


HOME SWEET HOME

Wishing you well from our new home.

Another year has passed by with some significant changes. We renovated and moved all our services to new premises at Te Atatu Peninsula. The shift was achieved with minimal disruption to the programme in July this year.

The larger facility is much more suitable for staff and residents. All enjoy the restful, healing environment with a glimpse of the water and ample grounds. The garden design is underway thanks to the generosity Xanthe White.

The board wishes to thank all those who have supported, contributed and assisted us to carry out our work treating those who are severely drug dependent and wishing to live free of their addiction. The dedication of the wonderful staff team at Higher Ground is the binding force which maintains the highest standards of care in a loving environment.

We wish you a joyful festive season and happy New Year, as we at Higher Ground look forward to another successful year of growth and recovery. 

HIGHER GROUND

news

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HIGHER GROUND DRUG REHABILITATION TRUST

STUBBORN AND PASSIONATE ABOUT RECOVERY

After 20 years a registered drug addict, life hit rock bottom. He couldn't stop using drugs, but he'd had enough and sought help at Higher Ground. Now 11 years drug-free, a graduate tells his anonymous story.

"I was brought up in a white, Jewish, middle class family in the eastern suburbs of Auckland. My mother, a registered nurse, was a survivor of the Holocaust although no one would talk about what had happened to her.

My Kiwi father was a manager. He was a student when the war broke out, served as a tank commander and stayed in the army until he was 28.

I had one sister. We were well-off but it was not a happy upbringing. My father was quiet and withdrawn. My mother, who had survived horrors getting out of Germany, was manic depressive, had a drug for everything and took them all daily as they were easily available to her as a nurse. She had hysterical temper tantrums and would fly into a rage if I did something as small as dropping food off a spoon.

Shock Treatment

Her parents were in Auckland. My grandfather died when I was about five. My grandmother also was unstable because of her past. My mother and grandmother were regularly in and out of a psychiatric hospital where they had shock treatment. Numerous times I came home from school to find my mother had overdosed. As a child, what I learned was that that when you were depressed you tried to kill yourself.

I hid behind my music, starting violin at five, becoming the best, which was my "my feel-good" until the age of 14 when girls and drugs came into

my life. Initially I stole alcohol and then my mother's drugs – codeine, mandrax, methamphetamine, valium. I started getting into trouble before being asked to leave school at the age of 15.

Free Love, Drugs

It was 1968, hippy times, free love, drugs... I fitted straight in, trying opium that I bought off the Chinese. I used it intravenously, was addicted the first time and never stopped using narcotics again for the next 28 years. In 1970, James K Baxter, a sober alcoholic himself, took eight of us off the streets to Jerusalem on the Wanganui River to "clean up". It was a hippy commune with the philosophy that love was free and drugs were not for selling but for giving. Woodstock happened, and we lived it. Two years later, the commune was like a zoo and I took off to Wellington, Christchurch and Auckland and a small but thriving heroin scene soon supplied by Mr Asia and bit players like myself. We were the junkies, hip and cool we thought.

Called Up ... Away

I got busted, then left the country for Israel, India and Thailand, as I had been called up for military service and did not want to go into the army. This was during the Vietnam War. When the new Norman Kirk Labour Government abolished Compulsory Military Training, I returned to New Zealand in 1974 with hepatitis and a serious drug dependency. *continued overleaf ...*

How to Make a Referral to Higher Ground

Higher Ground welcomes self-referrals.

Health, social and legal professionals wishing to make a referral to Higher Ground should note that our admission criteria require residents to be over 20 years of age, have a primary diagnosis of alcohol or other drug dependence, an interest in 12 Step recovery and a drug free status on admission.

Referrals or self referrals can be made by telephoning Kathy Mildon on 09-834 0042 for a pre-admission assessment appointment on weekdays between 8.30am and 4.00pm.

Assessments in prisons, detox facilities or hospital can be arranged. Applicants who have outstanding legal charges are considered on a case by case basis. If required, Higher Ground can organise a medical detox through referral to the Auckland Regional Alcohol and Drug Services.

Making a Donation

Higher Ground is a registered Charitable Trust. Donations over \$5.00 are tax deductible and may be sent direct to Higher Ground. Higher Ground is dependent on charitable donations for the continuation of its programme.

