

# Commencement Connection



Fall 2009

## **Helping Friends**

*By: Rob Hinzman CAC, Business Manager*

Since working at Athens Area Commencement Center, I have had the opportunity to help many people in the community. During this past year, many of my longtime friends and family have come to me for help with their addiction. Many friends I have known my whole life.

It has been through my own recovery and working at the Commencement Center for a few years that has allowed this to happen. Most of my close friends know and understand my story of recovery. Some have even watched my process as my life began to change and start over.

By living in the Athens Community for 32 years, most people who know me and understand what I do for a living. Jokingly I will tell some friends that I have a chair in my office waiting for them. I do not interfere

with whatever lifestyles my friends are living. But they do know that they can come to me when they are ready for help. Several clients I have helped this year, I have known my whole life. By them knowing where I've been and how my life is today is what gives them hope. There is nothing more that I love to do than to be able to help people that I know and love.

Not only have I helped some of my close friends, but they are also referring other friends and family members to Commencement Center for help. This past year we have treated three members of the same family. Many people do not know where or how to get the help they need for their addiction. This is what makes Athens Area Commencement Center a community program. It's kind of like a family tree growing and branching out.

## **If You Can't Say Anything Nice Don't Say Anything At All!**

*By: Karen Skinner, MED, CAC II, Aftercare Counselor*

As many of you know, I was born in Athens, a "good" southern girl. I was raised with this saying, "If you can't say anything nice don't say anything at all!" I have heard that all my life and was even heard repeating it to my step son!! Did I manage to live by it all the time, afraid not. Did it cause me a lot of pain when I didn't, afraid so!! Do I still believe in the wisdom of this saying? Most definitely, yes. Is this article purely about not gossiping—no. That is another article another year, another periodical.

In sobriety this saying has taken on a whole different quality for me. Prior to sobriety, I only considered his saying in reference to my talking about others. I have since come to regard it as extremely important for

me to practice this principle in reference to my own self talk. What is self talk? The thinking I do in my head that only I am a party to! I am convinced that the disease of addiction is located in my brain and my thoughts start my relapse process. I listen to myself and what is scarier than that; I believe what I tell me! It is important to my continued sobriety that I learn to hear which voice in my head I am listening to. I have two that do the talking! One voice is the voice of sobriety, the other is the voice of addiction. The voice of sobriety feeds off of positive thoughts and phrases like, I can. The voice of addiction focuses on what is negative or impossible for me. Addiction would have me believe *Continued on page 2*

ATHENS AREA COMMENCEMENT CENTER

## *Mission*

*Athens Area Commencement Center*

*strives to be an outstanding substance abuse treatment program. Based upon our understanding of addiction as a family disease, we provide holistic and preventive care that is safe, confidential and is delivered in a therapeutic environment.*

*Services are provided with dignity and compassion by competent, qualified staff who have the necessary skills, certifications and credentials to ensure good outcomes. Care is individualized to best treat each client's needs. Different treatment modalities are provided and include, Ambulatory Detoxification, Day/Evening Outpatient Services and Aftercare. Client care is delivered in a fiscally responsible fashion.*

*Our primary goal is to discharge clients who contribute to their families, communities and nation by desiring and working for life-long sobriety.*

## Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms

By: James L. Hinzman

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October 14, 2003, Athens Area Commencement Center became a private Ambulatory Detoxification and Intensive Outpatient Treatment Program. Until this time, we were known as The Commencement Center of Athens Regional Medical Center.

Over the years in working in Chemical Dependency, I have watch drugs come and go for the exception of alcohol. In the 1980's and 1990's it was cocaine and alcohol. In the mid 1990's prescription drug addiction and alcohol become the drugs of choice for most individuals seeking treatment. At this time, most individual's seeking treatment was addicted mostly to Hydrocodone. I remember a Georgia State Narcotics Officer telling me in the 1980's that in the next ten years this country would see an epidemic of Opiate addiction. The Narcotics Officer was accurate with his prediction. Most of the individuals presenting to the Athens Area Commencement Center today for treatment are here for detoxification/treatment from Opiates.

Opiate drug addiction, however, has progressed to another level within the last 6 years. Our young people have loss interest in Lori tabs (10mg) and are now using stronger prescription drugs like RoxyContin and OxyContin. Individuals have progressed from 10 mg pills to 30 mg or 80 mg per pills. The traditional Lori tab 10mg has become boring and our young people have loss their desire for it. Young people have also learned how to break the safety time-release on the pills in order to get a more intense and faster high off the drugs which mimics the effects of the street drug Heroin. As a result, we are seeing more of our young people overdosing or getting into more problems because of their opiate addiction.

