

Vol 3: February 2019

The Addiction Studies Alumni Club (ASAC) e-newsletter bringing you industry updates, alumni spotlights, and other pertinent information of our industry.

### Our Mission

The purpose of ASAC is to help alumni and students that are currently enrolled in the addictions studies program at Governors State University, keep abreast of all of the changes that affect those that are in the field of addictions, and support the mission and objectives of the Governors State University Alumni Association and of Governors State University.

### President's Message



The past year has been both exciting and challenging for The Governors State University Addiction Studies Alumni Club. We've gone through significant growth, both as an organization and in our ability to make a positive impact. At our 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Recovery Walk, we watched as more and more people, students and organizations got involved, including a number of new partners who directly feed into the communities that we serve. We welcomed new vendors, business leaders, healthcare agencies, faith leaders, parents, and the youth themselves—all coming to GSU for a shared mission. We welcomed new volunteers to serve on our Board of Directors, and we received a renewed commitment from our Faculty Liaisons to continue sharing our tools and resources with current students. Our members want to make a real impact, and to do so, they challenge one another to implement comprehensive, proven prevention strategies for lasting environmental change.

Local agencies and community members donated time, gift cards, catering and money to support our mission. Generous grants from the Trent Bartolomucci Foundation, The Melissa Kay Solomon Scholarship, and The Gregory J. Hand Scholarship helped to offset academic costs for current students looking to make an impact in the field of Addiction Counseling.

The GSU Foundation enabled us to benefit from those community donations to Celebrate Recovery in September and to host several educational workshops throughout the year.

With all this support and collaboration, GSU ASAC, brought evidence-based workshops to our community, and encouraged consistent growth to ensure sustainability. In other words, we built a strong foundation while continuing our work to protect our alumni, students and community

members from the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. for Americans under 50, Drug Overdose. As you read our accomplishments, we hope you feel as much pride in our club as we do and encourage our goals for 2019. We also hope that you are inspired to join our efforts and be part of the exciting accomplishments still to come. It is an honor to partner with the talented volunteers and GSU staff who have joined our commitment to reduce substance use in our communities.

Sincerely, Jamelia Hand

## Alumni Spotlight – Joseph S. Thomas, MHS, CADC, CARS



### ***“Tell us about yourself”***

I am a Certified Assessment and Referral Specialist, Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor C.A.R.S., CADC and Program Manager for Family Guidance Centers/Branden House. After I graduated from High School in 1978. I enlisted in the U.S. Army due to the lack of job opportunities available in my hometown, Tuscaloosa, AL. I also wanted to see the world and was honorable discharged after 3 years of active duty and 6 years of reserve duty. Post discharge, I returned home I still had trouble finding employment and this created a major change in my life where I began to make bad choices to survive. As a result of those poor choices, I began using drugs/alcohol to make the pain go away.

Before I realized what was happening, I was ordered into the criminal justice system. Post release, my drug use continued and I got into trouble again and sentenced to 3 months in Cook County Jail. Upon my release, I started using again, arrested for a 12<sup>th</sup> time and sentenced to 18 months T.A.S.C (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities) probation.

I stopped using drugs on March 27, 1991 where I successfully completed the program in 1992.

I got my life back and begun school at Prairie State College. I received my Associate of Arts Science Degree in Mental Health/Substance Use and began working as a C.A.R.S. I later received my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice Studies then continued my education to receive a Masters of Health Science in Addiction Studies from GSU in 2009. On August 19, 2015 the Circuit Court of Cook County Expunged and Sealed my criminal records. It has been 27 years since I used drugs or alcohol, thanks to God, my Wife, Judges, My Probation Officer, Family, Friends and Loved Ones, my life is rich and full of unlimited possibilities. My role now is to show some compassion to those who are facing where I have been and being in this field is my way of giving back.

### ***“Tell us about your time at GSU”***

I enrolled in Criminal Justice Programs to find out how the system works and to be able to help others. I had great educators, great mentors and during my time in the program, I was faced with family trauma. My professors were very supportive of me. My advisors were warm, acceptable and I could call any of them on the phone whenever I had questions or concerns.

