

The Freedom Flyer

NFF's Monthly Newsletter ~ Keeping the Community Connected

March 2015

60 Jonquil House Doing it Right

House Manager Rob K. Buys In; Yields Huge Reward



House Manager Rob K. in front of 60 Jonquil.

In 2014 Rob K. was awarded the title "Manager of the Year" for the huge strides he made in transforming the 60 Jonquil house. As Scott Fleming puts it, prior to Rob stepping into the position in July the house was struggling with order and the overall energy of the house was a little off.

"In the last year they've really turned it around, and I think Rob is

the catalyst for that," said Scott.

The Manager of the Year award came with a plaque, which was presented in December. Rob, or Pops, as the other guys call him, accepted the plaque and took it back to the house, but he did not hang it up. Not because he didn't want it, and not because he didn't believe in it, but because he did not take credit for the change in the house.

"I was just doing what my sponsor suggested," Rob said. "I don't take credit for that. I just take suggestions." And perhaps this is exactly why he is an excellent manager- because he is an excellent role model. He listens to advice, follows the rules and brings consistency to the house. This last trait- consistency- is the most

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important one for a house manager to have, according to Rob, and it only works if you buy into the process.

"If you do not believe this process works then [manager] is not the position for you," he said. The process that Rob refers to is the one created by Newfound Freedom- the rules and expectations for all recovery house residents. This process was put in place to help residents be successful in recovery.

"The recovery comes first," Rob said. "They do have to work and be productive citizens and pay their bills, but they must work on the recovery first. Everything revolves around that. It's just a structure. It's the structure that Scott has put into place. And if you buy into it, it truly works." And it has truly worked for Rob.

When Rob first came to NFF, he had been struggling with drugs and alcohol for many years. "It just became a repetitive thing for me," Rob said. "I thought society owed me something." It was that attitude that landed him in the penitentiary in 2010, where he served four years. When he was released in February 2014, he went back to the streets, falling into his old life. Three weeks later he realized he didn't want to do it anymore. Rob asked around, found a rehab, and started going to meetings. His counselor pointed in the direction of Newfound Freedom and he made the phone call. In May 2014, two NFF staff members drove to New Jersey to pick him up. On the way to Pennsylvania, the guys gave Rob the hope he had been looking for.

"They asked me: What were my desires? What did I want? And my desires at the time I wasn't sure about. But I had the desire not to spend another day in prison one way or the other. Jimmy and Jonny ended up telling me, 'Rob, you don't have to live like that. There's another way.'" The two brought him to 60 Jonquil and he was immediately inspired. He saw people like him running the show, being successful. Seeing how well it worked for the other men and women in these recovery houses, Rob invested in the process of Newfound Freedom.

"I bought it. I love what it stands for," he said. He dove in headfirst, tackling the structure, doing everything by the book. He took a minimum wage job through a temp agency, and rode his bike to work at 5am every day. Eventually they hired him on full time, and eventually, he was able to get his license back and a car. Rob's dedication to the rules and his determination to turn his life around affected the guys in his house.

"They see that Pop gets up every day at four in the morning, goes to work for twelve and a half hours a day, comes home, goes to his meetings, keeps the house clean," Rob said, talking about his daily routine. "It was all done by how I did it. And there's no excuse for them not to do it."

The guys see him buying in and they buy in, too. Together, Rob *and* the kids, as he calls them, completely changed the vibe in the house.



Rob K. inside his cozy home at 60 Jonquil

"This is not a dictatorship," Rob said. "It's a family thing. We do everything in collaboration. It's my home now. It's their home. They [want to do all these things for the house]." This respect and love for the house and for each other is something Rob has worked hard to create.

"You have to be firm but you have to understand that they're gonna bump their heads into the wall," Rob said. "Any time you have 17 alcoholics and addicts in one house there's going to be conflicts and growing pains. So you have to be firm, but [also] have a lot of empathy. You have to show them you care about them. That's what a manager should be doing. That's what I do."

Rob's reward for the work he's done goes beyond the title and the plaque he's earned. For him, the real prize is seeing his work pay off in others; seeing things click.