It is my prediction that within the next 5 years or so, Heroin will become an old-new fixture or drug in our young people lives. Heroin will become more available and cheaper than the Opiate prescription drugs. As always, more death will result to our loved ones. What a shame to loose our beautiful loved ones to this horror of addiction. One of SAMHSA surveys last year identified that middle school children did not see prescription drugs being addictive or a problem since they came from medical offices and their parent's medicine cabinets. This

makes some sense to the confusion that of our young people may have. We as adults are confused about it also.

Another alarming observation I see today is that having Legal consequences due to alcohol and drug use have become de-sensitized and an accepted norm within the ranks of our young ones. Do you know that the acceptance of out of control use of alcohol and drug is accepted as "normal maturation or adolescence process"? When I was growing up to have legal consequences; i.e. DUI or possessions charges or other legal problems were considered a horrible thing in one's life, however, not today. Alcohol and drug misdemeanor or felony charges have become normalized in our young people's life. Again, I believe I am identifying a collective society rationalization of our young people's use and abuse of alcohol and drug use and it speaks highly to the amount of alcohol and drug use today.

It is time to re-ring the society bell again. We should be alarmed to how our loved ones are being effected by this disease and yet how out of touch we are in treating and making available treatment services. First and foremost, we need to know what prescription drugs our loved ones are becoming sick from: Benzodiazepine (Xanax, Valium, Ativan), Adderall, Fentanyl, Hydrocodone combinations (Vicodin), Hydromorphone (Dilaudid), Methadone (prescribed for pain), Methylphenidate, Morphine, Non-benzodiazepine sleep aids (Lunesta, Ambien), Oxycodone (OxyContin). Also, we need to be aware that addiction is much more reaching of our loved ones with legal drugs than illegal drugs. Reaching our loved ones, we need to understand prescription drugs are addictive and they have both have physical and psychological withdrawal and in those individuals with addiction genetics usually require detox and treatment components to have a normal life. Hopefully, this information is helpful in recognizing the signs and symptoms of addiction in our loved one.

Athens Area Commencement Center is available to answer any other questions pertaining to detoxification and treatment by calling 706-546-7355.

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### If you Cant Say anything nice...

*continued from page 1...*

By: Karen Skinner

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I am unworthy and not valuable as an individual; not lovable or capable of loving, not successful or capable of success. Notice how I have multiple examples of the addiction voice and one of the recovery voice. That is because the addiction voice tries to do most of the talking, which makes it important for me to learn which voice I am listening to.

The voice of recovery, or my relapse prevention voice says, "I need help!" which means I acknowledge I shouldn't do this alone. I need help means I am willing to let others take me where they have successfully gone in an effort to stay sober. I can benefit from running my thoughts by my sponsor as she can help me see when I am thinking from my addiction vs from my recovery.

The relapse process starts in my emotions, where I am not thinking about drinking or using but my emotions are setting me up for a possible relapse. The Big Book

tells me I am restless irritable and discontent, I need to remember this and not be surprised when I find that to be true. The signs of emotional relapse are: anxiety, intolerance, anger, defensiveness, mood swings, isolation, not asking for help, not going to meetings, poor eating habits and poor sleep habits. To prevent relapse I need to recognize that I am in an emotional relapse and change my behavior by starting to take better care of myself. If I don't change my behavior I will become exhausted and will need to escape from that feeling. My sponsor and home group members can help identify these symptoms long before I can see them. Coming back from an emotional relapse is much less painful than coming back from a chemical relapse and cheaper too!! So, think positive thoughts, know you are special and that you are loved and be willing to ask for help. And, if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all!

## What Next?

By: Joe Preston, LCSW, CAC II

Want to take a guess what is the number one prescribed drug in the USA? If you said Hydrocodone (Lortab), you would be right. 121.3 million prescriptions valued at **\$1.78 billion** were filled for it.. That is about three times as many prescriptions as the number two drug, which is for hypertension.

Remember when **THE** drug everyone feared was heroin? Growing up in the 50's and early 60's, all we knew was that drug addicts were people who mainlined heroin. They ended up going cold turkey in some jail cell like we saw on *Dragnet*. Alcohol? That wasn't a drug. Marijuana had a compelling mystique about it but we didn't know anybody who had really smoked it until friends started coming back from Vietnam. LSD was still legal and was being used by psychiatrists to understand their schizophrenic patients. Drugs were just not a real problem in my world. Sure, some truck drivers took goofballs, footballs or bennies, but we weren't really sure what they were or what they did. We just heard that they were bad. There were some vague rumors about an occasional doctor who "had a problem" whatever that meant. There were the local winos or town drunks but everyone knew that they were just sorry. We knew very little about drugs.

In the late 60's, drugs were very much in the news. Pot was seen, depending on one's camp, as being either the Evil Spawn of the Devil or as a beneficent plant that would change society for the better. (I held the latter view.) Mother's Little Helpers (Valium) were song topics. Cocaine, we were told, was not addictive, only "psychologically dependence building". Society still did not think of alcohol as a drug. "Speed Kills" was a slogan that came out of the methamphetamine epidemic that ended the Summer of Love. Society was becoming more aware of alcohol as addictive and something for which there was help. Pharmaceutical companies came out with drug after drug said to be non-addicting: Librium, Valium, Xanax, Demerol, Talwin etc. One after another, addicts found them and fell in love!

