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INTERVIEW WITH MATT MOBERG

From Pain to Love With Paint and Canvas

by Mary Berg

Brushstrokes on Matt Moberg's artwork reflect a kinetic energy. Addiction's bared teeth show up in the fangs of the wolf, the jaws of the bear, the wild-eyed terror of the horse. The animals and people reveal intensity, edginess, tension. In one piece, his wife's body bends taut with anxiety. In yet another, his grandpa's eyes alight with love. Thick black pencil lines and layers of color depict raw emotions. How did Matt Moberg become an artist who renders pain and love using paint and canvas?

He grew up in a sports-focused family but was never good at sports. Instead, he did performative work, playing music around the Midwest. After getting married, he got asked to be on the TV show, *The Voice*. His time in LA springboarded him into studio-type work as a singer-songwriter with TV licensing. Playing music, talking in front of people, leading a church community, that was his identity.

Growing up, Matt only drank casually. Not being great at sports, he found his social circle among the creatives who tended to participate in drugs and drinking. As a performer, Matt looked for affirmation and applause. The moment he stepped off the stage, outside of the public eye, anxiety got the best of him. He couldn't stop working, doing performances, nor could he stop his messed-up thinking afterwards. When the anxiety picked up, his drinking became nightly. He knew it was a problem, but he also saw drinking as a tool, a way to cope. Alcohol, he thought, was a performance enhancing drug, the thing that allowed him to be the person he thought he needed to be.

Matt became convinced that sobriety was a threat to everything he provided, a threat to who he was, to his God-given gifts. He recalls, "It's a weird, twisted

FROM PAIN TO LOVE to pg 6



ADDICTION STUDIES SPOTLIGHT

Meeting a Need, Transforming Lives

Minnesota North College nets funding for training counselors, changing lives of students in recovery. The shortage of mental health professionals in Minnesota, including those working as LADCs, has been well documented. One in four jobs in the field is currently vacant, according to an April Minnesota legislative report.

Read the article on page 14

JOHN H. DRIGGS, LICSW

A Moral Compass: What is It? How is It Built? Why Do We Need It?

You know, about thirty years ago I had a big decision to make while dating my wife-to-be. I could either hide the fact that I had a son that I had never seen before or else tell her the whole truth and risk losing her by paying back child support that I owed my son from all the lost years. Years ago, I was just too scared to face the truth with my beloved. I knew she would want to be in my son's life. Yet I wasn't ready to face facts and step up to the plate with my son. I thought it would be easier to live a lie and deny having any son and keep things less complicated.

Well, it turned out to be more complicated than that. I knew in my heart that denying that I had a son would never work. Just the thought alone of abandoning my son ate at my heart for years and I lost a big part of myself for being such a wimp. I covered my misdeed with alcohol for years and wasn't the best husband to my dearest wife. When she separated from me, I decided to step up to the plate and be the man who I wanted to be. I joined a 12 Step group, told my wife about my lost son, reunited with him and paid all the child support I owed him. I became a real father for the first time in my life.

All of this didn't happen overnight, many tears were shed, and my conscience was clear for the first time in my life. I have my sponsor and home group to thank for all this. Funny thing is my wife told me she knew all along about me having a son years ago, way before I told her. I asked her why she didn't give up on me. She said she knew all long that despite all my hiding and drinking that I always had a good heart—a moral compass. How very right she was!

WHAT IS A MORAL COMPASS?

Having an internal sense of right and wrong—a moral compass—is the most essential part of who we are. It has to do with doing the right thing when no one else is looking. It is the supreme form of ethics that goes beyond written rules. It makes us a decent and likable person wherever we go. It often nags at our heart when we have transgressed others. It is something we cannot hide from no matter how hard we try to ignore it or how many years ago our misdeed happened. Others will likely appre-

A MORAL COMPASS to pg 12



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The Art of the Printed Book

by Louise Elowen

"A room without books is like a body without a soul."

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO, POET, WRITER, AND PHILOSOPHER (106 BC-43 BC)

When I was a teenager, growing up in the early '80s in the UK, I excitedly looked forward to reading my *Jackie* magazine each week. Each Saturday, I went to the newsagents, and I got to pick up the latest copy. I can still smell the paper it was printed on and remember the thrill of first opening the freshly minted pages. My parents always had "quiet time" when my sister and I were reading our weekly magazines. Sadly, that magazine went out of publication in 1993, allegedly unable to compete with the changing market in the teenage world. I'm not sure if such an equivalent is available today.

When I was in school and college, it wasn't unusual to lug around a boatload of textbooks from one lesson or lecture to the next; something that today's technology-driven students will never understand. And novels. Once upon a time (not too long ago), the satisfaction of holding a physical novel in your hands and finding a corner to curl up in on a cold winter afternoon or a lazy summer day was a given. Today, iPads, tablets, Nooks, and any other kind of electronic device that is capable of downloading a book and displaying it on an electronic screen has replaced much of the printed book market.

But, unlike its electronic successor, a printed book – a *real* book – is a work of art. Think about what goes into making a real book. There is the design, the typesetting, and the layout process to begin with. Then there are the physical components of the book itself. What type of paper? What type of binding? What type of book jacket? What size will the book be? Is it a hardcover or paperback book? There is a whole team committed

to bringing you a printed book: From the writer to the editor, to the proofreader, to the printer, and to the bookstore. These roles are often rolled into one with the publication of an electronic book – and sometimes bring down the quality of the book in the process.

I love the advantages that modern technology has had on my life in many ways – working remotely being one of them – but I do feel like today's generation is missing out on the art of a *real* book. One which you can hold physically in your hands, mark the pages with a pen or pencil if needed – *Ssh! Don't tell*

anyone! – and pull its tattered cover from your bookshelf to refer to again and again, like meeting up with an old friend after an extended time away. My books often tell the story of my life. The dog-eared corner of one book is the tale of a puppy teething; the scented page of a physical notebook

reminds me of the time I spilled a bottle of aromatic oil while working on a perfume formula; a makeshift bookmarked page (often from a receipt or ticket) in a novel reminds me what I was doing, or where I was traveling, when I was reading *that* particular book.

Let's celebrate the art of print while we still can. Pick up the printed version of this newspaper and rediscover the thrill of inhaling newsprint, experience the crinkle of pages turning, and the passion that went into the process of bringing these words to you.

Pouring my heart and soul into the art of real books,

Louise

My books
often tell the
story of
my life.



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SPOTLIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH

The Rewards of Returning to School as an Adult

by Seth Perry



Pétur Einarsson / Photo by Seth Perry

Returning to school as an adult posed a serious threat to my mental health. Balancing a full-time career, full-time university, and full-time recovery was a significant challenge. For five years, I focused primarily on surviving the process of obtaining my master's degree. Late nights, lack of sleep, and excessive procrastination all made the road to my second post-secondary degree seem exponentially more difficult than my first. For this issue's column, I sat down with a recent graduate who offers a fresh perspective on returning to school in mid-life.

Pétur Einarsson is a recently certified Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC) and a counseling team member at Hazelden Betty Ford in Center City, Minnesota. In addition to the demands of obtaining a master's degree over the past two years, Einarsson filed for a student visa and a work visa, moved once, and got engaged—all while living well with ADHD. Any one of these challenges could stretch anyone to the breaking point. Today, Pétur

shares the strategies, techniques, and habits that worked for him while studying for his master's degree.

"Last time I was in college, 40 years ago, my essays were handwritten," Einarsson comments as he reflects on his undergraduate years. "There has been so much change." Pétur touches on an important point for any adult considering a return to school. However, just because learning looks or feels different doesn't mean it isn't worth trying, which is why he shares this hopeful observation: "It's a practice. The more I did it, the more I got used to it. If I can do this, anyone can."