"I like it when a kid comes in and bangs his head against the wall, and then six months later I see him grab a kid who just comes in and does the same thing for [the new kid] that I did for him," Rob said. "That's where I get my joy. There's where my recovery is."

It's no surprise that Rob is pursuing a career in the field of counseling. He is currently enrolled in college, and his long-term goal is to work with young men who need guidance; who might otherwise end up being lost.

"I don't want them to go through what I went through," Rob said. "These men between 20-28, if you don't get a hold of them, you might lose them. That's what I'm here for. I'm not trying to lose any more of these young cats."

Rob's advice for future managers is simple: Buy in and be consistent, no matter what. He adds, "You have to do [the job] because you want to do it for the betterment of the house."

As for Rob's advice for those in recovery: "Give yourself a break, take some suggestions, and just easy go. This is not a sprint. It's a marathon. You gotta buy in for the long haul. Find the lane you belong in, and ride. If you're working your program, and you buy in, you can't lose." ♦

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

NFF Houses Have Adopted an Annual Tradition

In 2011 the women of NFF had a great idea- they decided to start a program that would help give underprivileged families a magical holiday. Throughout the year, the women of Newfound Freedom collected money from residents, alumni, family members and the community. At the end of the year, NFF owner Scott Fleming matched the amount they had raised. With these funds, the girls adopted a family and gathered items from their wish list.

Now it has become an annual tradition. In 2013 the guys started collecting, too, and NFF was able to adopt two families.

"It's a great program the girls started," said Scott, who matched several hundred dollars last year.

Sue Davids, one of the founders of the program, remembers the two families they adopted last year.

"One was a family who had been subject to domestic violence," Sue said. "There were four kids. We got them everything on their list. And the other was a woman who had just given birth to her third child. The father died from a heroin overdose. We were able to give each of the two older kids a \$100 gift card and gave the mother a \$100 gift card for Babies-R-Us."

"It's clear that this is not just about giving someone a present. It goes beyond the material objects," a supporter of the program said. "What they are giving these families is hope, and that is the gift that keeps on giving."

Starting now, all five NFF recovery houses will accept donations for the 2015 holiday season. Over the next 10 months they will be raising money for a family in need.

★★★

For more information, or to make a donation, please contact Sue at 215-764-9673



Buy a Raffle Ticket, Be Entered to WIN \$10,000 cash or a Harley Davidson!

The NFF girls will soon be selling raffle tickets for Livengrin's annual event,
Ride for Recovery.

When you purchase a \$10 raffle ticket, you are not only entered into a drawing to win the big prize, but you also donate to the cause: providing treatment for those without insurance.

Watch the NFF Facebook page for details!

DONATE YOUR TIME to NYC's BIGGEST and BEST SOBER ST. PATRICK'S DAY Party!!!

**Volunteers needed
Monday, March 16th and Tuesday, March
17th
to help behind the scenes!**

*Volunteers who give 3+ hours of their time receive
free admission to the party.*

Party held the evening of the 17th in NYC.

For more information, visit: SoberStPatricksDay.org

Spotlight on Alumni: Chris N. Reflects on Ten



Chris in 2011 with his wife Ashley.

This past January, Chris N. celebrated ten years of sobriety. Looking back, he is amazed at how his life has turned out. Today, Chris is a husband, a father, a business owner, and above all, he is able to enjoy his life. Ten years ago this all seemed far from possible, and Chris hasn't forgotten how hard it was to get here.

Background

Chris started drinking at 13 years old, and began doing drugs at age 16. He grew up in a rough section of West Philadelphia, where crime was prevalent and drugs were not hard to get. Chris was quickly swept up in that world, and from 16 to 21, he "got involved in all kinds of stuff. Any drug that was available [he] would do it." When Chris decided at age 21 that he wanted to live a different life, he found it impossible to just up and quit.

"I didn't wanna do it anymore," he said. "I really didn't. And I

didn't know how to stop."

Thinking that it was a question of will power, Chris had made efforts to stop on his own accord; attempted to put the drink and drugs down and just walk away. But he kept coming back. He tried everything he could think of, hoping that he could change his behavior by changing the things around him.

