

Young adults and addiction

This is the first in a two-part series on young adults and opiate addiction. This is one parent's true story. Some names have been omitted to protect the family's privacy.

Chris grew up in the suburbs, blessed with not just one family who loved him, but two. His mom and stepdad divorced when Chris was eight (his biological father was out of the picture), but Chris remained close to his stepfather, even after both his mom and stepdad each remarried. In addition to a sister, Chris also enjoyed spending time with his younger stepsiblings: a sister and twin brothers.



Chris was a good student, did well in school and scored very well on his SATs. He was popular with both students and teachers. A pleasant, easygoing kid, Chris had an intense entrepreneurial spirit and started fixing up and selling bikes when he was just a kid. Not athletically inclined, Chris had a gift for all things technical, and soon was fixing up and selling cars, locally and on e-Bay.

Like many other kids in high school, Chris succumbed to peer pressure and tried marijuana. His marijuana use did not present as a problem. Chris said his marijuana use was "casual and recreational." After high school, Chris went on to a local college. Unfortunately, his friends had more than a casual interest in drugs – to the point of addiction – and Chris quickly got wrapped up in that world.

"We were a very close family," says Chris's stepmom. "However, Chris was over 18, so we had little control over how he lived his life. We were aware he'd tried drugs; we were not aware how often he was actually using them or that he was addicted. He told us not to worry, that he knew what he was doing. He knew about drugs, the risks and the side effects. He thought he was smarter than the drugs."

"Chris kept up his grades, he was earning his own money and he managed to graduate from college," adds Chris's stepmom. "We tried to encourage him in the right direction, but he seemed to enjoy getting high and believed he had everything under control. He saw no reason to stop."

It turns out Chris did not have the situation under control, and his problems with drugs worsened. He and his roommate were eventually arrested.

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“We were aware he'd tried drugs; we were not aware how often he was actually using them or that he was addicted. He told us not to worry...”



Gordon James Photography

From the desk of...

Hak Ko, MD
Medical Director

"I want my life back."

This plea is the one most often heard from people being evaluated for suboxone treatment. Whether in obvious distress from withdrawal or still under the influence, they desperately want nothing more than a chance for another life, free from the tight, unyielding grip of addiction.

Six months have passed since 28 people were admitted for suboxone treatment at Horizon. Suboxone is the first opioid medication approved for the treatment of opioid dependence in an office-based setting. Thirteen are in full remission at various stages of recovery; 15 have been discharged for a variety of reasons. Most significant is the fact that only two have relapsed with opiates.

We finally have a drug that can deliver the ideal therapeutic effects of painless withdrawal and control of cravings – all without any significant side effects.

At 60, Don is the oldest member in our program. Having gone through a number of failed attempts at freeing himself from opiate addiction, Don had long ago stopped counting the number of detoxes, rehab stints and methadone treatments. Now, for the first time in his life, he enjoys being a father and a grandfather. "This stuff is for real. It's like a miracle."

It is important to note the drug alone does not make the miracle. People in the program will tell you how important the daily groups and variety of support made available by the treatment team was for the whole recovery process.

I am just grateful to be part of the team that can give hope to a once hopeless cause. ♥



New Board Members Appointed

At our annual meeting in May, the following board members were re-elected or newly appointed:

Horizon Health Services Board

Mark Cramer, Esq. of Hiscock & Barclay, LLP was elected to his first term and will serve as Chair. **Katie Kenney**, community volunteer, has been elected to her first term and will serve as Vice Chair. **Joseph S. Sankoh, MA, MAIS, Ph.D.**, Daemen College, has been re-elected to his third term and will serve as Secretary.

Horizon Village Board

Katie Kenney was re-elected to her third term and will serve as Chair. **Michael Maxwell, Esq.** of Hodgson Russ Attorneys LLP was elected to his first term and will serve as Vice Chair. **Rev. Jesse Scott**, Word of Life Ministries, was re-elected to his third term and will serve as Secretary.

