

UNDER THE BRIDGE

Newsletter for Last House On The Block Society



March 2014

This is the third issue of Under The Bridge, the newsletter for Last House on the Block Society. It is with deep sadness that I must announce the passing of one of our directors. Harold Delaney passed away unexpectedly on the morning of March 1, 2014. His smile, his bear hugs, and his unwavering commitment to our organization will be greatly missed.

As a tribute to Harold I feel I should relate a portion of his story for those of you who did not know him as we knew him. In order to do that, I will need to disclose personal info about myself and about Harold, but nothing that either of us told the other in confidence and certainly not anything of a sensitive nature. As many people know I was involved with a transition house for men in recovery from addictions. I worked there for many years. I am not an addictions counsellor. I do not hold any degrees in Psychology or Social Work. The only experience I have in the field of alcoholism is hands-on experience. I was a drunk and a drug addict for 30 years. At the end of it I was sleeping under the bridge with a rock for a pillow and a newspaper for a blanket.

That is how I met Harold. In 2007 he was one of our clients. I liked him instantly. I was a weekend attendant at that time and I baked a lot of peanut butter cookies. Harold loved my peanut butter cookies. He always volunteered to help me clean up afterwards so that he and I could clean up those cookies.

Although Harold was in a different 12-step fellowship than I was, we still attended many of the same meetings and we got to know each other that way. I had about ten years under my belt and Harold would ask me questions about how I had overcome my alcoholism and drug addiction. One day he asked me to be his sponsor. Although I feel that sponsorship is essential to successful recovery and even though I generally sponsor half a dozen men at any given time, I had to say no.

Sponsorship between staff and residents was discouraged at the house. There are good

reasons for this. Sponsorship is an intimate relationship between two people in recovery. To be effective, we must walk day by day on a path of spiritual progress. We would spend a great deal of time together during the first few weeks or months. I might accompany him to meetings. I would want him to attend the weekly step study that I attend. We might have lunch together. I may even invite him into my home, to have thanksgiving dinner with my family. I may help him find a job. We would likely develop a rapport that I do not have with the other clients and that he does not have with other staff members. For, we would become friends.

Eventually, one of us would be spoken to. If we are working an honest program, we will not be able to lie about it. In fact, one might conclude that we were already lying about it, since an act of omission bears the same weight as an act of commission. And what message am I carrying then? That it is OK to be dishonest when it suits me? Like many forms of lying, it starts with one little lie and gradually becomes a bigger lie. When the truth comes out, we will be told that the relationship must come to an end. There may be hurt feelings, resentment, maybe even a defiant refusal. In a worst case scenario, he may be looking for another place to live and I may be looking for another job.

The simplest solution is to say no. In fact, an A.A. member once said to me, "Why sponsor one of them when you can sponsor all of them?" At first, I didn't understand what he meant. But, if Harold had a question about A.A., he could certainly ask me the question. If he picked up a resentment at a meeting, he could certainly talk to me about it, and he often did. If he needed a hard to find pamphlet, he could ask me where to locate one. If he wanted to hear how I got well, I could tell him - before I began my shift, after I ended my shift, or during one of my breaks. In my story he would hear me mention my sponsor numerous times. If he decided he needed a sponsor, I could explain to him how to go about getting one, direct him to literature that might help such as the pamphlet Questions and Answers on Sponsorship. I may even give him a few leads.

I gave Harold as much support and encouragement as I could. We kept in touch through social media. About a year later, I was talking to him online and I asked him if he wanted to go to a meeting. He said sure so my wife and I picked him up and away we went. We drove down through Waverley and Fall River, Enfield, Lantz.

When we got to Stewiacke, Harold said "Where the hell we going?"

"To a meeting." I said.

We were heading down to the Hubtown Group in Truro. We stopped at the Village Bakery in Shubenacadie, bought some homemade bread and jam, had a picnic and enjoyed the stillness of the area. We made it to the meeting in plenty of time. I introduced Harold to some buddies of mine and we had a good day. Later, we had lunch at a restaurant and Harold again asked me to sponsor him. Neither one of us was at the house, so I agreed. I told Harold what I tell every guy I sponsor. If you want to get well, I will help in any way I can. But if you are just wasting my time, I will leave you to your own devices and move on to someone who wants to do the work.

Harold was actually a very low maintenance sponsee. We went to meetings together for a

month, did some step work together. We started a few online groups together and then we drifted apart. If I ever wanted to know how he was doing, all I had to do was check his status updates online.

