weekend manager
- Leigh P. - four years clean and sober - Leigh is a licensed automobile mechanic and has returned to school this year to obtain his bachelors degree.
- Buddy B. - two years clean and sober; Buddy is sponsored by Leigh P.
- Alex P. - three years clean and sober - Alex worked on becoming a certified computer software specialist while at Nick's Place and is currently working in that field.
- Jason B. - two years clean and sober - Jason is a licensed and successful real estate professional and owns his own condominium. He is currently sponsoring Oscar P. who is mentioned above.
- John S. - two years clean and sober living in an Oxford House (sober living home) in the same neighborhood as Nick's Place;
- Matt C. - two years clean and sober; returned to college
- Michael G. - fifteen months clean and sober. Michael has returned to Penn State and is working on a bachelor's degree in communications.
- Jonathan K. - fourteen months clean and sober. Jonathan is entering the armed services.
- Billy G. - Two years clean and sober. Billy is pursuing his music career.
- Andy S. - One year clean and sober. Resumed his college education
- Matthew M. - Current resident; celebrated one year clean and sober
- Jason S. - Current resident will celebrate one year on December 12
- Oscar P. - Current resident will celebrate one year on January 10

These are fifteen lives that have been turned around. Their families are thrilled and relationships have been restored. When we stop to think that many of these guys were pretty hopeless, just like Jason, it really makes us appreciate the strength and courage it takes to persevere.

Not unlike any other chronic disease such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease or cancer, the disease of addiction has a course of treatment and a course of recovery time. The prescription for healing includes regular attendance in Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous (AA or NA), good nutrition, proper rest, a healthy support group and continued education about how to live with this disease.

Wow, this is daunting for a mature adult! So just imagine how intimidating this can be for a young adult. That is why I believe our residents have earned the right to feel proud of their accomplishments. And I'm looking forward to the day when they can speak out against the stigma of this disease and demonstrate to everyone what the face of recovery looks like. Nick's Place is here to provide a clean, safe, sober and supervised environment to our residents so they have the best possible start to long-term recovery. To that end we took some steps to enhance our programs.

This summer the Nick's Place leadership team evaluated our programs. We asked ourselves: What can we offer our residents that will increase their chances of a successful recovery? When we evaluated the reasons why residents leave prematurely, we identified the following three areas that can be roadblocks to recovery:

1. The inability to manage money
2. A premature romantic relationship
3. Impulse and/or anger control

We enlisted the help of two of our alumni to make sure our thinking was on the mark and then set out to find the right professionals to administer new programs to deal with these issues.

I am happy to report that the Money Management class completed successfully! Residents learned about the different types of bank accounts as well as how to write a check and balance an account. They also learned about the importance of securing and maintaining a good credit rating and how to receive their credit reports. Overall, it was a good general learning series.

We have also completed the Relationship Series that encompasses dating, healthy vs. unhealthy relationships, expectations, setting boundaries and saying goodbye to a relationship that has run its course. The series is getting raving reviews from our residents. Dr. Wendy Buskey developed the curriculum and has won the confidence and trust of the residents. Next she will tackle the four part series on Impulse and Anger Management.

From a financial perspective, we received our first pledge gift of \$25,000 from Rick Powell and his company PMG to be distributed over the next five years. Rick

encourages others who are in the position to do so to follow his lead. I'd also like to recognize George McDonnell. George donated \$2,500 in addition to his regular support to be used for renovation and/or to assist with funding our new programs. There are also those donors who give monthly like Judy Giordano, Judy Puckett and Rick Whelan.

We thank EACH and EVERY person, family, company and foundation who has supported Nick's Place through the years. These gifts help us pay our monthly utilities, buy food, pay our manager's salaries and hire the professionals we need to expand our program. I hope you can see that we are staying true to our mission and that we really are helping to change and save lives.

Please tell your family and friends about Nick's Place. If your employer or theirs has a matching gift program, it is an ideal way to increase your contribution. And if there is someone you know who is struggling with the disease of addiction, please reach out for help. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has a treatment locator for the entire United States. You can access it at www.csat.samhsa.gov.

We pray that you will continue to recognize the value of Nick's Place and the opportunity we present to our young residents. We thank you for the kindness, financial support and commitment you have shown us throughout the years. Have a safe and happy holiday season.

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