Health Management Group

Pete Grum, Rand Capital, was re-elected to his second term and will serve as Chair. **Dan DiPofi**, Hockey Western New York, LLC, was elected to his second term and will serve as Vice Chair. **Mark Cramer** was elected to his second term and will serve as Secretary.

A complete listing of all board members can be found on our website at www.horizon-health.org. Congratulations and thank you to all of our dedicated board members! ♥



Mark Cramer, Esq.



Katie Kenney



Michael Maxwell,
Esq.



Rev. Jesse Scott



Pete Grum



Dan DiPofi

Hello
My name is
Erin Elizabeth Ryan
Vice President, Finance/CFO



Gordon James Photography

"She is a welcome addition to our staff."

Erin has found coming to Horizon from corporate America a "healthy and inspiring transition" and says, "I have gained an incredible respect for all of the people – from the

physicians to the counselors to the case managers to the maintenance staff – who execute our mission on a daily basis.

"The raw talent and experience of our leadership staff rivals that of any major corporation I have worked with," adds Erin. "This is a team of diverse skill sets that complement one another and operate like a high-functioning family."

Erin is a graduate of St. Bonaventure University, where she received a B.S. degree in accounting with a secondary concentration in Pharmacy from West Virginia University. She is also a Certified Public Accountant. A resident of Orchard Park, Ryan is past vice

president and treasurer of the Mount Mercy Academy Alumni Board; a member of the Town of Orchard Park Safety Council and an active volunteer on numerous special committees for Women and Children's Hospital and domestic violence organizations.

"I have never witnessed such high-quality work delivered with such compassion and caring," says Erin. "Horizon is truly a special place, and I am very happy to be a part of the team." ♥

In her new position as Vice President of Finance/Chief Financial Officer and a member of Horizon's executive management team, Erin Ryan is responsible for the strategic and operational aspects of the organization's financial planning, management and development. Her previous experience as director of the Long Term Consulting Practice of Ernst & Young, where she worked for 16 years, is well suited to the duties of her new job at Horizon.

"Erin's experiences in financial services and healthcare are definitely an asset to Horizon," says CEO Anne Constantino.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in 2003, 4.7 million people ages 12 and older misused pain relievers.

thePathtoRecovery

Here is the true story of a consumer who overcame many obstacles to turn his life around. Last names have been omitted for privacy.

He's in his sixties, but one of Donald's goals is to go back to school. "I know I still have something to offer," he says, "and I believe God wants me to help others avoid the path I've taken."

Donald started abusing alcohol in his late teens. He moved on to marijuana, sleeping pills, hard liquor and "pretty much anything that was available." Over the years, his addictions took their toll. His health began to decline; he's diabetic, has high blood pressure and other ailments. He's been in and out of various treatment programs over the years, and has spent time in jail for different offenses.

"I was in the methadone program for 10 years and managed to stay pretty clean during that time," says Donald. "But the treatments made me sick, and I couldn't see myself sticking with it for the rest of my life. I was very worried about the long-term effects. It scared me."

He had heard good things about suboxone (an opioid medication approved for the treatment of opioid dependence in an office-based setting) and was curious about it. At the time, one of the conditions of his release from prison was that he attend a rehab program, and Donald jumped at the chance to join Horizon's suboxone program.

"When he came to this program, he was – as they say – 'tore up from the floor up,'" says Ramona Lee, his counselor. "Today, you wouldn't recognize him as the same man.

Donald has learned from his mistakes and is motivated and determined to stay clean."

"I was so tired of being on the streets, of always searching for drugs, of not feeling well," says Donald. "I was determined to find a way to eliminate drugs permanently from my life. And I had heard that, with suboxone, there's no pain during withdrawal."

In the program since March, Donald has, indeed, made great strides. He's been clean since entering the program, and has seen a significant improvement in his overall health which, in turn, has had a positive effect on his attitude as well.

"Donald knew what he had to do," says Ramona. "He's made some very significant changes in his life. He has made such a positive impact on so many people here – he regularly attends meetings, he listens, he gives good feedback and he's always positive and upbeat for others who are struggling."