### ***“What was your motivation to join the Addiction Studies Alumni Club (ASAC)”***

During my time in the MHS program, a strong bond was created. I met many people that are now friends. I wanted to keep that bond and bring my experiences to my work with clients. It has given me a platform for giving. We help people through scholarships and partnerships within our communities. Clients are coming to GSU and enrolling as students, peer recovery specialists, even MHS degrees. Our members are executives and

business owners. GSU raised us and now we get to give back and inspire change. We were once students and we keep coming back to GSU.

***“What should students be doing to prepare them for a career in Substance Use Disorders”***

Students should learn the business of our field and how it operates. They need to understand our business on the Federal Level, State and Local Level. Advocacy is important right now. This will position them to pursue federal opportunities. They need to “step outside” of the classroom and interact with peers and go to presentations. Our future is virtual treatment. We need to get prepared for this and equip ourselves now.

***“Can you recommend a book that our readers might benefit from reading?”***

Mentor: A Simple Story of Overcoming Challenges and Achieving Significance- The Kid and the CEO by Tom Pace and Walter Jenkins

Interviewer: Jamelia Hand. For more information about Joe Thomas, please send him an email at [jthomas@fgcinc.org](mailto:jthomas@fgcinc.org)

ASAC will highlight a GSU Addictions Studies alumni in each edition of the ASAC newsletter. If you would like to self-nominate to be included in the newsletter, please e-mail [alumnirelations2@govst.edu](mailto:alumnirelations2@govst.edu) and include your work history, information about you, what you’ve been up to and any other information you feel is important. Our newsletter review committee will review all applications and submit their recommendations for inclusion.

**Organization Spotlight –  
TASC, Inc. (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities)**

Governors State University's Addiction Studies Alumni Club prides itself in being at the forefront of the Addictions field. In this Organization Spotlight we had the honor of interviewing Pam Rodriguez and Daphne Baille of TASC, one of our ongoing supporters, to learn more about their organization and why they continue to support Governors State University and The Addiction Studies Alumni Club.



***“Tell me about your roles”***

Pam- I grew up in Minnesota, and came to Chicago to study criminal justice, juvenile justice and social work. I was introduced to TASC in graduate school, where I worked with Melody Heaps, TASC’s founder, who began her career as a community organizer on the West Side of Chicago in the 1970’s. With her mentorship, I became a full-time employee in 1982, and so I’ve been with TASC for 37 years now. I grew up with and learned with TASC, working across the spectrum of social justice and community issues, including advocacy, policy, public education, HIV, direct services, and the list goes on... As just one example of how direct services and policy intertwine, we developed the Sheridan Correctional Facilities Treatment and Community Reentry Program, which has reduced recidivism rates by 44% among those who complete the program. Based on our experience in connecting justice systems to community-based treatment, I have been able to travel the world and share what we do at TASC, how to accelerate learning and learn from our community, national and international partners.

Daphne- I've been with TASC for 30 years, often behind the scenes supporting those who are delivering our direct services, policy, training, and consulting work. As TASC has evolved, so too have methods of communication. We have many services at TASC, and our aim is for our voices to be unified about our mission and purpose, which is to build a healthier, safer, and more just society. We reached more than 44,000 people in justice, corrections, child welfare, and health systems across Illinois last year. Because of that, there's a constant exchange of information in our direct services, our consulting arm, our policy work. Our clients are affected not just by direct services, but by public policies and by the systems with which they interact. That's why we advocate on all these levels.

***"You've told me about the many TASC services, what's your focus?"***

TASC is a responsive, innovative organization. At our core, we are focused on behavioral health and justice. Our goal is to move people who have substance use disorders out of systems and into well-being in the community. Our work is in the court system, in jails, in prisons, in child welfare systems, and in communities, where we offer specialized case management and wraparound services. We are in the business of "changing hearts and minds."