"I also have ADHD, which was only diagnosed a few years ago," Einarsson notes, reflecting on the challenges he encountered while studying for his degree. Despite his diagnosis occasionally interfering with his work, there was one crucial factor that kept him engaged in his journey to achieving his LADC certification. "I always wanted to go back and do a master's degree. It had to be in

something I had a passion for." Despite the inevitable obstacles that his diagnosis presented, Pétur's education remained manageable due to a deep interest in his chosen field. Enthusiasm about your future vocation goes a long way.

Completing the program at Hazelden Betty Ford Graduate School meant that Pétur needed to develop some core habits. "Get good sleep," Einarsson advises, "and that means going to bed early." Pétur focused on eating well, which he indicates improved his concentration. He also prioritized time management, which helped quiet his mind. However, one of the biggest contributors to his mental health has been choosing to stay off social media. "I have deactivated Facebook and Instagram," says Einarsson. "I would just go on and couldn't stop." Since stepping away from overstimulating and addictive social media accounts, Pétur has seen a marked improvement in his overall wellness, which has paid off both in school and now at work.

Any master's level education program demands a lot from the student; however, Einarsson also needed to complete a set amount of clinical hours counseling clients at the Center City campus of Hazelden Betty Ford. He is open about the potential pitfalls, stating, "I've heard that burnout in this field is less than three years." Counseling comes with a significant mental load that most individuals without ADHD would find difficult to navigate. In addition to the high-pressure environment of a clinical setting, Pétur spent nights and weekends studying while balancing daily ADHD maintenance, typical life stress, and a demanding schedule. "I have to put the oxygen mask on myself before my patients or others," he remarks as he reflects on the importance of self-care. This is why boundaries are the cornerstone of Pétur's work-life balance. Over the course of his education at Hazelden, he established and maintained a home environment that was as free of work and school stress as possible. Einarsson makes a focused effort not to talk about caseloads and day-to-day work challenges at home. Pétur is the first to admit that this is a work in progress.

Not only is Pétur managing ADHD, but he is also in long-term recovery from addiction. "I've been in recovery for a long time," he says. In fact, he recently celebrated 31 years of sobriety. "I've sought 12-step meetings all around the world."

Einarsson, originally from Iceland,

Not only is Pétur managing ADHD, but he is also in long-term recovery from addiction. "I've been in recovery for a long time."

has lived in a variety of cultural contexts. His move to the United States in 2022 presented numerous challenges, but he found support from 12-step groups immediately upon arriving. "I come here, and the first thing I look up is where the local Alano Club is and where the meetings are." Recovery has been a means for him to find support and accountability almost immediately.

Returning to school in mid-life requires the right mindset. "I look at life as the first half and the second half," says Pétur. "Now it is time for me to do something bigger than myself and maybe give back a little." As he begins his new career as a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, Einarsson offers advice for anyone considering the next chapter of their life: "It is never too late to go back to school and to learn. I feel like I am just at the beginning of learning."

So often, people are hindered by the assumption that they are too old, too behind the times, or too burdened to attempt to blaze a new personal path. Pétur Einarsson, MA, LADC, doesn't just have the credentials to show that it is possible to keep experiencing new and challenging things; he has a story that brings hope for many people's futures.

Seth Perry (he/him/his), an ELCA Pastor, devotional blogger, and mental health recovery educator, embraces his journey of living well with Bipolar Type 1. He works to reduce stigma where faith, mental health, and personal growth intertwine. Pastor Seth currently serves Elim Lutheran Church in Scandia, MN. His website is: www.ourstigma.com



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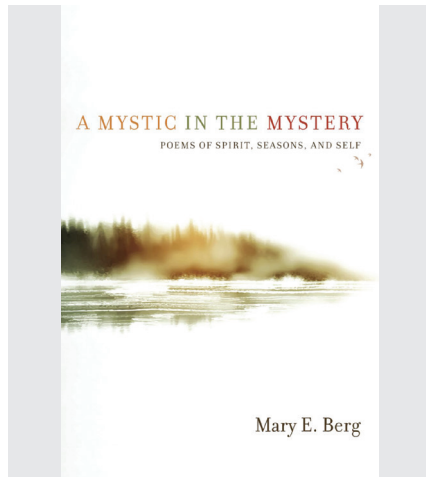
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Books



A Mystic in the Mystery

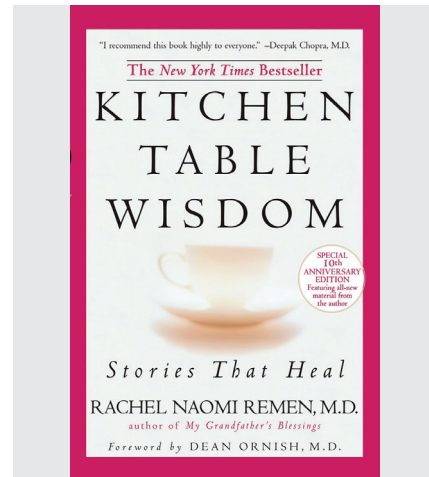
Poems of Spirit, Seasons, and Self

By Mary E. Berg
BENDING WAVE BOOKS

In this collection, rhymed and unrhymed verses capture the nebulous double thread that connects our inner consciousness and our outer reality. The poet reflects on how one's core spiritual nature intersects with the physical landscape. She sees the glistening diamonds on a blade of grass, notices the fog piercing the early morning river valley, and recognizes our essence in stardust, moonbeams, and beacons of light.

"Mary Berg touches life's deepest truths in her poetry. She makes small observations and asks big questions, ranging from the quotidian to the existential. Mary's brave self-honesty and vulnerability are relatable, and her turns of phrase—from witty to lyrical—are inspirational. Mary's poetry may have you gazing skyward, eager to touch life's deepest truths for yourself."

-REV. TERESA BURTON, DAILY WORD EDITOR



Kitchen Table Wisdom

Stories That Heal

By Rachel Naomi Remen
RIVERHEAD BOOKS

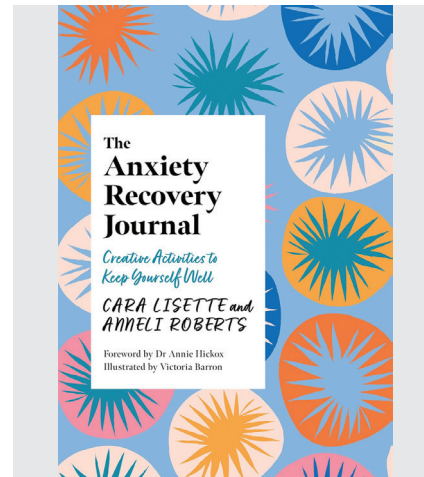
This special updated version of the New York Times-bestseller, *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, addresses the same spiritual issues that made the original a bestseller: suffering, meaning, love, faith, and miracles.

"Despite the awesome powers of technology, many of us still do not live very well," says Dr. Rachel Remen. "We may need to listen to one another's stories again." Dr. Remen, whose unique perspective on healing comes from her background as a physician, a professor of medicine, a therapist, and a long-term survivor of chronic illness, invites us to listen from the soul.

This remarkable collection of true stories draws on the concept of "kitchen table wisdom"—the human tradition of shared experience that shows us life in all its power and mystery and reminds us that the things we cannot measure may be the things that ultimately sustain and enrich our lives.

"A book of stunning radiance, authenticity, and power. I laughed and cried my way through it, from beginning to end... Come share in this extraordinary outpouring of human wisdom."

