

TURNING POINT OF TAMPA, INC.  
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## The Gifts of Recovery

by Susan Keller

I can't wait to go home for Christmas this year, and that is one of my many gifts of recovery. I remember back when I was drinking, I absolutely hated holidays and family gatherings. It took everything I had to sit there and make conversation with people, while all I wanted to do was disappear and drug myself into oblivion, like I did on every other day. It was difficult to pretend to be "normal," and a few times I didn't succeed; my relatives would be whispering about me – worried about me while I lay passed out upstairs. (My poor mother!) Or I would concoct an excuse to run off, like I did one Thanksgiving... "Bye, everyone! I'm going to feed the homeless!" I could get pretty creative.

To tell the truth, I never wanted to be sober. All I really wanted was to be happy, and when I was not drinking or using drugs, I was miserable. My family wanted me to be sober, which is why they kept shipping me off to rehab after rehab. I'm so glad that they did, because I ended up at Turning Point and my life has changed in amazing ways since my stay here.

Something clicked for me, and although I didn't want to be sober when I got here, I realized that it was the only chance I had to find real happiness. It's only been a short four years, but since I came to Florida I have made incredible friends and graduated college. I've gone from being a client at Turning Point to working here as an Admissions Coordinator, which is amazing. Now I get to see miracles every day; I get to watch the before/after transformations of people coming in. I see their eyes light up. Their misery begins to fade and is replaced by hope. They start to have fun again doing things sober, whether it's going to the movies, hanging out at Starbucks, or playing cards in the Village. The world looks brighter again, and the days don't blend together anymore. It reminds me so much of my own journey, and I feel so lucky to see the miracles happen as a part of my job. It is truly a gift of recovery.



OF TAMPA, INC.

# TURNING POINT

## From the Desk of the CEO

by Robin Piper

2003 has been full of challenges, adventures, and tragedy – with some of our staff dealing with illness and the personal tragedy in my life. Many staff members spent much of 2003 going above and beyond the call of duty. I would like to personally thank all the staff for not only doing that, but also for being supportive friends during my grieving process.

Many people have given me the gift of crediting Turning Point's success to my work here. Actually, it's the staff who work here who make Turning Point what it is today. Thank you to all of you from the bottom of my heart.

## The Village Voice

by Joan Browne

The Village is looking good! Turning Point of Tampa has made some real nice renovations this year. Recently we have purchased new mattresses, a bunch of new appliances, and replaced pots, pans and cutlery for all the houses. Outside we have added a few railings around the fireside and some new sitting areas with picnic tables, as we had to increase the size of our visiting areas due to all the family support.

The holidays are just around the corner and we are ready! This past month we had a very creative art therapy class; clients worked in teams decorating centerpieces for the Thanksgiving dinner tables. Between the grapes, fall leaves, glue guns, gourds and ribbon it turned out to be quite festive.

Forty-five sober guests came for the turkey and ham dinner. It was a very memorable event for our current clients and their families. Mike's yearly gift to the clients, "the *Underground Thanksgiving Song of T.P.*" was also well received. Sorry, I cannot divulge those lyrics to you, as you must be a current client or an Alumni. Call Mike if you are an Alumni for a refresher course on those lyrics...

As I write this I am witnessing that Christmas is officially here. All the decorations have been pulled out of storage and of course the latest tunes of the season are being played – *The Chipmunks Christmas*, *Elvis' Best of the Holidays*, and *Nat King Cole's Holiday Season*. We actually could not find the tapes this year and had to replace them with the exact same tapes that were missing. Another T.P. tradition.

The Big Group Room, the Office and Village have had some very sober elves spreading the tinsel and holly throughout. It was suggested in a very spiritual way, of course, that we might want to update our musical repertoire for next year. Seems like I heard those exact words last year. Hey, I wonder? Anyway, Happy Sober Holidays from the Village.

And as always please come to our fireside meetings on Wednesday and Sunday and share your gifts of recovery with our clients.

## Our Staff

### Owner

Michelle Ratcliff-Castellano, R.N.

### C.E.O./Clinical Director

Robin Piper, M.S., C.A.P.

### Medical Director

Renee Haney, M.D.

### Nurse

Ellen Seto, R.N.

### Program Director

Michael C. Hicks, B.A., C.A.P.

### Counselors

Andrea Holmes, M.P.H., L.M.H.C.

Margery Porter, B.S., C.A.P., C.E.D.S.

Robert G. Zentarski, M.S., C.A.P.

Tina Bauman, M.S.,

Hans Lutz, M.A.

Nelson Moore, C.C.P.C. III E, C.A.S.

### Outpatient Services Director

Stephanie Brooks, M.A., M.S., L.M.H.C.

### Outpatient Counselors

Debbie Wilson, M.S.

Olena Ferguson, M.Ed.

### Nutritionist

Lori Herold, R.D., L.D

### Admissions

Jenni Coppola

Sheri Clark

Sue Keller

### Administrative Assistant/

Human Resources/

### Privacy Officer

Stacy Washburn

### Medical Records

Pam Calvo

### Professional Relations

Terry Hutchinson

Clara Wells

### Business Manager

Cheryl Slate

### Receptionist

Shirley Polak

### Client Coordinator

Joan Browne

### And Our Village Staff

Accredited by J.C.A.H.O.



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## It's That Time of Year

by Debbie Wilson

As the new year approaches many people begin to think about making New Year's resolutions. Some actually accomplish them. Most are neglected and forgotten by February. Here are some suggestions for success with your resolutions in 2004.