***"How did TASC get started?"***

TASC was founded in 1976. The White House had developed a program model in 1972 to connect criminal courts to substance use treatment systems. This was at the beginning of the War on Drugs era, and they gave grants for pilot programs called TASC, which stood for Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime. In 1976, TASC was born in Illinois when Melody Heaps (former CEO/President) partnered with the Illinois Dangerous Drugs Commission and the Circuit Court of Cook County to submit a proposal for a pilot program in Cook County. TASC is both a program model and the name of our organization in Illinois. By 1981, we had grown to serve criminal courts across the state of Illinois. From there, we partnered with the Juvenile Justice System to serve youth, and later with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), where work with parents over time to address their substance use disorders and help them reunify with their children. We have implemented several other programs over the past 40 years, and now we are in our fifth decade of justice advocacy and community-based services for people with substance use and mental health disorders. It's very gratifying work. We have stayed true to our mission.

***"What would you like to accomplish this year (2019)?"***

Eighty percent of TASC's justice-involved clients are men who are low-income. The Affordable Care Act expanded Medicaid in Illinois, thereby opening up insurance coverage and access to services to traditionally (only) available to low-income women and children. Substance abuse case management has not been a reimbursable service. Through the 1115 waiver, we have been approved by the federal government and in Illinois as part of a pilot project. Because of this, we will be able to implement the Medicaid Waiver (1115) and increase more access to care for clients. We would also like to continue to increase services and grow our Supportive Release Center, where we provide a bridge for people being released from jail. We help to connect them to services right away and provide support and education between jail and the next place they need to go, such as treatment or

housing. The University of Chicago has been following our program and the research is promising. We trust that our services are helping people and this is a sustainable model.

***“What’s been your experience with Governors State University/Recovery Walk?”***

TASC has been a part of Recovery Month and a national Recovery Month Planning Partner with colleagues across the U.S. who are committed to recovery activities. We have participated with GSU’s Addiction Studies Alumni Club’s Recovery Walk for the past 8 years. We participate as a vendor, and we walk with those celebrating recovery. Our former EVP/COO, Peter Palanca, has been a tireless supporter, always reinforcing the importance of this event. Our staff who have participated love it. We work hard to employ people in recovery, and we also have hired a good number of GSU students to work at TASC. We are also currently working with one of the professors in their research. We appreciate the partnership that we have with GSU.

***“Where is the field of Substance Use Disorders going?”***

Healthcare Integration. SUD professionals must be able to operate in managed care environments. It will be a huge driver for the next 10 years, as will the integration of mental health services. We must be able to operate holistically. Recovery still has much stigma to overcome, particularly in communities of color, but it is also more normalized than ever – in society, we routinely see and hear the faces and voices of recovery. In the media too, recovery is beginning to be addressed differently. It is now being recognized as a health issue. We also actively work to address stigma and discrimination, and rectify barriers to recovery.

***“What can we do to get students ready?”***

Teaching and placement methods must be adapted to fit an ever-changing treatment landscape. Students need real world experience, including understanding evidence-based practices and how to properly document their services. Finally, students and professionals working in the field must be prepared to continually learn, grow and invest in themselves and our field. They must keep learning post-graduation, and go outside of their field of study to get a broader view of society. This includes reading and studying topics outside of their expertise and finding good mentors.

***“What book or reading materials would you recommend?”***

Pam- “The Harvard Business Review”

Daphne- “Just Mercy” by Bryan Stevenson

For more information about TASC, please visit [www.tasc.org](http://www.tasc.org)

## ASAC Workshops

ASAC presents workshops several times a year to provide continuing education credits to alumni and community members, help raise awareness about addictions and to raise funds for ASAC sponsored scholarships.

In 2018, Samantha Berta, LCSW, CADC, and Program Director of Symetria Recovery in Joliet, presented on the topic of *Medication Assisted Treatment: OTP versus OBOT Models of Care*. Alumni, students and others from all over the region attended this workshop.

### **UPCOMING WORKSHOPS:**

Saturday, May 4, 2019 from 9 to 12, "Critical Thinking" presented by Dave O'Donnell

- How do we think the way we do?
- What is Critical Thinking?
- What is poor thinking?
- What are characteristics of a critical thinker?
- What does it take to become a critical thinker?
- Use of Critical Thinking in the Addiction Field
- Why is Critical Thinking a clinical necessity?

To register visit [www.govst.edu/addiction-studies-workshop](http://www.govst.edu/addiction-studies-workshop) or print and mail the attached form with your check

### **Save the Date:**

Saturday, October TBD from 9 to 12, Adolescents, Families and Substance Abuse Disorders, to be presented by Peter Palanca.