-JON KABAT-ZINN, PH.D., AUTHOR OF *WHEREVER YOU GO, THERE YOU ARE*



The Anxiety Recovery Journal

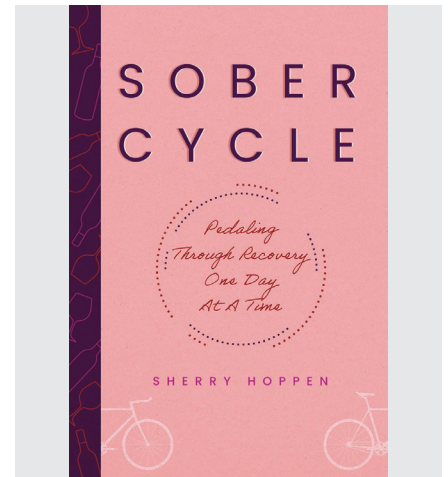
Creative Activities to Keep Yourself Well

By Cara Lisette and Anneli Roberts
JESSICA KINGSLEY PUBLISHERS

A creative journal to support adults and young adults with anxiety from blogger and CBT therapist Cara Lisette and mental health advocate Anneli Roberts. *The Anxiety Recovery Journal* is for anybody struggling to stay motivated while managing the feelings and impacts of anxiety. With journaling prompts and creative activities to help overcome your anxiety and be kind to yourself in the process, this journal is yours to be as free and imaginative with as you wish.

The Anxiety Recovery Journal is designed to support you in managing your feelings of anxiety. Drawing on evidence-based techniques, such as CBT, and on the authors' professional and lived experience, it features helpful journaling prompts, creative activities, beautiful coloring pages and motivational quote pages to help you calm your anxious mind.

This uplifting journal will help you better understand your experiences of anxiety and motivate you in your recovery journey. Created by CBT therapist Cara Lisette and mental health advocate Anneli Roberts, the activities in this journal will help you to take positive steps towards living a full life beyond your anxiety.



Sober Cycle

Pedaling Through Recovery One Day at a Time

By Sherry Hoppen
REDEMPTION PRESS

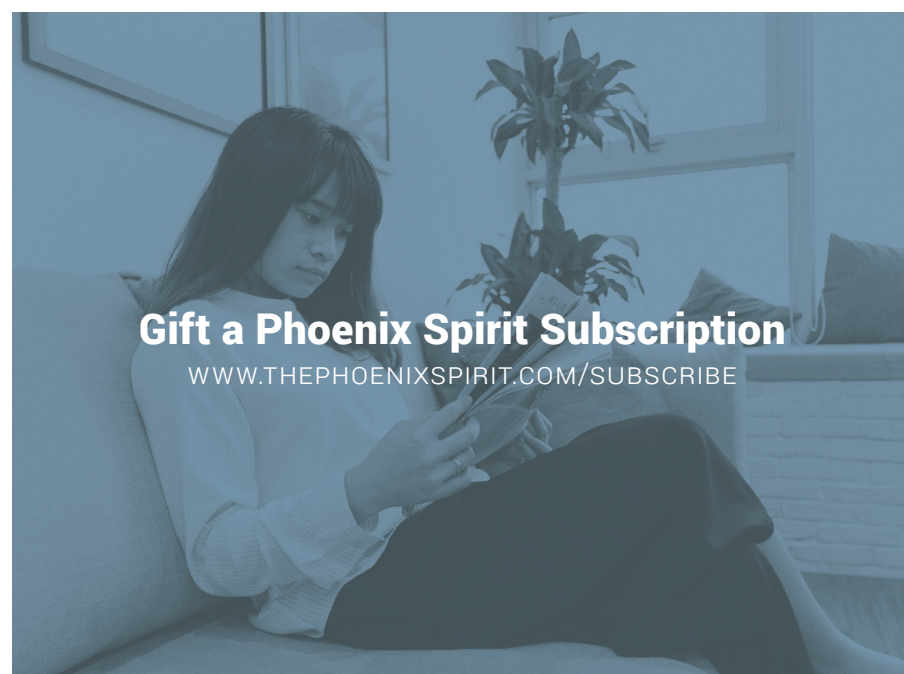
Maybe this will be the cure I've been praying for ...

Sherry Hoppen was hiding a secret alcohol addiction. When she said yes to joining a thousand-mile bike ride for charity, it was a desperate attempt to kick-start a positive change in her life—the hard way—by riding her bike from Michigan to Texas. She asked herself, "Will this be what it takes to get me sober?" This nonathletic mom who worked in ministry and directed a children's choir was a respected member of the community. But she also drank alone at home—and couldn't stop.

With her no-holds-barred honesty and humor, Sherry Hoppen recounts her many attempts and failures at achieving sobriety, and the hiding and her shame over the addiction that held her prisoner for over ten years—until the day she surrendered and God took over.

Ten years later, Sherry is living a life of sobriety and is passionate about helping other women surrender the secret sin of addiction that cripples their faith and family life. *Sober Cycle* offers hope without judgment or trite mantras, assuring readers that they, too, can find redemption and healing and a life free from addiction—all without riding a bike for thousands of miles.

Many of the book descriptions are taken from the publishers or promotional releases. If you have a book you'd like featured or have an old favorite you'd like to share with others, please contact us at phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com and we may include it in an upcoming issue.



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from page 1

thing. I bought into the lies of alcohol: I felt that to be a good dad, not focused on the 10,000 different things pulling me away from my home and family, that I needed to drink so I could be more present. Alcohol doesn't allow you to be more present. It just allows you to be less bothered by your own absence. I believed that drinking allowed me to do 'this,' to be that. I drank to love them. I drank so I could sit down with them. I drank so I wouldn't be distracted. I drank so I could look them in the eyes."

Matt's addiction peaked during a public leadership role. In college, he had switched from Business Marketing to Theology after hearing a minister tell a great story about Jesus. He and a friend started *The Table of Minneapolis* about ten years ago — a church community for people who have been harmed by the church. It's a group where people can be loved as children of God, people who are sufficient and celebrated. Because the foundation was based on transparency and authenticity, Matt wasn't shy about the fact that he was an addict. The medicinal part of authenticity was that other people said, "Me, too." They went to meetings together.

However, authenticity is challenging for addicts. When Matt went to his first meeting, he wasn't honest. He told his wife, "I need to run some errands real quick." Never in his ten years of parenting had he said, "I'm running errands!" He called her from the church parking lot, just weeping and said, "I'm going to a meeting."

About four to five years ago, while working with a therapist, Matt told her, "I can't escape this idea that everything I do has to be for public consumption. I'm constantly on edge. People keep asking for more. Demands keep coming in. My schedule, my bandwidth is limited." He knew he needed sobriety, but with all the demands pulling at him, he wasn't finding sanity and stable sobriety. She told him, "If you want to stay sober, if you want to make a real go at this, what is something that you are awful at doing?"

Matt told her, "My hands have always had tremors. Ever since I was a teenager, I've had shaky hands. I know for a fact that I cannot draw or do art because I cannot hold a pencil without shaking."

She said, "That's exactly what you need to do. Painting is something that can slow your mind down. You can just



In rehab, they taught us that cravings don't last much longer than 5 minutes. If you can immerse yourself in something that captivates you for 5 minutes, it steals your eyes from the things that you shouldn't want, but you do want. Art has been that for me.

be in that space, doing something that nobody's ever going to like. You're not doing it for anybody but you."

Painting became a therapeutic practice for Matt. He says, "I need art. Art is the thing I bank on. It's this therapeutic balm that keeps me afloat as I try to battle addiction. It hasn't been easy. I've had multiple relapses. I went to rehab last year, but I'm doing good now, and I'm scared to say that. I don't want to get too confident. I don't want to get recklessly arrogant about that."

"I have an ADHD mind that goes from zero to 60. Somebody told me once, 'attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is like having 20 television sets on at the exact same time, but you only have one remote control.' Art allows me to stop, press the pause button. It lets me catch my breath. I get immersed in it. In rehab, they taught us that cravings don't last much longer than 5 minutes.

If you can immerse yourself in something that captivates you for 5 minutes, it steals your eyes from the things that you shouldn't want, but you do want. Art has been that for me. It's also beyond being a distraction or a tool. I'm consumed by it. I love art so much. It's slow work in a very fast, distracted world; a world that is ADHD just like my head. Art makes you ask questions. Look at answers. Evaluate and assess where you are in your own story. Art, alone in a studio, in a quiet space, saved my life."