Then came the 80's! Cocaine was on the rise in popularity and society began hearing that it was indeed addictive. Freebase became crack and cocaine became the number one drug seen in treatment centers. Lord, the counselors hated to see folks like me come in the door. Cocaine addicts were a different breed of addict indeed. Over the years the most popular drugs of abuse have changed over and over. David Smith, MD, founder of the Haight Ashbury Free Clinic, pointed out these trends. From stimulants like cocaine to tranquilizers and other downers to methamphetamine to opiates, on and on. The relative constants have been alcohol and marijuana. Pot today is sometimes 20% THC. That makes it a way different drug than that stuff from the 70's.

We continue to see trends. Perhaps one generation of user learns from the mistakes of their older siblings or their parents, and avoids a particular drug, only to become addicted to another. "So, what's the point, Joe?" I suspect we ain't seen nothin' yet. There is lots of

buzz about there being a need to legalize marijuana for medical uses. Maybe so. It seems to have some value there. Certainly there have been too many people sent to prison over marijuana. But once that camel gets its nose under the proverbial tent flap, where do we stop? Do we really need another legal social intoxicant in this country? I have known quite a few people who never tried pot because it is illegal. Would some of them have become addicted? What are the implications for the recovering community? What about the person who smokes a couple of bowls of Hydro, Gainsville Green or Indica on top of a few beers. I wonder how well they will drive. The long term medical and social implications, as well as those for recovering people are huge. I hope we are all up to the challenge. Get ready!

Joe Preston, LCSW, CAC II

## Athens Area Commencement Center

### *Annual Open House*

I can not believe that another year has pasts since Athens Area Commencement Center became a private Ambulatory Detoxification and Intensive Outpatient Treatment Program. We continue to have a vision of community service and a desire to make a difference in the lives of addicted individuals, families, and a difference in the community in which we live.

I always describe Athens Area Commencement Center as the best "sleepiest" program in the country. Our Aftercare continues to be attended well each week. Aftercare becomes one of the most important outcome measures that we have. Aftercare is the level of care designed to prevent relapse or a program of Relapse Prevention.

I want to express gratitude to my staff for their dedication and tireless work with addicted individuals and their families. Athens Area Commencement Center is successful because of my staff's desire of wanting to make a difference in the addicted individual and our community.

I want to express also my gratitude of thanks to the volunteers that help us with the mundane daily functioning of Athens Area Commencement Center. To all the volunteers that donate their time and energy to clean windows, restrooms, answer telephones, water plants and to do whatever needs to be done.....THANK YOU and we need your help.

PLEASE COME TO OUR OPEN HOUSE FOR  
CELEBRATION OF RECOVERY  
HEAVY HORS D'OEUVRES AND SOBER DRINK.

**Open House will be:  
December 10, 2009  
6:00 until 8:00p  
RSVP**

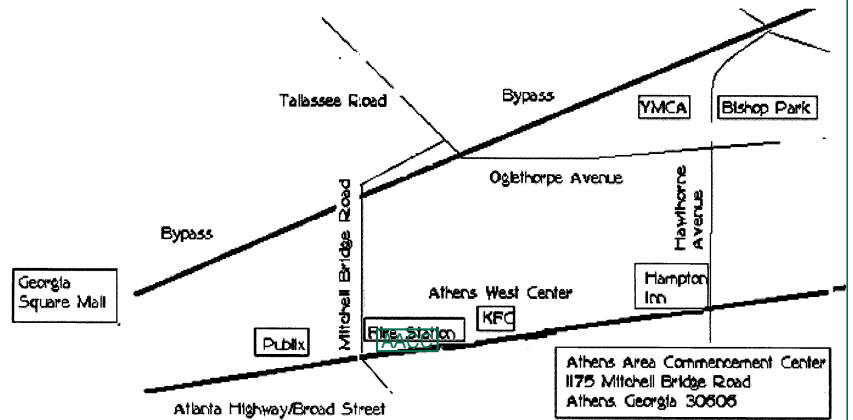
*Happy and safe Holidays!*

# Athens Area Commencement Center Staff are Certified or Licensed to treat Addictions

*All our Staff is qualified to treat  
the brain disease of addiction.*

*Each one of our staff demonstrates  
the knowledge to treat clients with  
the diagnosis of Alcohol / Drug  
Dependence*

**Athens Area Commencement Center  
is located near the intersection of the Atlanta  
Highway (Broad Street)  
and Mitchell Bridge Road.**



## ATHENS AREA COMMENCEMENT CENTER *A Place of Healing...*

Alcohol and Drug Treatment for Over 25 Years.



*“We can't make quitting easy  
but we can make it possible”*

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