



HLM ROSC Meeting Notes

March 28, 2023

Attendance: 21 - Neesha Stringfellow, Wesley Stringfellow, Dr. Alice Crawford, Dr Crawford's Guest, Tash Leak, Kristen Dean, Geoffrey Leak, Dr. Ruby Powell, Jenny Gonzalez, Ben Rudolph, Shawn Smith, Kennedy Leak, Kathleen Burke, Cynthia Tyler, Ali Rogers, Amy Bechtol, Rachel Jones, David Crawford, Deborah Anthony, Jeanette, Danielle Bonds

Lived Experience: 4

Location: iCan Dream Center - 8501 Maple Creek Dr Suite 200, Tinley Park, IL 60477

Welcome/Prayer:

Kristen Dean

Dream Big Vision Maker:

Neesha Stringfellow

All members part took in the sharing their vision. If you had limitless amounts of funds and time and can create a recovery program, what would you do and what would you spend it on? Recovery early childhood. Remote facility for recovery intentionally to not be around things you know, with scholarships available to get back on your feet. Rehab housing.

Upcoming Events:

Jenny Gonzalez

NK Artistry - prom dress giveaways
4/10 Braid wood Coalition Meeting
4/22 Recovery in ARMs
4/25 Grundy county Meeting
4/25 Will County Prevention coalition
April 25th - council meeting zoom
May 23rd - council meeting zoom
6/17 - Walk a thon
6/27 - Hybrid Council Meetin iCan Dream Center
7/28 - Movie in Mind
Celebrating families to start in summer
December Banquet Fundraiser 11/26

Kathleen Burke added more dates to our upcoming events

Kristen Dean also added Narcan Training soon with Kathleen Burke

Intro to Amy Bechtol:

West Tennessee faith based community coordinator with Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse. She works with the faith community across 20 counties. Building partnerships, raising awareness and improving access to wellness and recovery resources. Amy holds a master's degree in clinical psychology from East Tennessee State University and a mass social psychology from the University of Florida. She has published peer reviewed research articles in the area of health related attitude and behavior change and remains passionately interested in change motivation and mental health related stigma, especially in the faith community.

Amy Bechtol:

I AM and I CAN

Recovery farm and village.

So every time I talk I try to be encouraging and I try to spur us on to continue the work and not to grow weary in doing good. So 20 years ago, I actually wanted to die. I did not believe that I had anything good to contribute. And there was a lot that was pretty ever present in my life. And it was that everybody would be better off. If I was just gone. I felt like I was too much for everybody unless I wasn't enough for somebody. And it was a constant back and forth and that had to do with the fact that I had undiagnosed bipolar disorder. And ironically, while I was in the throes of trying to get that under control and trying to figure out how to survive with that, and while I was dealing with an alcohol addiction, I earned a master's degree in clinical psychology. So I was actually teaching psychology at the collegiate level and skipping the addiction chapter because nobody really wants to talk about that and not seeing the diagnosis in myself, because I just believe there was something really wrong with me. And it couldn't be explained. It was just a terrible flaw. And it's interesting, I think, you know, that we have these narratives, and this is why I'm talking about I am statements, we tell ourselves these things and often we tell ourselves these things in secret. We don't share them with somebody and so we have them alone. And we walk around with that lie and it influences our whole life. So until we are able to find community until we're able to pull that out from the darkness and put it into the light. It can't be touched. It can't be corrected. It can't be dealt with. So eventually, I got to the point with all of that struggle that I just wanted to give up. I was so tired and this was actually at the end of a Ph. D program. I was at the University of Florida and working on a PhD in social psychology. And I took my qualifying exam and I failed it. I couldn't even concentrate I wrote down answers. And our major professor team said they're correct, but they're not creative. They're not PhD level responses. They're very elementary. And so I was devastated. And I didn't want to live anymore, and I was done. But when I went back to my apartment after taking the exam, I got ready to take a lot of pills. And I heard just in my mind just exploded with beloved and it was an answer to the question of who I was. And it was God claiming me for his own. And I believed him. And it wasn't just because it was that particular moment but it was because when I was 14