### **Do You Have a Topic You'd Like to Present?**

GSU ASAC is calling for workshop volunteer presenters that offer unique educational experiences for Addiction and Social Work focused students and professionals. We are seeking current and relevant information for the topics below:

**Practice Management & Technology:** Health Information Technology (HIT), Electronic Health Records (EHR), Certification/Licensure, Patient Retention, Billing/Insurance, Social Media, Teletherapy, and Ethical, Legal, and Liability Issues.

**Co-Occurring Disorders:** Integrated Treatment, Changes from DSM-IV to DSM-5, Mental Health Disorders, Trauma, and ICD 10.

**Psychopharmacology:** Neurobiology of Addiction, Pharmacotherapy/Medication-Assisted Treatment, Opioids, Alcohol, Marijuana, Sedatives, Stimulants, Synthetic Drugs, Tobacco/Nicotine, and Designer Drugs.

**Advocacy:** Policy/Regulatory Issues, Affordable Care Act (ACA), and How to Advocate.

**Clinical Skills:** Evidence-based Practices, Case Studies, Relapse Prevention, Treatment Planning, Screening & Assessment, Counseling Theories, The ASAM Criteria, and Promising Practices.

**Cultural Sensitivity:** Introduction to Cultural Humility, Addiction-Specific Issues Involving LGBTQ, Racial/Ethnic Groups, Gender, Spirituality, Low-Income/Homeless, and Veterans/Military.

**Process Addictions:** Gambling Addiction, Sexual Addiction, Internet Addiction, and Eating

**Education:** Topics that seek to enhance the quality of training and education in addiction studies, to disseminate professional knowledge and share ideas regarding addiction studies, students and scholarship in the field of addiction studies with a creative evidence-based focus. The topics can be as broad as national policy level discussions, and as narrow as creative improvement of a single course-originality is key.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer workshop presenter, please forward your speaker bio, topic and presentation outline for consideration to [lhealy@govst.edu](mailto:lhealy@govst.edu) and [jamelia.hand@gmail.com](mailto:jamelia.hand@gmail.com) as soon as possible.

## Schedule of Events



### **Save the Date - 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk for Recovery – Saturday, September 17, 2019.**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Governors State University Addiction Studies Alumni Club's Recovery Walk our best yet!

More than 200 individuals came out for the Walk on September 15, 2018. It was a glorious day! After a light breakfast was served during registration, the program began with Peter Palanca of TASC welcoming treatment providers, alumni, current students, professors, individuals currently in recovery programs and others in recovery. Keynote speak, George Ochsenfeld, entertained attendees with his words of wisdom, outing his experience as a leader and mentor to individuals in recovery and those still struggling. Ashley O'Malley spoke from the heart about the loss of her brother to addictions and how it affected her and her family. Tony and Kim Bartolomucci presented their scholarship to a GSU Student. President of the Addiction Studies Alumni Club, Jamelia Hand, spoke about the Club and the ASAC Scholarship. Mr. Palanca motivated and organized everyone for the Walk. The group returned to music and pizza, generously provided by Chicago Dough Company of Richton Park and Aurelio's Crete. Because of all who participated, the Walk was a success!

For sponsor information call Alumni Relations at 708.534.4128

ASAC Upcoming Schedule:

ASAC Meeting: Thursday March 28 at 6 pm in the Cafeteria Annex at GSU

Workshop: Saturday, May 4, 2019 "Critical Thinking Applied to the Addiction Field"

ASAC Meeting: Thursday, July 11, 2019 at 6 pm in Cafeteria Annex at GSU (Recovery Walk Planning)

8<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk for Recovery – Saturday, September 17, 2019

Workshop: Saturday, October – to be announced – “Adolescents, Family, and Substance Abuse Disorders.”

## Join ASAC

ASAC membership is available to all GSU Alumni interested in the field of Addictions. There is no charge to join ASAC. Student memberships are also available. For more information, contact Jamelia Hand at [Jamelia.hand@gmail.com](mailto:Jamelia.hand@gmail.com) or [lhealy@govst.edu](mailto:lhealy@govst.edu)