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A New Recovery Advocacy Movement

William L. White & Pat Taylor

People in recovery from addiction, their families, friends and allies are on the move. Some are calling on mayors, governors and legislators to change policies to make it possible for people to get needed treatment and recovery support services. Others are joining National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month celebrations that draw tens of thousands of people and extensive media coverage.

Local communities of recovery are organizing and sharing ideas, resources and experiences. A grass roots media campaign (see www.recoveryiseverywhere.org) is countering stigma and putting a positive face on recovery. A network of thousands of recovery homes is spreading rapidly to small towns and large cities. Recovery High Schools are flourishing, as are special programs for the growing number of recovering people entering or returning to college. Innovative peer-based recovery support services, ranging from Recovery Support Centers to growing networks of recovery coaches are testimony to new creative solutions to addiction. Something is happening in our communities -- a renewed spirit of service and activism that has been christened the New Recovery Advocacy Movement.

Faces & Voices of Recovery, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, the Legal Action Center, the Johnson Institute, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment's Recovery Community Services Program grantees such as White Bison, Association of Persons Affected by Addiction (APAA) and Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR) and hundreds of new grassroots recovery community organizations are all part of this exciting movement. Recovering people are collaborating with visionary professionals to communicate to the world that addiction recovery is a reality for millions of people and their families. This movement is calling for a vanguard of recovering people and their families and friends to stand together as living proof of this proposition.

Individual recovery advocates and recovery community organizations are pursuing several core strategies within this movement. They include:

- *Building strong, grassroots organizations* that develop recovery leaders, offer opportunities for recovering people to express their collective voice and provide a forum for community service.
- *Advocating for meaningful representation and voice* for people in recovery and their family members on issues that affect their lives.
- *Assessing needs* related to the adequacy and quality of local treatment and recovery support services.
- *Educating the public, policymakers and service providers* about the prevalence and pathways of addiction recovery.
- *Developing human and fiscal resources* by expanding philanthropic and public support for addiction treatment, recovery support services and recovery advocacy and cultivating volunteerism within local communities of recovery.
- *Advocating for policy changes* at the local, state and federal levels that promote recovery and remove barriers to recovery.
- *Celebrating recovery from addiction* through public events that offer living testimony of the transformative power of recovery.
- *Supporting research* that illuminates effective strategies and the processes of long-term recovery.

If you want to know more about or be part of this growing movement, contact the national Faces & Voices of Recovery campaign at www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org.

Since its inception, this column has described the history of recovery in America. Come join us today in shaping the future of recovery in America.

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