Art is paradoxical for Matt, because this quiet thing that he was sure he couldn't do, turns out to be another talent. Matt's art is getting media attention, putting him back in the limelight. Since recovery has been a significant part of that journey, he doesn't leave it out of his story. As somebody who's been addicted to performance and getting applause, he acknowledges that this

attention can be dangerous territory, that his brain could get hijacked again. "I'm an addict through and through. Whatever I get into, I go in all the way. I don't know how to tap on the brakes and find a healthy medium. I'm trying to steward my talent rightly, but I do think that success contributed to one of the relapses. I got asked to do commissions. Those were the gateway drug for anxiety to creep back in. They sabotaged art for a bit. I haven't done commissions lately, because art is a sacred space for me, one I need to preserve. The show at Douglas Flanders is all non-commissioned work. I'm not painting somebody's dog. It's not a response to an 'ask' or 'can you please do the dance for us right now?'"

In contrast, when Matt painted his great grandpa, he was doing art as a sacred practice; organic, original, and derived from within. In the stillness and silence, he processed a conversation he

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from page 6



Matt Moberg with his artwork (Previous / Current page) / Photos provided by Moberg

had with his grandfather. He just grew the colors on the canvas, trying to digest his thoughts. Matt said, “At my age, you never know how many conversations you have left with your grandpa. I wanted to savor them. I didn’t want to just flippantly go back inside and watch the NBA finals. I wanted to take in and reflect on what that conversation was.”

At Matt’s rehab, the speakers talked about mindfulness practices, too, one of which is creativity. In the circle, addicts would overwhelmingly respond, ‘Well, I’m not creative.’ It’s not true, people are creative, but we get told that what we’ve produced isn’t any good. Somehow that means ‘you can’t do it.’ The two are not the same thing. Matt wasn’t looking for success when he picked up a pen. He still picks up his brushes to find peace and stillness, sanity, and sobriety. He stopped. He got still. He did something he was drawn to, that he thought he couldn’t do. “I use art as an attempt to return to the manufacturer’s settings, the animal setting, to be present, at peace, integrated, whole.”

Today, Matt tries to align his priorities with his family’s main motto: “Life is a gift and love is the point. To save the gift that is life, I need priorities and boundaries. I’m not a ‘yes man’ to everything anymore. My goal is to get better at knowing where I start and where I stop.”

He’s found that one of the gifts in recovery is realizing “I’m the one who fumbled. I made mistakes. I broke trust. Accountability and ownership are required. When you mess things up, and you’ve broken trust, you need to pick up those broken pieces and try to create something whole again. Sobriety has allowed me to have intentionality and clarity. If life is a gift, and love is the point, then I need to be faithful to both the clarity of seeing the gift, but also the fidelity of my actions. Sharing love on a day-by-day basis, as every addict knows, is the ultimate aim we’re aspiring towards.”

Mary Berg is a retired associate professor of clinical education, a resume writer, published author, and poet. Her first poetry collection, *A Mystic in the Mystery: Poems of Spirit, Seasons, and Self* will be released in 2024. Her website is: marybergresumewriter.com.

Learn more

Matt Moberg has an MA in Theology from Bethel University with an emphasis on Just Peacemaking. He is a past co-leader of *The Table of Minneapolis* as well as the current Chaplain for the Minnesota Timberwolves. His artwork has recently been featured at Douglas Flanders & Associates in Minneapolis.

Matt’s website
www.mattmoberg.net

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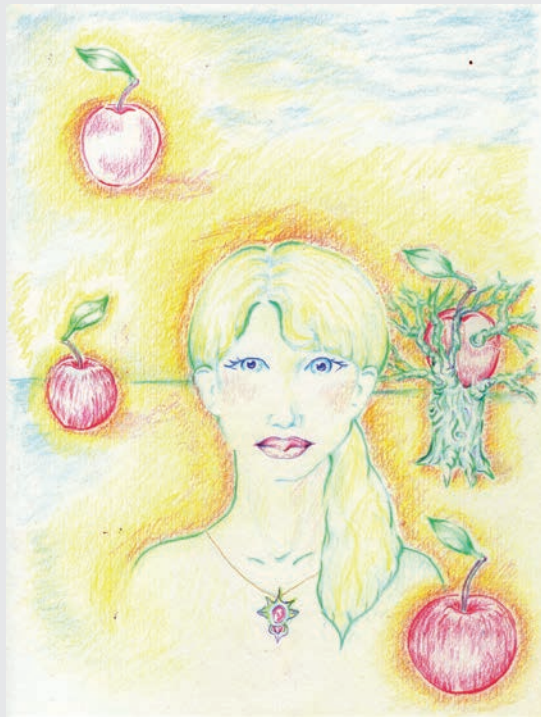
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*Treatment is available free of charge for qualifying individuals throughout Minnesota.

Art Gallery

A special thanks to Avivo ArtWorks and Missions, Inc. Hart House for providing these wonderful pieces of artwork to share with readers.



"Woman with Apple Tree" by Douglas Blue



Dress by Christine



"Wolf's Domain" by Gary R. Melquist



Needlepoint by Bethany



"Impression of Starry Night" by T.L. Reeves



"Stairway to Heaven" by John Casey III

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Education Directory

The following is a complete list of recovery high schools in Minnesota and a partial list of higher education offering addiction studies.

RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOLS

APEX Recovery School
Rochester, MN
507-328-3999
www.alc.rochesterschools.org/academic-programs/apex-recovery-school

APEX Recovery School offers a school community of support for students in recovery from substance use and co-occurring disorders up to age 21. Not all of our students are in recovery, we also support students with familial ties to recovery.

Central Freedom School
Mankato, MN
507-387-3047
www.chs.isd77.org

Central Freedom School exists for adolescents returning to the community from recognized substance abuse treatment centers and/or has been identified by support services. Students must be committed to obtaining high school credits in a safe and supportive, chemical-free environment.

Insight Recovery School
White Bear Lake, MN
651-773-6400
alc.isd624.org/academics/insightrecovery-school-clone

The Insight program is a school within a school which operates within the ALC building, partnering with ALC teaching staff. We seek to support the student in an individual recovery plan

The Lakes Recovery School
Detroit Lakes, MN
218-844-5687
alc.dlschools.net/student-services/recovery-school

The Lakes Recovery School is open to students that have successfully completed a residential or outpatient Chemical Dependency program and have a desire to remain sober. The Recovery School offers daily CD groups with a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor to help students navigate their recovery journey as they complete state education requirements to earn their High School Diploma.

RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOLS

McKinley ALC Recovery School
Waite Park, MN
320-370-6823
www.isd742.org/alc

A school-within-a-school, creating a supportive classroom setting for youth in recovery to continue their education. Credit is earned daily toward math, language arts, social studies and science, as well as daily recovery group. Credit recovery also offered for students as needed.

P.E.A.S.E. Academy
Minneapolis, MN
612-378-1377
peaseacademy.org

P.E.A.S.E. Academy is here to serve high school aged students, grades 8-12 who are seeking to engage in recovery from substance use and misuse. We offer unique supports and provide a great education to place students on a pathway of lifelong success and founded in 1989, P.E.A.S.E. is the oldest recovery school in the nation.

COLLEGE / GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Augsburg University
Minneapolis, MN
612-330-1000
www.augsburg.edu/msw/dual-degree-and-pathway-options/msw-ladc-pathway/

Augsburg's MSW/LADC prepares MSW students for ethical, competent, and culturally responsive social work practice in the substance use disorders field.