“I just got a new job.”

“I'm in a relationship.”

“I bought a truck.”

“I'm single again.”

“It's complicated.”

“I sold the truck.”

Harold was a lot like me when I tried to get sober. We didn't have any trouble stopping. It was the staying stopped that we struggled with. Eventually, though, Harold did stop drinking and using his other drugs of choice. He became involved with a meeting in his fellowship of NA and that helped considerably. Last December he presented me with my 16 year medallion and asked me to present him with his one year. I wasn't able to attend that meeting but I hear it went very well.

When we decided to alter the memorandum of our society and change it from a transition house to a community outreach, Harold asked if he could help out some way. Although we prefer our directors have a few years under their belt, I knew it would enhance his sobriety so I discussed it with the rest of the board and Harold was elected to serve on our board of directors. He was only with us a short time but it was time well spent.

Harold's involvement in the other fellowship proved to be beneficial. Harold had a lot of friends and he got them interested in what we were doing. There are women on our knitting committee now that wouldn't be with us if not for Harold. On Christmas Eve we donated scarves and socks and blankets and toys to two community organizations and two recovery events. Harold was diabetic, he had high blood pressure, heart trouble, and a bad leg. Yet he still insisted on being Santa Under The Bridge at an NA event in Halifax by donating gifts to them and their children.

One of the online groups we started was called Fellowship Memorial. It was dedicated to our brothers and sisters in recovery who had passed away either by natural causes or as a result of addiction. Harold was committed to that group.

It always made Harold smile to know he was helping others. He told me many times how grateful he was for putting his old life behind him and for having his family back in his life, especially the grandchildren.

In reflection I see that he had become what he always wanted to be, what all of us in recovery want to be - happy, joyous, and free. I wish he could have stayed with us longer but it was not meant to be. God must have needed him somewhere else. I'm sure that wherever he winds up, he'll grab a few addicts and start a meeting.

In memory of Harold Delaney. (February 26, 1960 – March 1, 2014)

We encourage our readers to submit their own stories or articles. So if you have a story about life under the bridge or on the streets or if you are working or volunteering in this field, we'd

like to hear from you.

Submissions should be addressed to:

Last House on the Block Society, 38 Trentonian Lane, Dartmouth, NS B2W 0C4.

You may also email them to us at : lasthouseontheblock@outlook.com

About Us

Last House on the Block Society is a non-profit organization that provides community outreach and/or information services to men and women in recovery from addictions to alcohol, drugs and gambling.

By directing persons in recovery to treatment services, self-help meetings, life skills, leisure activities, training and employment agencies, and by offering them support and encouragement, we hope to help them build a positive self-image so that they may re-integrate back into society.

Whenever possible, we will donate items of clothing to persons in recovery from addictions.

Board of Directors

					
Bernie	Larry	Nancy	Heather	Harold - Deceased	Deanna

How to Contact Us

Our mailing address is:

38 Trentonian Lane, Woodlawn Village, Dartmouth. NS, B2W 0C4

Check out our website:

<http://lasthouseontheblocksociety.weebly.com>

Like our facebook page:

www.facebook.com/LastHouseOnTheBlockSociety

or become a member of our facebook group:

www.facebook.com/groups/lasthouseontheblocksociety

Follow us on Twitter @lasthouseonthebloc

or just send us an email and ask a question:

lasthouseontheblock@outlook.com

Submissions for Under The Bridge should be sent to the Editor, either by mail or email to the address above.

How To Get Involved

There are different ways to help with Last House On The Block Society.

You can donate money or items (as many of you do). Please visit our website for info on how to donate. You can be one of our knitters (if knitting or crocheting is your thing). You can volunteer for fundraising events by getting on the fund-raising committee. Or if you'd like to be directly involved in the decision-making process, you can make application to serve on our voluntary board of directors. Its a two-year term. We currently have 6 board members which is enough to operate the society, although our full complement is 11 board members. If you are in recovery from an addiction, we would prefer one year clean or sober.

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For email subscription: lasthouseontheblock@outlook.com

Earlier this month, an anonymous person attached a bag of hand-knitted scarves to a post on Argyle Street in Halifax. By mistake, our Society was suspected of doing it. We were contacted by local media who wanted to do a story on that. Of course, it wasn't anything we had done, but once the news team learned what we actually were doing, they asked to do a story on us and as a result there was a news video on News At Five on Monday, March 10. To the anonymous knitter, if you'd like to put your skills to use on a regular basis, we could always use another set of hands.