"I would go to church, I'd move to a different neighborhood, I'd hang out with different people, I'd get new girlfriends," he said, but none of that worked. No matter how much he forced external change, he still struggled internally. He continued using, and his addiction continued to push away those closest to him.

"It just got to a point where it was so bad my family wanted nothing to do with me," he said.

In January of 2005, Chris found himself living in his car at the top of a golf course, defeated. That's when he got a visit from an old acquaintance, Jason, who also suffered from the same disease.

"All of a sudden he shows up and he's sober. And he was different," said Chris. Jason told Chris about Newfound Freedom. Chris had never heard of recovery houses; he didn't know there was a community of people like him living in sobriety. But he could see what it had done for Jason and he was intrigued, so when Jason asked him to check out the houses, Chris went.

The Recovery House

Chris moved into Blue Ridge, ready to do whatever it took to get sober. Though he was somewhat skeptical at first, he was soon inspired by and impressed with those around him.

"[When I first came, I thought] 'There's no way you get [multiple] years sober doing what I was doing.' I couldn't even believe it," Chris said. "So seeing a house full of people who I believed were like me and sober, I was interested. You had my attention." Chris focused that attention on his own recovery, following the rules and listening to advice. He may not have always understood in the moment the reasoning behind the rules, but he saw it working for others, so he kept doing it, hoping that it would work for him as well.

"I didn't understand- What does doing a chore have to do with you getting sober?" he said. "But I was all out of options, so I kept my mouth shut and I just did whatever they told me to do." Looking back now, Chris can see the connection between the chores and recovery:

"[I now understand that] they put together structure and they showed me how to live. I didn't know how to live. All I knew how to do was wake up to get high or wake up to drink. I didn't know how to take care of myself." Here, he learned how to take care of himself, how to take care of a home, and how to be responsible. He also learned to let go of a lot of his judgments and found mutual respect from his new community.

"Everybody in the house smoked. I was the only person who didn't smoke in the whole house and I hated it," Chris said. "But what they did was, they made a rule that if I was in the room they wouldn't smoke in the room. I couldn't believe it. I was blown away. I was screaming for a life like this."

Having found this life that he had wanted for so long, Chris was very careful not to lose it. Looking around,

Chris saw that the people who stayed sober were the people who did the work.

"[I realized that] if I just keep doing what they're telling me to do I'll be alright. I literally just did whatever they told me to do," Chris said. And it worked. He could see it paying off. "I couldn't believe that I was sober for two months; for four months."

As part of the work, Chris began sponsoring guys. One in particular sticks out in his mind:

"After I saw this kid, this 18 year old kid, do what I was telling him to do, and he got sober, and he started repairing the relationship with his family, I fell in love with it. This is the greatest feeling I ever had in my life."

This feeling became the driving force behind Chris' recovery and his whole life. By giving back to others the gift that had been given to him, Chris found success in recovery, and he attributes it all to being in the house.

"My experience with the house was amazing," he said. "I think if I didn't move there when I did I think I'd be dead. Without a doubt."

Continued Sobriety

"They say that you know you're ready to leave if you don't care if you have to stay. Everybody who moves out too soon ends up either dead or coming back months later anyway." Chris waited until his managers told him it was time to move on, and after 7 months at Blue Ridge, Chris moved into an NFF sober house.

Chris's relationship with his sobriety hasn't always been easy. Like any long-term relationship, sobriety takes work. Sometimes it takes reaffirming your feelings; reminding yourself of why you are in it. This is something Chris had to do a few times.

"I've been on kind of like a rollercoaster," he said. "For five years I was up and down. And then it got a little bit better from five to eight years."

When Chris was eight years sober, he hit a wall. It had been about five years since Chris was, as he called it, "affectively sponsored".

"When I hit that eight-year mark, it was almost like a depression I was going into," he said. "I realized that I need to [continue to] be sponsored, and to continue to sponsor new guys."