Century College
White Bear Lake, MN
651-773-1700
www.century.edu/programs/addiction-counseling

The Addiction Counseling program is designed for career opportunities in entry-level positions in the field of chemical dependency counseling

Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
Cloquet, MN
218-879-0808
www.fdlccc.edu/degrees-certificates/certificates-diplomas/chemical-dependency-counselor/

COLLEGE / GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Hazelden Betty Ford Graduate School of Addiction Studies
Center City, MN
1-855-929-6242
www.hazeldenbettyford.org/graduate-school-addiction-studies

Masters degree in addiction counseling programs are based in addiction studies and the treatment of substance use disorders, but also include intensive coursework and emphases on mental health and co-occurring disorders.

Metropolitan State University
Minneapolis / Saint Paul, MN
651-793-1302
www.metrostate.edu/academics/programs/alcohol-and-drug-counseling-bs

Prepare for a career as an alcohol and drug counselor. Help save and enrich the lives of people struggling with addiction by studying on campus in Saint Paul to earn a bachelor's degree in Alcohol and Drug Counseling

Minneapolis Community & Technical College
Minneapolis, MN
612-659-6000
www.minneapolis.edu/academics/school-education-and-public-and-human-service/addiction-counseling

This program prepares students for Minnesota Alcohol and Drug Counselor licensure.

COLLEGE / GRADUATE SCHOOLS

St. Cloud State University
St. Cloud, MN
320-308-0121
www.stcloudstate.edu/programs/addictions-counseling

Classes and field work experiences introduce you to the best ways to help those with alcohol, tobacco, drug, gambling and other process addictions.

University of Minnesota
St. Paul, MN
612-301-6127
www.ccaps.umn.edu/master-professional-studies-addictions-counseling

Master's in addiction counseling program prepares students to treat clients with substance use disorders by providing strong theoretical and practical foundations in evidence-based treatment modalities, clinical skills, professional and ethical responsibilities, and client advocacy.

Winona State University
Winona, MN
507-535-2551
www.winona.edu/counseloreducation/addictionscounseling.asp

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Robyn Alliah ATR-BC, LPCC, CCTP

Robyn graduated from Florida State University with a master's degree in Art Therapy in 2006.

She is a Board-Certified Art Therapist, a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, and a Certified Clinical Trauma Professional.

In 2015, she helped develop and facilitate trauma informed therapy groups for military veterans.

Robyn has been working at River Valley Behavioral Health and Wellness Center since 2016. She sees adolescents through adults and primarily works with trauma, ADHD, anxiety, and depression issues. She also helps clients create a healthy sense of being.

Robyn's practice is located at rivervalleybhwc.com.

ART THERAPY FOR RECOVERY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Ask the Expert

We feature an expert in the mental health and/or substance use disorder fields to answer questions

crease problem-solving, empower, and increase self-esteem. Art helps increase a person's ability to function in areas such as relationships and boundaries.

Art therapists work with a variety of diagnosis such as anxiety, depression, trauma, addictions, grief, and eating disorders. They also work with veterans, first responders, LGBTQIA+, cancer patients, and many other communities.

Q What might a typical session of art therapy look like for an individual?

Sessions are tailored specifically for each person and their desired goals. The client/therapist relationship is a key component to the therapeutic process. A session might include check-in, goal to work towards, choice of art materials, with or without a directive prompt, creation of artmaking, and verbal processing image.

Art therapists may prompt metaphors and similes to encourage creative expression and multi-layered meanings. Art therapists prompt questions about the artwork to verbally process the image, to help find meaning, and how to move forwards.

An example is "Draw yourself as a rose." Materials may include colored pencils, markers, or oil pastels. The client then creates the artwork alongside the therapist. Questions which assist in the verbal processing of the artwork may include, "Where are you planted, ground/pot? Are there cracks? Are you a single or multiple flowers? A stem with/without thorns?" These responses provide information related to "how the client feels about their environment." The client and therapist discuss meanings, and infallibly the art is what the client says.

Q Do you have to be good at art to benefit from art therapy?

People do not need any type of art background or be good at art. The focus of art therapy is the process of creating artwork, self-expression, and the creative process of making art with personal meaning.

Q How can art therapy benefit someone's mental health?

Art therapists are specifically trained in areas that include psychotherapy theories, ethics, art materials, understanding symbols that are present, guiding subconscious meaning, and viewing situations from various perspectives. The art can provide a new understanding about life events, situations, and feelings when there are no words.

Art therapy helps clients improve their function in areas such as relationships, work, social, and life skills, and helps increase a sense of personal well-being.



Q What types of outcomes have you seen?

People use art therapy to process events, often with directive prompts or protocols. The art provides a new understanding of an issue from different perspectives and allows exploration of subconscious thoughts. People symbolically make changes within art itself and begin to move forward in their life's journey.

A specific client used art therapy to work through a traumatic event. The trauma impacted the nervous system and the body held onto specific unpleasant body sensations. Art making created an opportunity to change the impacted senses: Smells, textures, sounds, and visuals with an introduction and use of new materials. Art therapy helped shift and subside traumatic nightmares. Expressive movements with specific materials foster the release of internal body sensations. Making meaning in the artwork helped guide the client towards less negative and intrusive thoughts while recreating new memories.

Q Who benefits most from art therapy?

Anyone can benefit from art therapy, meaning all ages, genders, disabilities, mental health issues, and specific populations (veterans, cancer patients, etc.). The relationship with the art therapist is a key component to benefiting from art therapy.

Therapy can be done with an individual, group, couples, and with family formats.

However, if a person does not believe they would benefit or are resistant towards making art and trusting the process, art therapy might not be the modality for them.

Q What are some resources that are available to people who are seeking art therapy?

Resources would include the American Art Therapy Association: <https://art-therapy.org>. The site includes a link to an Art Therapist locator: <https://arttherapy.org/art-therapist-locator/> to help find art therapists in your location.

Psychology Today also has listings for art therapists in your area. Look for credentials which indicate specific art therapy training, such as ATR (Registered Art Therapist) or ATR-BC (Board Certified Art Therapist).

Many art therapists have additional state requirements (such as a mental health license) and are available in clinics, as well as group, and private practices.

References

1. Art Therapy Credentials Board, Inc., What is Art Therapy?, accessed from: <https://atcb.org/what-is-art-therapy>
2. Psychology.org, What is Art Therapy?, accessed from: <https://www.psychology.org/resources/what-is-art-therapy/>

If you have a question for the experts, or you are an expert interested in being featured, please email phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com. Experts have not been compensated for their advice.

Q What is art therapy?

Art therapy uses art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork as a therapeutic and healing process. Art therapists are trained in both art and therapy. The process is not an art lesson – it is grounded in the knowledge of human development, psychological theories, and counseling techniques.¹ Art therapy helps people to use creativity and self-expression to support their mental health.²

Art therapy includes a mix of art with verbal processing of the artwork. The process of art making helps create personal meaning and expression. The artwork allows the client to find words or understanding for events, conflicts, emotions, self-awareness, and assists with moving forwards in their journey of life.

Q What types of needs and challenges can be addressed through art therapy?

When people come to therapy, they are often looking to find meaning or create change. Art therapy can provide a unique avenue for transformation, which differs from only talk therapy. Art making provides emotional healing through creative expression.

Art therapy can help with symptom management, such as reducing worries, decreasing irritability, and regulating the nervous system. It also helps to understand and shift core belief systems (i.e., Am I good enough?), reduce cognitive distortions (i.e., what if's, worst case-scenario), reduce distress and conflict, in-

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POETRY

Under Your Breath, Under My Eyes

by *Sean Scott*

Am I just in my own head? or do I think you are crying right now
after our relinquished phone call.
I feel guilty, but I also feel responsible.
Not responsible for you blinking back tears, allegedly.
We all know you are stronger than that, but responsible that I am.
Relieving you of me.

Because I slammed the door open and snapped at a casualty or war,
that person could feel the tears striding down my face beneath my cowl
from the comment you made under your breath earlier tonight.