years old, I had a Sunday school teacher who gave me a piece of paper that had my name on it, Amy and then right below it was the meaning of my name, which is beloved. And I will never forget that I looked at that and I thought my Sunday school class, whatever. And if you any of you guys have worked with teenagers, you know that whatever, whatever there were some are rollin. But it was really, you know, there was a lot of self hatred that was going on at that time, and I just, I wouldn't have done it. I believe the opposite. But for some reason I kept that piece of paper. And I'm sure and I still she is still living and I know her. I have talked to her and told her how important this was to me now, but I'm sure at the time she thought that kid, you know, she probably felt discouraged. She sure didn't see any lights come on. When she handed that to me. But in that moment, when I was 28 years old,

all those years later, that just came to me as an alternative to the law. And God showed me that and the seeds that she planted all those years before popped out of the soil. And I tell this story pretty much every time I'm allowed to because I want those of us who are in recovery work to understand that the seeds we plant actually often are going to come to fruition but they may not right then, but we keep at this work. Also in that story, I want you guys to notice that there was a connection that was made. And that while that connection was when I was 14 years old, you know and my teacher was willing to connect with me at that point, and I didn't connect back there was still she was reaching for me and it took her words, sprinkled with God's words in the Holy Spirit later to kind of make something amazing happen. So all of your dreams just about it included community and connecting with people. And that's such an important part of recovery. We cannot figure out who we are and what we can do by ourselves. This is why God says don't forsake the fellowship. It's not because you're bad if you don't go to church on Sunday, it's because he knows we need each other to figure out who we are and what we can offer. So whether it is in this amazing hotel complex thing that you're dreaming up or on my little farm or in really cool. Athletic complexes are different things that y'all were all talking about a college classes or retraining your workforce development or whatever. The point of all of that is that human beings need to feel like they are someone who has something good to give and they need to feel like they are contributing to something. And that is what I do in my work often is encourage the faith community to press into those I am and I can statements, and there's so many amazing different ways to do that. And if for some of you, I want to talk just real quick as I'm kind of closing this up about what I do to kind of inspire you as you guys keep dreaming big and don't lose those lists. I think it's amazing and going back to those and thinking about what can we do in the community and how can we engage with the rest of the faith community and other ministries and reach out for those partners and all all of those kinds of things. So what I'm always speaking to groups about is understanding how vital especially the faith community can be in helping to shape I am and I can statements for people, whether there's somebody who's homeless whether it's somebody struggling with substance use disorder,

whether it's somebody who is in the throes of mental illness, whatever it is, if we can teach them their worth, if we can meet them where they are, and love them just like they are and help build them up and empower them. And help them believe that they are somebody then show them that they're making an impact and give them ways to show their strengths, be strengths focused and all those kinds of things. Then we can change things we can create healing communities. It's not rocket science. It can start out very small in a recovery meeting and become a whole recovery village. And the faith community is positioned better to do this than any other group because we already know how to love them people we already know how to give grace, and we're grateful for the grace we've been given. And so that just overflows and I can hear that in your group and you're such a sweet family, I can tell that you guys really have a heart for this and that you're dreaming big. So I just want to encourage you to definitely reach out and find those other people link arms and find ways to show people that they're worth recovering that they can recover and then give them opportunities dream about ways that they can go ahead and they can make contributions and that they can help other people find recovery as well. I see my miracles every single day. And I see groups dream about the things that you guys just talked about and get funding for those even small. Some of the little bitty rural churches that I work with across West Tennessee will go for grants and create recovery housing, or create a warming station. Somebody was talking about a shower station for the homeless community. I've seen people get funding for those kinds of things. But what I haven't seen is anybody do it by themselves. It usually takes us finding out you know go into those events and setting up the table at the record at the resource fair that you were talking about or doing other kinds of outreach is joining the other coalition's you know and letting God work through community because that's what he likes best. Now as to find ways to belong and be empowered and to make those big differences. So that's really what my recovery story was all about was connection. Connection is the opposite of addiction. And I would go so far as to say that connection is the opposite of all the bad things. We need each other we need to connect and in that way as we empower and encourage and equip each other than we empower and encourage and equip others and it just grows and it grows and it grows. And I'm really excited about the work you guys are doing. And I did want to tell you as I close to that I am consulting with your larger group, so I'm really loving Illinois right now. And I'll probably be at other events and doing other things and I might just be there physically. So I hope I get to meet some of you in person. And I thank you for letting me share just a quick word of encouragement about connecting around i am and i can and i look forward to hearing all the ways that you guys are going to do that and I want to revisit your lists and find out how your dreams came true. Appreciate you guys.
Thank you

Q&A with Amy Bechtol:

Closing Prayer:

Kristen Dean