At that time, Chris sat down with his sponsor and went through the steps, completing the whole process all over again. Since then, he said, "it has completely leveled off. From eight to ten years has been the first time where there hasn't been any ups and down"

When asked how it is to have ten years sober, Chris said:

"I guess it's not so much the time, but just the feelings. Just, the peace." Today, Chris has peace of mind for the first time in his life, and he continues his work to keep it that way. For Chris, life is not just about being sober; it's about enjoying sobriety:

"It's so much more than putting down the drink and the drug. If you miss that, you're missing a lot. You're missing the whole key to life. I thought that I was coming here just to get sober, so I had no idea what was available. If there's nothing more than just getting sober it's going to be boring. So, if you continue to do this stuff, more's going to be revealed. You're going to see more than you thought you'd see."

Looking back, Chris realizes how lucky he was to find Newfound Freedom when he did. Jason, the young man who brought him here, passed away two years after Chris entered Blue Ridge, but he still lives on in Chris' memory. In fact, Chris feels he owes his own life to Jason, and uses the example to show other guys in recovery that it's never too early, or late, to make a difference.

"He had less than thirty days and he saved my life," Chris said. "So, these new guys think they have nothing to offer, they can't help anybody. But this guy with less than thirty days brought me here and I got ten years because of that single moment. He definitely saved my life." ♦



Above: Chris speaking during a trip to Iceland with NFF owner, Scott F. in 2013.

Below: Chris skydiving in New Jersey in 2014.



NFF Excited About Putting Money Back into Houses

Property Manager Joe Ruddy discusses dreams and goals for NFF homes.

Last winter, the Jonquil house received a bit of a makeover. NFF property manager Joe Ruddy was able to redo the upstairs bathroom, reframe much of the house, and update some of the systems. According to Ruddy, Jonquil was in need of these updates, but the work is still far from over. This year, NFF plans to put more money back into the houses.

Little by little, Ruddy and his team have been tackling the big jobs, while staying on top of the little things. Ruddy is dedicated, driven, and knows the importance of constant maintenance in a recovery house.

"An average American home has 3-5 people in it. Recovery houses have more than that," said Ruddy. "That means that everything in those homes from a doorknob to a refrigerator door gets umpteen amount more use. So you [need to] have somebody there, constantly keeping an eye on stuff." And that is where he comes in.

A typical day for Ruddy consists of answering calls from residents, running to the store to pick up supplies, climbing into crawl spaces, and, well, fixing things. Though all of these tasks are essential, Ruddy dreams of doing more.

"I'd love to have a deep freezer at my girls' houses. I would love to have two washers and two dryers in Blue Ridge. I want to be able to put a new floor in [the Birch house]."

These are just a few of the items on Ruddy's wish list. The reality is, however, that all of these things take money, time, and people. There are moments when all three of these things are not available, and so the "dream" projects get put on hold, while essential needs are met. Not to say that Ruddy isn't aware of house aesthetics, or that he hasn't completed plenty of big projects, but sometimes his work is not even visible.

"[I know about the nicks in the walls, and the little holes], and I know, we could do that, but what I'm really looking at is that 20 year old boiler," Ruddy said. Last year, he was able to replace the boiler in 60 Jonquil and the electrical system as well.

"That's what I get excited about. I was proud of it." He said. "Nobody sees it. Nobody hears it. It's function of the home. It's safety."

That has always been the number one priority for NFF. Though some things are occasionally put on the backburner, safety is never one of them. The residents know they can call Ruddy with any serious concerns and he will be there immediately. But, there is more to a home than safety, and NFF knows this, too.

"The conditions of our homes is extremely important to Newfound Freedom," says Ruddy. "There's so much more that we'd love to be able to do for our residents. It's extremely important to have the nicest possible homes. We all just try to knock out as much as we can."

This year, NFF plans to knock out quite a bit. The plan is to put a lot of money back into the houses, focusing on many of the bigger projects, starting with the kitchens and bathrooms. It's important to Ruddy that the jobs are done right.

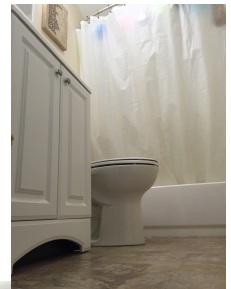
"That's the way we want to do things at Newfound Freedom," he said. "We want to be able to go in and do it completely and correctly."