Everything you do is loud and clear whether you do it subconsciously or not.
I stress adjectives and adverbs holding hands into a deep and quiet slumbering poem box
You get offended when I use big words in sentences.
So, I keep doing it because it's not fair to you if I don't.

In this last duration, tonight has marked its closing ceremony.
This was our one portal left open on the docket.
And maybe that's why I feel you sobbing in my heart.
Your dossier is embedded, and I have locked myself out purposefully.
In that file is Duluth.
I wore the sweater tonight you had bought me there.
And I know you still turn on that Tiffany-like-lamp I got you.
Those two people are gone now,
and that remaining gigabyte is the only residue of their existence.

Hey, remember that time you offended me, and I walked outside my apartment,
and sat under the gazebo for tens of minutes wondering why you would say that.
Until you asked where I was. Me either, because you apologized that night, and
I always wanted to tell you that.

The universe has shifted for you so that your new path would lead you
to what works best for you
For me, it has allowed even more people to enter.
Better to have a million fans in my corner
then one person who has turned one.

It has taken me this long to figure it out.
Not that you don't deserve me, but that you know it.
What you said under your breath tonight will
stay with me until its expiration.
At the end of the day, I got to see you one last time.
As if it were the first time.
I have been improving myself lately
so that I no longer get excited when I see you.
And you probably said that under your breath tonight to
let me know the inevitable has arrived.
You cried at our chaotic beginning.
Beneath my eyes is my finale with a blown kiss
into the ether of our abandoned auditorium.
...Or maybe, all you did was put your phone down, un -paused your TV
and resumed your show.
(end transmission)



Scan to learn more

Introducing RECOVERY DISCOVERY

*The recovery event game
where the prize is connection
and everyone wins!*

WHAT: Scavenger hunt hosted & operated by NUWAY Alliance during MRC's Walk For Recovery

WHEN: Saturday, September 21
from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

WHERE: Minnesota State Capitol Grounds

HOW TO PARTICIPATE?

- Stop by the NUWAY Alliance booth to pick up a scavenger hunt board.
- Visit participating vendors & get your board stamped.
- Return completed boards to NUWAY Alliance booth and receive a PRIZE and be entered into a drawing for additional PRIZES!!!
- Post your fun on social media using hashtags #recoverydiscovery #intheheartoftherecoverycommunity

Scan the QR code to learn more about this event and other Recovery Discovery scavenger hunts across the state!

Driggs from page 1

ciate the emotional safety inherent in our integrity.

Having a moral compass doesn't make us a perfect person. Instead, it allows us to be responsibly imperfect as we are more likely to be accountable for our behaviors thanks to having a nagging good conscience. Some of us have a strong moral compass and others have a weaker one. This whole subject was thoroughly discussed in Dostoyevsky's great novel, *Crime and Punishment*. It is the story of a man who murders a pawnbroker for what he sees as justifiable reasons and feels he is above the guilt that most people feel. Most of us feel justified in the misdeeds we do but our moral compass guides us in the wisest and most realistic path.

Many people today have a faulty moral compass because they feel they are above the law and don't accept the limitations inherent to the moral compass. Most evil deeds are committed by people who feel they are above the law even when they don't see themselves as evil. Mostly a moral compass teaches us how to repair what we have broken in our life and what we could continue to break. Fewer people today have a religious practice and are content with not doing an honest self examination because of fear of what they might find out about themselves. When we lack ways of forgiving ourselves or getting the support to do so, such as through a good 12 Step program, we are more prone to lie to ourselves and have a faulty moral compass. We are less prone to say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." True self-forgiveness is the key to having a healthy moral compass.

Living in a society that flaunts misbehavior or minimizes misdeeds, especially by people in positions of authority, only weakens our moral compass, especially for children. It is best when children can see their parents misbehave or make mistakes in judgment only to apologize later and make amends for their wrongs.

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO HAVE A MORAL COMPASS?

A moral compass allows us to tell the difference between right and wrong, helps us discern complex moral situations for the better, helps us anticipate how others may see us, warns us of the grey areas of life that can ruin our reputations, helps us make complex moral decisions, enables us to face the emotional subtleties of intimate relations, helps us make ethical decisions in the business world, helps us repair misdeeds we have done, protects us from ethical violations in our social and work life and helps give us a good name and reputation. It is what allows us to be trustworthy.

WAYS TO RECOGNIZE A HEALTHY MORAL COMPASS

You have a healthy moral compass when:

- You apologize to others whom you've wronged even when they don't tell you that you hurt them.
- You actively make amends for your wrongs to others.
- You always pay your way and wouldn't dream of not tipping.
- You own your misdeeds even when it is embarrassing for you to do so, or it makes you feel bad about yourself.
- You pay people back even when they don't remember that you owe them.

- People see you as a good person to talk to in complex moral situations.
- You worry less about how others see you and more about how you see yourself.
- You can and do admit your shortcomings and flaws to others.
- You have haunting experiences and distress about unresolved conflicts with others.
- Your personal relationships with others are very much a part of you.

HOW IS A MORAL COMPASS BUILT?

It is built in stages of human development through the relationship between parents and their children. Children learn more from how they are parented, how their parents act in their own lives and how their peers act around them. Most learning is non-verbal in a "monkey-see, monkey-do" context. Children have to make mistakes or be on the verge of making mistakes for them to develop a moral compass. Parents have to make mistakes and be overtly accountable to their children for their misdeeds.

The earliest stage of moral development is about knowing the difference between right and wrong in the context of parental guidance. In this stage, children want to do the right thing because they don't want to their parents to be mad at them. If they do something wrong, they expect to be fairly punished by their parents. Children learn the ABCs of rules to live by. They learn not to steal, tell lies, hit other people, leave their toys out, sass their parents and apologize for wrong doings. This is the concrete nursery school stage of moral development that goes on between birth and 18 months.

The next stage of moral learning occurs between 18 months and three years when children tune into other people's feelings through the development of empathy and separation from others. It is the so-called "terrible twos." Children who are held accountable for how they treat others develop a conscience during this period. Parents may have to ask their children something like "How do you think that other boy felt when you threw his drawing in the trash?" They may need to ask their child to apologize to the wounded boy and ask them to say that they are sorry. This is how healthy moral shame develops in children and is the bedrock of moral development in children.

Children who are let off the hook for their behaviors and are not expected to contribute to house chores are likely to lack a conscience and think they are too special for rules. This "spoiled brat syndrome" is really based on parental neglect and a misguided wish for parents to be their children's friend. There is no better way to be close to your children than telling them what they don't want to hear. Indeed, many misguided adults who see themselves as "special" spend their whole lives in legal trouble wishing for somebody finally to tell them what they don't want to hear.

A good TV program like "Leave It to Beaver" strongly illustrates this dynamic between children and their parents in building a moral compass. With a working conscience children need to learn a social conscience—how to respond morally to school peers and teachers and policemen. This happens between ages three to twelve years and it is developed

When we lack ways of forgiving ourselves or getting the support to do so, such as through a good 12 Step program, we are more prone to lie to ourselves and have a faulty moral compass.

in preteen years. Eventually, teens learn to be independent of adult rules if there is a greater good—like breaking curfew to hang out with peers. Teens learn the concept of personal responsibility and learn the difference between being ashamed of their behaviors and being ashamed of themselves. Such learning matures at about age twenty-five in college years when the human brain is fully mature. Children learn that breaking the rules can be healthy for them if the greater good of people, in the form of social justice is at stake. It is a long journey between birth and age twenty-five and parents with a healthy moral compass are required to be a guide all the way.

It is vital to realize that parents don't have to be perfect for their children to turn out well. Other people who are part of the village that raises children can and do step up to the plate to help them have a moral compass. Children themselves can reflect and change ways they lack moral character. Children belong to all of us.

WHAT IF YOUR MORAL COMPASS IS BROKEN AND YOU WANT TO FIX IT?