“I never knew so many people could care so much about me. Everyone here has made me feel comfortable and worthy. They truly are concerned about me and they keep on top of me to be sure I don't slip up.”

"Horizon has helped me in so many ways," says Donald. "I never knew so many people could care so much about me. Everyone here has made me feel comfortable and worthy. They truly are concerned about me and they keep on top of me to be sure I don't slip up. It's been really great and I am very encouraged!" ♥



Each year, our Facility Strategic Planning Group initiates a special *Horizon Cares* project, focusing on at least one major facility improvement event.

This year the group chose to completely re-landscape the front gardens at our Main Amherst Facility. In the spring, Horizon staff and consumers participated in planting new shrubs and flowers and spreading mulch before enjoying a much-earned cookout. Well done, team!

MEET OUR Board

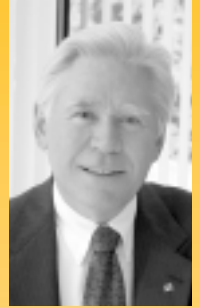
Name:

William Glass

Title: Senior Vice President

Company: Evans National Bank

On which Horizon Board do you serve? "I serve on



the Health Management Group board."

How did you come to be on the Board?

"Through business and personal relationships I had developed over the years with Horizon's legal counsel and senior management staff."

What have you found most rewarding about serving on the Board? "Playing a small part in Horizon's long-term ability to not only survive, but thrive in an environment that has provided constant challenges to its mission of serving "quality of life" human needs in a fiscally-responsible manner."

What do you want people to know about Horizon? "Horizon is one of many worthwhile and effective non-profit organizations serving WNY. Although I have come in contact with many of them over the years, I have yet to encounter employees with a greater sense of commitment, inspiration and "can do" attitude as those at Horizon. The empowerment with which Horizon employees approach their job on a daily basis clearly is communicated to their consumers, as evidenced by the positive lifestyle changes so many have achieved." ♥

The primary active ingredient in suboxone is buprenorphine, which is a partial opioid agonist.

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"It broke my heart to visit Chris in the holding center," says Chris's stepmom. "I felt very sad and guilty. I thought we should have done more for him before things got to this point, we should have seen this coming. We were very close with Chris, we always had an open and communicative relationship. This caught us completely by surprise."

“...we always had an open and communicative relationship. This caught us completely by surprise.”

Chris was placed in a 30-day detoxification and rehabilitation program. Upon his release, his families told Chris they "were behind him, would support him and do whatever we could for him...unless he ended up in jail again."

Chris's entire family tried to support and

help him, tried to keep the lines of communication open and encourage him to make positive changes in his life. But Chris continued to use drugs. By this point, he'd tried everything from marijuana to OxyContin to Lortab to heroin to the Fentanyl patch. He was arrested again. Rehab failed the second time. His families were getting increasingly frustrated, Chris was becoming more withdrawn.

In April, Chris's family got the call all parents dread: Chris had overdosed. Within hours, the promising life of a loving boy full of potential had come to an end. At just 23 years old, Chris and his families had lost the battle – the drugs won.

"Drug addiction took away our son and changed our lives forever," says Chris's stepmom. "This grief we all feel will never go away. It simply changes with the passing of time." ♥

Removing the stigma of opioid dependence is critical to helping patients receive proper care. A key part of achieving this goal is wider recognition that opioid dependence is a medical – not a moral – issue.

Horizon is the largest and most comprehensive outpatient provider of integrated mental health, chemical dependency and medical services in WNY.

HorizonHealthPulse is published for the employees, consumers, Board and friends of Horizon Health Services. Please share this newsletter with a friend. If you would like additional copies of this newsletter or if you have any questions or comments about its content, please call Pat Chrzanowski at 716-831-1800 or email her at pchrzanowski@horizon-health.org.

President & CEOAnne Constantino
Medical DirectorHak Ko, M.D.



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INSIDE: Youths and opiates: one parent's story.

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