1. **Define your goals.** Be specific and make sure your goal is realistic.
2. **Plan.** What are the *Physical* preparations you need to make such as materials, equipment or perhaps even a visit to your doctor? What are the *Mental* preparations needed? Who might support you emotionally? Are you honestly committed to this change? What are its potential benefits? And finally, what are the *Spiritual* preparations you need to make? Let your *Higher Power* in on what you're doing! Visualize yourself achieving your goal. Write some affirmations that support success.
3. **Keep track of your progress.** Record it on a calendar. Keep a journal. And keep in mind that any change is a process! There will be ups and downs. Getting off track temporarily does not mean failure, but perhaps a need to revise your plan. It's all an opportunity to learn more about yourself... so take one day at a time... enjoy the ride!

## Remember the Journey

by Stephanie Brooks

Ya know, sometimes ya can't win for tryin'. Life's that way sometimes. But I wonder if the "winning" is all it's cracked up to be, and how invested am I in the "trying" – maybe like someone has said, it's the journey and not the end that really counts. There have been a lot of Christmas's in my life, some good, some not so good, and some really great. When we were younger, we remember the Christmas we got the toy we wanted the most – mine was a bike, shiny and blue with cream accents. As we get older, our "toys" change and we want for bigger and better "things" along with the feelings we used to have as children on Christmas morning. It's very sobering (no pun intended) when these big toys do not elicit those past feelings. More and more we tend to forget the journey and only want the end results.

Sometimes, as I spin 'round and 'round in my daily life I continually look for the end results. If I do this, I'll get that, and so forth. The journey merely becomes the daily grind, getting buried in the next chore, the next deadline, the next – whatever. I tend to forget to stop and look around, or really listen to what's truly important. Hey, I got things to do and places to go and people to meet! But if I sit still for a minute and turn down the chaos, I can hear the murmurings of the journey, the gentle wind on my face, the blue of the sea and the brightness of the moon against an inky sky.

That's Christmas ya' know, turning down the chaos and remembering the journey.

# The Christmas Gift

by Michael C. Hicks

I have been wondering about who started this business about giving Christmas presents and decided it was those three wise men who travelled to Bethlehem. You know, the ones *bearing gifts*. Apparently, Sears, JC Penney's, and the Pottery Barn found out about it, printed up their catalogs and the rest is history.

There are two different kinds of people who receive Christmas presents. Kids, and those of us who are no longer kids. It is a much better deal when you are a kid. Everybody asks you what you want for Christmas. I even remember a creepy-looking Santa who smelled funny asking me what I wanted when we went to Marshall Fields. The best present I can remember from when I was a kid, was a hockey stick I received. Whoever gave it to me included a roll of black tape so I could wrap the blade the way the players on the Chicago Blackhawks did. I probably played hockey with it, but mainly I remember walking around the neighborhood with it over my shoulder, looking cool.

What I remember the most about Christmas presents are the ones I didn't get.

Each year I asked for: 1) *an archery set*; 2) *a hunting knife*; 3) *a B-B gun*; and 4) *a chemistry set*. My mother explained that I would not get any of them because: A) *I would hurt somebody*; B) *I would shoot my eye out*; C) *I'd blow the house up*.

I still want these things for Christmas but now my wife says "no" for all the same reasons! One year I did get a stupid little bow with a wooden arrows that had suction cups on them. My grandmother took it away one month later when she found me in the basement using her carving knife to whittle points on the arrows. C'mon, how can a kid go hunting in the woods without real arrows?

As I moved from the kid phase into the "not a kid," I found out now I had to ask others what they wanted for Christmas. I also discovered that the holidays meant a lot of drinking, office parties, house parties, and the endless "stop-by for a Christmas drink." The holidays, the alcoholic's custom-made excuse for "a-drink" days. I never really liked shopping to buy Christmas gifts until I discovered

that Ace Liquors sold your favorite booze in a stylish holiday decanter, which came in the attractive gift box, ready to give as a present. I could do all my Christmas shopping in one stop! Christmas morning soon became a blur of lights and family as I sat each year with my coffee cup, laced with brandy, trying to stop the shakes while I slid off into that alcoholic fantasy world. Despite the protests and offers of help from others, this continued until one Christmas there was no family. Just me. And my coffee cup. And my booze.

On June 21, 1987, I began my journey into sobriety. As I struggled along, *One Day at a Time*, I began to think that, "maybe I can do this." Suddenly an insurmountable obstacle appeared before me... the holidays. An overwhelming sense of helplessness overcame me as I tried to imagine getting through the upcoming days without a drink. Somehow, I managed to accept that I needed to combine the two types of people who receive Christmas presents into one. I would give the kid in me a Christmas present and I would do this just for me. On Christmas of 1987 I gave myself a Christmas present – the gift of recovery. This has worked out so well that for each holiday, I give myself the same gift, and on Christmas morning I will be drinking regular coffee with my family.

To all of our alums, please let me wish you a joyous holiday season and my hope that you will give yourself this wonderful gift of recovery. *Our aftercare group continues to meet on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.; OA and AA meetings at the Office/Village on Wednesdays at 8:15 p.m. and Fireside AA meeting on Sundays in the Village at 6:00 p.m.* As always, our staff is here for you by phone. I hope we will hear from you.

Well, that's my story about the Christmas gift. I guess those wise men started a pretty good thing, after all. Sometime about Christmas I will find a quiet place to say thanks. Oh! And I will do one more thing. On Christmas morning, while my family is still sleeping, I will allow the kid in me to awake very early. I will quietly slip out of bed and check all around and under the Christmas tree. I will be looking for a present in a 4½, oblong-shaped package with my name on it. Maybe this year, I'll get that archery set.