When a moral compass is broken in the first few years of life it can be nearly impossible to repair. When children are not emotionally sensitive to others and lack empathy, often due to attachment issues with parents, the moral compass may be permanently broken. The 1956 movie, *The Bad Seed*, painfully illustrates this tragic outcome. However, most children have some degree of sensitivity to others and empathy and generally have consciences that can be repaired. I would say that it is generally possible and likely to be able to repair a broken moral compass.

It's best to start by taking a personal inventory of when and how your compass fails. Believing the unwanted news about your children reported by teachers, and the feedback we may not want to hear from peers, is a good place to start. Realize that getting bad reviews from others is unwelcome for most of us, yet it can also be a sign that someone is invested in us personally and wants the best for us. It can be a real gift to hear bad news from others about how we're behaving.

You will need a teacher, therapist, 12 Step Group, or trusted guide to make your repairs. Don't work alone in a do-it-yourself process to repair your broken compass. You may need an extra set of eyes to see what needs to be repaired. The best repair comes about from emotionally close relationships with people who authentically care about you. The comfort and honesty of these relationships will do the trick. Please be an active participant in the healing process and don't be afraid of speaking up on your own behalf. A collaborative relationship is the best way to repair a broken compass.

A good movie on this topic is *Leap of Faith* (1992). It tackles the topic of a fraudulent traveling evangelist/faith healer, played by Steve Martin, and follows through his transformation. God's blessings in your own journey for a healthy moral compass.

*John H. Driggs, LICSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice in St. Paul and co-author of *Intimacy Between Men*.*

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EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT

Meeting a Need, Transforming Lives

by Angelo Gentile



Some of the addiction studies students and instructors attended a multicultural training day this spring. / Photo by Minnesota North College

The shortage of mental health professionals in Minnesota, including those working as licensed alcohol and drug counselors (LADCs), has been well documented. One in four jobs in the field is currently vacant, according to an April Minnesota legislative report.

At the same time, the disturbing number of opioids, heroin and fentanyl overdose deaths has been surging since 2018, according to the Minnesota Department of Health. In 2018, 342 deaths were reported, in 2022, 1,002—representing a 192% increase.

This perfect storm of a rising number of those struggling with substance addiction, combined with a shortage of professionals who can intervene, gets even worse in rural areas of the state. One prime example of this shortage is in the number of LADCs.

In rural parts of the state, the shortage of LADCs is stark, as Minnpost.com reported last year. According to the Minnesota Department of Health, in the Twin Cities, there are 2,786 residents for every 1 LADC. In rural areas, the number is 13,576 residents to every 1 LADC.

With this perfect storm in mind, one community college program on the Iron Range in Northeastern Minnesota, has garnered significant grant funding to help train students to become LADCs and, at the same time, help those students, who themselves are also in recovery, transform their lives.

A DUAL PURPOSE: MEETING A NEED WHILE CHANGING LIVES

On Minnesota's Iron Range, you'll find an uncommon landscape of scenic pine forests, striking stands of birch trees, pristine blue lakes, and, occasionally, giant open-pit mines, some still in operation, others abandoned.

The Range also is home to Minnesota North College, formed by the merger of five long-standing community colleges (six campuses) in the area: Hibbing, Itasca (Grand Rapids), Mesabi Range

(Virginia, Eveleth), Rainy River (International Falls) and Vermilion (Ely).

The college covers an expansive region that includes parts of St. Louis, Itasca and Koochiching Counties, extending from north of Duluth all the way to the Canadian border. The area is a remote, isolated part of the state, and has long contended with the challenges of multi-generational alcohol abuse and, more recently, opioid addiction.

To meet these challenges, the college's nearly 30-year-old Addiction Studies Program, located in Virginia, has had recent success with securing sizable grant funding for its Associate of Applied Science (AAS) two-year degree program, which can lead to an alcohol and drug counselor temporary permit (ADC-T) and eventual permanent licensure for being an LADC through the Minnesota Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy. The program also offers a certificate program for those students who already have bachelor's degrees—they can complete the program in a year and get an addiction studies certification. Those without a bachelor's degree need to complete the AAS degree. Courses are delivered in person and through several distance-learning options.

Mary Kay Riendeau, the program's department head and one of three faculty members in the department, has led efforts to bring in, since 2019, about \$2.7 million in total grant funding from three sources: The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota (BCBS-MN) and St. Louis County.

Rural counties like St. Louis County have been "especially overlooked, in my opinion," Riendeau told *The Phoenix Spirit* in a recent interview. "Legislatively, and State of Minnesota Department-wise, rural counties have been neglected and now you have a real problem."

Additionally, "we're not just lacking in counselors, we're lacking in treatment centers in this region," Riendeau said,

estimating the area has only about five treatment centers.

As a recent press release about the funding stated, the grant awards "all have the same goal: Create opportunities for students and increase the number of licensed drug and alcohol counselors (LADCs) in Minnesota, and help recovering substance-use individuals."

The majority of the grant funding comes from DHS, which has earmarked the dollars to support training that leads to the temporary permitting for the ADC-T and permanent LADC licensure, specifically for those students who are in recovery in rural areas, Riendeau said.

The DHS grants are actually a combination of state and federal funds, with federal monies coming from the Opioid Epidemic Response Advisory Council (OERAC), which is part of the 2019 Opiate Epidemic Response bill signed into law in 2019 in Minnesota. This law secures funds from drug manufacturers and wholesalers to fight the opioid crisis, while creating the OERAC to oversee the funding.

State and local governments throughout the U.S. are receiving billions of dollars in settlements from companies that made, sold or distributed prescription painkillers and were accused of fueling the opioid crisis, according to KFF Health News. More than a dozen companies will pay the money over nearly two decades.

The BCBS-MN grant funds help cover a variety of other specific student needs, such as aiding students with emergency funding for basic living needs like child care, rent and car repair, and for those students who may already

"We can empower recovering people to do this work for us... empower people to do something different."

have a bachelor's degree and are coming back to school to enroll in this program but who don't qualify for financial aid.

The county funds are for continuing education for current LADCs to receive training for counseling adolescents.

Riendeau said she hopes to eventually gain permanent funding for all of these needs, given the dual-outcome goal of this type of program. The synergy here of solving a shortage of LADCs while changing the lives of students in recovery is not lost on Riendeau.

"We can empower recovering people to do this work for us...empower people to do something different. If you give addicts too much time on their hands, that's not a good idea," she said with a smile. "So, let's fill up their time and give them something productive to do, they can move out into their communities and do

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Mary Kay Riendeau, right, is the department head of the addiction studies program at Minnesota North College, which offers in-person and distance-learning options for students. / Photo by Minnesota North College

something useful...isn't that what's really important? If you give people worth, they can gain self-esteem, then find meaning and purpose in life."

And what do students think of the program? Two recent graduates shared their stories.

STUDENTS WEIGH IN

Ely native Amy K. still lives in her hometown, which borders the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, serving as the office administrator for a long-time, family-run auto repair business. She said her drug of choice was alcohol, and now has 11 years of sobriety. She also has family members in recovery.

Amy, 54, had been pursuing a social work degree at the College of St. Scholastica (CSS) in Duluth. While doing that, she found out about the ADC-T permit and LADC licensure offered through Minnesota North. She withdrew from CSS, enrolled in the Addictions Studies Program, completed it, graduated in May, and now will circle back to finish one year remaining in the bachelor's degree at CSS. She ultimately plans to work full time as a counselor.

"There is such a need out there, a shortage of LADCs, a shortage of services, shortage of facilities...I feel (Minnesota North's) program is serving an important need in this region," said Amy, who received partial funding for various costs through the BCBS-MN grant.

Another student, Racheal J., was arrested in 2016 on the Range in Virginia for possession of methamphetamine, was eventually convicted of the crime and sent to the women's prison in Shakopee for 48 months.