Higher Ground's NEW Contact Details

Address • 118 Beach Road, Te Atatu Peninsula, Waitakere, 0610

Mail to • PO Box 45 192, Te Atatu Peninsula, Waitakere 0610

Telephone • office 09-834 0017
• after care 09-834 0076
• admissions 09-834 0042
• residents 09-834 3700

Office fax • 09-834 0018

We hope you have enjoyed this issue of the Higher Ground News. If you do not wish to remain on our mailing list, or are incorrectly listed, please write to HGDRT, PO Box 45 192, Te Atatu Peninsula, Waitakere, 0610.

For further information about the Higher Ground rehabilitation programme phone Programme Director, Stuart Anderson 09-834 0017 or fax 09-834 0018 email hgdrtr@xtra.co.nz www.higherground.org.nz

Higher Ground Drug Rehabilitation Trust
118 Beach Road, Te Atatu Peninsula,
Waitakere, 0610.
Ph 0-9-834 0017 Fax 0-9-834 0018

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Across the Horizon, Across the Tasman

Australian visitors to Higher Ground, in Auckland for a major professional gathering, took home a challenge to incorporate more cultural values into their work.

Higher Ground and Odyssey House co-hosted the first Australasian Therapeutic Communities Conference in New Zealand. Over 128 delegates attended, with about 60 from across the Tasman, all working in the field of alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation.

Auckland's harbour provided a spectacular backdrop for the three day event, held at Romford's, Tamaki Drive on 22, 23 and 24 November. The theme was "Across the Horizon" and presentations were based on research and practice.

On the first day, many of the delegates visited both Higher Ground and Odyssey House. About 40 people visited Higher Ground over the three-day period. The A.T.C.A. Board were given an official welcome onto Orakei Marae.

The conference began with a whakatau (Maori opening) and welcome by Carol Dawes (chairperson of the A.T.C.A. from Australia) followed by guest speakers Dr Janice Wilson, Prof. Doug Sellman, Barry Bublitz and Derek Wright. All presentations will be posted on the A.T.C.A. website www.atca.com.au.

Two papers were presented based on research undertaken at Higher Ground. Dr Gabriele Schafer presented a study of the multiple family group programme. All residents interviewed said they had gained better communication skills and were able to integrate these into their relationships with their families and partners. Lisa Zimmerman presented Alex Gordon's research "Road to Recovery" which


measured what clients felt were turning points for them in treatment. It showed that relapse is not the end of the road to recovery. Some clients may achieve long term recovery even though they briefly relapse.

Higher Ground Trust Board chair Janet Colby reports there was a special warmth throughout the conference. "It was inspiring for me to hear so much mention of the need for some form of spirituality for addicts to recover, and the recognition of cultural needs.

"The Australians were so encouraged with what we were doing culturally they took on the challenge to be more proactive in their work with indigenous people."

On the final evening the conference hosted an official dinner with a performance by a combined kapa haka group drawn from residents of Higher Ground and Odyssey House, lead by Higher Ground's cultural advisors and Maori group leaders Ra and Kohi Pene and Odyssey House's Maori advisor Joe Wilson (kapa haka group). "They had been practicing for months together, and it was very moving," says Janet.

After dinner a Cook Island cultural group got the audience to participate in some Island dancing with much hilarity. "Overall the feedback was very positive."

Next year's conference will be held in Melbourne, with the theme "Past, Present and the Future" and the call is for all therapeutic communities to collate and share their histories. 

I was met at the airport by my parents and Dr Roche, who admitted me into his methadone programme. That was before addiction treatment was taken from general practitioners and centralised into clinics. I didn't fit in there, and I didn't like the regimentation and having to go along to the programme every day. I liked drugs too much and wasn't ready to give up.

Parents' Suicides

The following year, both my parents committed suicide within a week of each other. I can remember the week after my mother died. I smashed up the pub, I got busted driving through the front window of a medical centre, I can remember my father trying to talk to me, and that he was dead the next day. I can't remember anything else after that, I just obliterated it from my mind. I know I must have gone to the funerals but I can't remember. I really can't tell you much about that period or the next five or ten years.