When he talks about his job, he smiles. It's clear that Ruddy cares not only about the work he does but the people he serves.

"I like dealing with the people in the houses," he said. "I can go work in property management in some apartment complex...but it's just not the same as working with people who are in the same boat as I was and working their way through it."

Ruddy's love of helping others in recovery and his passion for these homes is what drives his work. It is the knowledge that things can always be better that inspires him to strive for the ideal. What is the ideal state of the homes for Joe Ruddy?

"That if somebody, anybody, were to walk into that house, they would think it was just the average family home, and they would say, 'This is a really nice house... I would want to live here. I'd feel comfortable living here.'" ♦



The brand new Jonquil bathroom

Celebrate with NFF Residents and Alumni Every Month!



Above: NFF Residents and Alumni at February Celebration Meeting Below: Celebration Cake/ Joe R. and Billy C.

On the last Monday of every month, NFF staff, residents and alumni gather at the First Presbyterian Church for an evening of celebration, cake, and coffee. Those in AA and NA receive chips to celebrate milestones in recovery. The NFF resident with the most sober time is invited up to speak for ten minutes.

After a short break for cake, the main speaker is welcomed to the stage to share for thirty minutes.

The Celebration Meeting is open to the entire NFF family and is a wonderful way to support each other and find inspiration. And, in case you missed it, there's cake!

This month's Celebration Meeting will be on March 30th from 7:00pm-8:30pm. The main speaker will be Neal T.



Here Are Some Other Monday Night Meetings:

NFF AA Step Meeting

Every Monday
(Except the last Monday of each month)

7pm-8:15pm at First Presbyterian Church

NFF NA Basic Text Study

Every Monday
(Except the last Monday of each month)

7pm-8:15pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Brennan's Corner

*Happiness is like a butterfly:
the more you chase it, the
more it will elude you,
but if you turn your
attention to other things,
it will come and sit softly
on your shoulder.*

Henry David Thoreau (1817 - 1862)

What's Going On?

Calendar: March 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 AA Step Mtg 7pm @ First Pres. NA Text Study 7pm @ St.Paul's	3 Men's Big Book Study 7:30pm @ 60 Jonquil	4 Garage Mtg (Men's Lit Study) 7:30pm @ Bowman	5 Recovery Rap Mtg 9:30am @ Blue Ridge	6	7
8	9 AA Step Mtg 7pm @ First Pres. NA Text Study 7pm @ St.Paul's	10 Men's Big Book Study 7:30pm @ 60 Jonquil	11 Garage Mtg (Men's Lit Study) 7:30pm @ Bowman	12 Recovery Rap Mtg 9:30am @ Blue Ridge	13	14
15	16 AA Step Mtg 7pm @ First Pres. NA Text Study 7pm @ St.Paul's	17 Men's Big Book Study 7:30pm @ 60 Jonquil	18 Garage Mtg (Men's Lit Study) 7:30pm @ Bowman	19 Recovery Rap Mtg 9:30am @ Blue Ridge	20	21
22	23 AA Step Mtg 7pm @ First Pres. NA Text Study 7pm @ St.Paul's	24 Men's Big Book Study 7:30pm @ 60 Jonquil	25 Garage Mtg (Men's Lit Study) 7:30pm @ Bowman	26 Recovery Rap Mtg 9:30am @ Blue Ridge	27	28
29	30 NFF Celebration Mtg 7pm @ First Presbyterian	31 Men's Big Book Study 7:30pm @ 60 Jonquil	1	2	3	4



United Recovery Softball League starts in April!

Contact John Henry to join NFF's team:
215-917-7961



Upcoming Events!

*SEPIA Roundup- April 10-12

*Livengrin's Ride to Recovery- May 31

*AA 80th Anniversay- June 10

*Founder's Day Celebration- June 12-14

*4th annual Liberty Bell Roundup- August 21-23

<http://libertybellroundup.com>

First Presbyterian Church:

5918 Emilie Road
Levittown, PA 19057

St. Paul's Episcopal Church:

89 Pinewood Drive,
Levittown, PA 19054



Contact Us:

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