Racheal, now 43, reflected that her incarceration was a lesson in grace. "That was the best thing that ever happened to me. I went through the treatment program, cognitive behavior therapy, for six months in prison."

She has also been "sober since the

day I was arrested" in October of 2016, and has returned to live on the Iron Range in Eveleth. She has been working as a certified peer recovery specialist at Partners Behavioral Health Care in Virginia, has also worked with Recovery Alliance in Duluth, and graduated in May from Minnesota North College with an AAS in addiction studies, with help from DHS grant funds. She plans to go on for a bachelor's degree in order to be eligible for licensure as an LADC.

Racheal raved about Minnesota North's program, including the faculty members who "have a passion for the material and for instructing and teaching," she said. "It is nice to have people who have actually done counseling to teach us."

She also said the program includes a relevant curriculum, covering topics such as case management, assessment and crisis intervention.

Racheal also noted how faculty members helped guide her and others, who have the baggage of criminal histories, through navigating the land mines of college and DHS rules and regulations. "Many of us were told, in other parts of our lives, that we couldn't do this. But the Minnesota North program and instructors proved them wrong and showed that we could do it...I've been told many times...that I would not be able to do anything with my background and here I am."

She plans to eventually work full time in the counseling field, recognizing the shortage of counselors in the state "and especially on the Iron Range." Plus, she said her work is a way to give back. "I was told one time that if I don't give it away, I can't keep it...everything that I was given in my recovery, if I want to keep it, I need to give it away, give back."

Angelo Gentile is a Minneapolis freelance journalist who has lived on the Iron Range and in Duluth.

Resource Directory

Counseling
Lehmann Counseling
Help for individuals and families dealing with addiction. Kate Lehmann is an experienced professional offering client-centered substance use counseling. Discrete, flexible, private pay. www.katelehmann.com for more information.

Eating Disorders
Melrose Center
Melrose's experienced team provides specialized care for those struggling with an eating disorder and substance use disorder – whether currently in treatment or recovery. Melrose Center has five Twin City metro locations. Visit melroseheals.com or call 952-993-6200.

Seniors
Silver Sobriety "Rebuilding Lives, One Senior at a Time!"
Silver Sobriety is a treatment facility specifically for seniors over age 55. Getting sober with a group of peers you can relate to is a better treatment option. Based on the twelve step Program, we focus on strategies to handle issues facing seniors, along with abstinence from alcohol and drugs. Contact us for a free confidential conversation. www.silversobriety.org info@silversobriety.org. 651-431-8308.

Substance Use Disorders
Minnesota Teen Challenge
If you or a loved one is struggling with drugs or alcohol, we're here to help. In addition to our effective and affordable residential Licensed Treatment, faith-based Long-Term Recovery and convenient Outpatient program, we have extensive prevention and transitional/aftercare services. Freedom from addiction starts here. 612-FREEDOM or mmtc.org

Workaholics Anonymous Meeting
Burning out? Workaholics Anonymous provides steps and tools to break free from non-stop work and activity — or work avoidance. Meeting is currently online via Zoom. Call Pat for link to the meeting or questions: 763-560-5199. www.workaholics-anonymous.org.

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Friends Forever

by **Mary Lou Logsdon**



“Let us be grateful to people who make us happy, they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom” — MARCEL PROUST

She looked interesting. Unconventional in dress, not afraid of dirty garden hands as she worked the soil of her urban terrain. She propped plants on imaginative metal sculptures. Her pure white hair was an early gift from the gods of aging. I walked by often. I lived two blocks east and passed her house on my way to the park where I walked daily.

We exchanged greetings, occasionally discussing the weather as Minnesotans are wont to do, often commenting on the beauty of her garden and its seasonal changes.

I was new to the neighborhood. I'd moved in a year or two earlier, leaving my old neighborhood and a regular walking friend. My life had been upended and rearranged. I missed the camaraderie of a regular exercise partner. It is not as easy to make new friends in your 50s as it was in your 20s and 30s.

One day I asked if she walked. Yes, she did. Would you be interested in a weekly walk? An hour around the park? “We could try it,” she said. Later I learned that she was dubious of the invitation and doubted it would last long. That “yes” turned into twenty years of walking and friendship.

You can cover a lot of material in an hour a week. We were born the same year. While her academic credentials exceeded mine, her work in evaluation fit my data analysis background. She taught at the

University of Minnesota. I was doing a little teaching of adult learners and welcomed her wisdom. We shared garden plants, family stories, and hard-earned life lessons. We walked and talked through all the calendar seasons and into the changing seasons of our lives.

While I was already retired from my first career, she was fairly new at the University. She had married right out of high school to an Army man she met while her father was stationed in Alaska. She soon had two children, was living in a trailer house near her husband's Wisconsin family and left alone while he told stories into the night at the local bar. She walked her children past and sometimes into the nearby college, peeking around corners to see what life was like for the students she saw, not much younger than her. She feared they'd know she didn't belong.

When she told him she got a job at the college, he assured her they would never keep her. What could she offer? She took one college class followed by another, growing in confidence and amazement as she discovered a new side of herself.

Eventually the marriage ended and she moved to Vermont, where her parents lived after her father's retirement. She found a job at the University of Vermont in Burlington and continued taking classes. Her BA was followed by an MA and

then a move to the University of Georgia where she earned her PhD. She was not quite 50 years old. A position at the University's School of Public Health brought her to Minnesota.

Besides being a smart and capable evaluator and teacher, she liked to play with art. I watched that blossom, too. She took classes, experimented with acrylics, watercolors, cold wax media. A multi-dimensional woman, she specialized in multi-media art. She fashioned books, collaborated with other artists, and took up welding.

Approaching retirement and needing a place to create, she designed a studio for her backyard. She and her wife built it together. Her art haven complete, she retired. Shortly thereafter she noticed some health issues. She experimented with a variety of remedies until an MRI scan found an invading growth in her abdomen originating from her ovaries. Ovarian cancer.

By now it was early 2020, just into the early days of COVID-19. Rather than walk today, she said, “Let's visit in the studio.” I came, masked. She gave me the stark news. OH, NO. We broke from COVID protocols, hugged and wept. In a twist of fate, her oncologist and surgeon was a former evaluation mentee from the University.

Our walks changed. Sometimes shorter. Sometimes slower. Sometimes still our regular three miles. Sometimes with a Scrabble board during a chemo treatment.

In the respite from the cancer, after a heavy round of chemo and before it recurred in her lungs, she did a series of paintings on daylilies. She plucked the dying blossoms from her garden and watched them fade, shrink, and shrivel. She painted them in their various stages of dying. The pictures were beautiful, honest, and heartbreaking.

We never stopped our weekly time together. After my move last summer, we drove to each other's house and then walked. We continued the stories while we celebrated how lucky we were to have this precious friendship.

This spring we visited a book artist's opening at a local art gallery. My friend had collaborated on one of the books. The pages were cut from her paintings. We parked a manageable two blocks away and walked slowly to the gallery. Once there, we rested on the window seat. We fitted our hands into white cotton gloves to touch the book and turn its delicate pages. After an hour, we started back to the car, arm in arm, stopping to admire a long narrow garden tucked between two brick houses in old St Paul. The homeowner engaged with us, sharing his garden story.

During the last couple of months, I walked to her studio where I found her perched on a stool, painting. She set me up for making art, too. She bound several of her practice sheets with additional blank pages to make a book for me, my own play space. She gathered watercolors, markers, and pens. I doodled and we talked—about life, about death, about love.

Eileen died June 10, 2024. She leaves a big hole in my life and in my heart. A person could protect themselves from this aching sorrow by not bothering to venture into love. That would come at a much higher cost. Besides, there's more room in a broken heart.

Mary Lou Logsdon is a Spiritual Director in the Twin Cities. She teaches in the Sacred Ground Spiritual Direction Formation Program. She can be reached at logsdon.marylou@gmail.com.

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