I was married to a woman who loved me, but I don't know if I ever knew what love was. My parents never showed love so I never knew how to love or be loved. My partner took over as my mother and took care of me.

There were just so many drugs around and I lived a rollercoaster life. One week I would have \$10,000, the next week nothing. My partner was working, and although she started using drugs a couple of years after we met she was never an addict.

Registered Addict

Ten years later, after a decade of drugs abuse and oblivion, the police broke the Mr Asia drug importation ring, forcing us addicts into reality and back to the clinics. The Health Department gave me a dispensation to go to my own doctor, where I was prescribed 16, 60 mg tablets of codeine a day. Although I soon enough arranged new sources for myself, I went to a doctor every week for 20 years for prescriptions of codeine and other drugs.

I was first put into Oakley Hospital as criminally insane in about 1968. I was under the Alcohol and Drug Addiction Act from about 1970 to about 1990. Every year or two the health authorities would put me back in Carrington Hospital so they could continue with me under the protection of the Act. They could pick me up any time and commit me, but for me it was protection. Being caught with a syringe was an offence, but the police would do nothing except drive me to Carrington where I'd stay for a day. The police looked on me more favourably because they were starting to understand addicts were sick people.

During that time I married, had children, owned my own home, partnered in a business. Although I twice went to prison for drug offences, I still managed to keep an outward appearance of normality.

In 1994 my world fell apart. My wife kicked me out, my work partners wanted me out, and the police after 10 years had finally infiltrated our small drug importation business. My health deteriorated, my arms became so blocked with chalk from injecting tablets that my veins collapsed, and I regularly overdosed.

I woke up one morning in 1995, 43 years old, a junkie for 28 years without stopping once, to realise I couldn't stop using drugs but had had enough.

I rang a medical Detox. which put me in touch with Higher Ground and was accepted into both. One month later I entered Detox, seven days later Higher Ground. I have never used drugs since.

I did not find it easy being at Higher Ground and being there for myself (and I know now if it's easy, it isn't working). I was challenged and challenging.

I completed the programme and graduated through sheer stubbornness and desperation. Higher Ground taught me much about responsibility and choice, and that if I went to a 12-Step programme there was a good chance I could stay drug-free. I met some good people on the staff and made a friend who has stayed close since then.

12-Step Meetings

A month after leaving Higher Ground I went back to work but continued attending 12-Step meetings of Narcotics Anonymous daily for the first four years. For those first years, I was just determined to stay drug-free. I did it by stubbornness without believing in a Higher Power or that the Steps worked for me. I didn't realise I was working the Steps the whole time by just turning up to meetings.

Now I tell newcomers who are struggling with the spiritual side of recovery that if you are practising honesty, open-mindedness and willingness you are working the steps.

When I was ready, I got into a study group, handed my life and my will over to the care of a Higher Power, and for the last 11 years have continued to work my 12-Step programme in the way it has always worked for me.


I'm stubborn and passionate about my recovery, but these days I'm a lot more gentle on myself which means I'm a lot more gentle with other people. I realised I am a much better person than I thought I was.

I also found out that I was holding a lot of responsibility for things that were not mine. I had carried my parents' deaths for years, but I now understand that I wasn't responsible for them.

Addictive Nature

Drugs were the end result of my problems: drugs were not my problem, my problem was me. I also know 100 percent that I can never use alcohol or other drugs again because then I would die. Because of my addictive nature I would not be able to stop, and the moment I used drugs I would destroy the relationship I have with myself and lose the self I have found through working the 12 Steps.

I value every day and acknowledge it, I work the programme to the best of my ability, I have a sponsor and sponsees. I give back to the Fellowship in service and do what was taught to me by my counsellor at Higher Ground who had faith in me. He said, "get up in the morning and say 'I will do my best' and at night say 'I have done my best'."

Things may or may not have gone my way, but as long as I learned from it and worked the principles to "my best" it's been a damn good day. I am 11 years drug-free and that is a lot of damn good days. 



New Home

There's been no looking back once settled at Beach Road, Te Atatu Peninsula, although some staff were sad to say goodbye to the grand old Parnell house which had been Higher Ground's home for nearly 16 years. Outside the new premises, from left, supervisors Shannon Baker and Kristin Priestly and clinical manager Johnny Dow.