



victories

VICTORY PROGRAMS **OPENING DOORS TO HOPE, HEALTH AND HOUSING**

A Journey of Family in Recovery Ed and Stacey's Story

ED AND STACEY have a long history of addiction and sobriety. They met at an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting where Stacey was getting help for alcohol addiction and Ed for heroin. They owned a home together where they were raising their two sons, now 8 and 9 years old. Ed owned his own business. They attended AA meetings regularly and had a strong support network of

friends, sponsors and family. During their six years as a couple Ed and Stacey had never used together, even though they each stumbled in their own recovery. In 2006, they began doing cocaine together. In 2009, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) intervened and placed their children in foster care. That September, Ed and Stacey became part of the Victory

Programs community, where they are currently thriving in their respective recoveries.

When they lost custody of their children, Stacey knew immediately that she had to get into treatment. After initially completing the 4-6 month program at Joelyn's Family Home, a recovery program for women, Stacey entered Victory Programs' Shepherd House.

Ed had originally entered into Victory House, but was transferred to New Victories to be closer to Stacey. "We didn't know any better," said Ed. "We thought being closer together would make our recovery easier, when we really needed to be working on our sobriety on our own." Shortly after, the couple relapsed.

In April 2010, Stacey returned to Joelyn's Family Home where



“I’m becoming the man my father raised me to be,” said Ed. “It feels good to be living a healthy life, a life surrounded by my family.”

A Journey of Family in Recovery

Ed and Stacey's Story (continued from page 1)

she spent eight months before entering into a housing program for women reuniting with their children in Webster, Mass. Initially things were going well for Stacey. She had a job, was going to AA meetings, and was finally reunited with her children, but her living situation made staying sober difficult. "I was still using when I would come to visit Stacey and the kids," Ed admitted, "and drugs were everywhere in the complex she was living in." Stacey is the first to admit that falling back into using cocaine was no one's fault but her own. "It's no excuse for relapsing, but the temptation was so great, drugs were so easy to get, and we didn't have the support system we had built in Boston." In January they were told that DCF was once again placing their children in foster care. "Those were the darkest days of my life," said Stacey.

Stacey admits going back to treatment was hard. "I was so embarrassed to call Joelyn's again, but I needed to put that aside and get back." The couple made the call on March 21 and Stacey was back in the program the very next day. "I really

jumped right back into recovery. I got a job, went to meetings, got a sponsor." Ed also returned to Victory Programs, but four days into his program he relapsed and almost died. Stacey and Ed soon had powerful realizations that put them on the path to recovery that they're traveling today. They came to the understanding that they needed to go through recovery for themselves. "The first two times I went through Joelyn's, I did it to get my kids back," Stacey said. "This time I knew I needed to do it for me." Ed's revelation occurred in the hospital after an overdose. "I had a spiritual moment. I realized I had to make my own health my number one priority. I had been trying to take care of other people and had not been taking care of myself. The only way I would be able to work at being a better husband to my wife and a better parent to my sons was if I was alive and sober."

Victory Programs offered Ed another chance. If he could complete a 28-day detox program, they would welcome him back to Victory House,

and Ed jumped at the chance. "I took every opportunity to go to meetings, to take full advantage of everything I could," he said.

Ed and Stacey are so thankful to Victory Programs for never giving up on them through their journey. "They care so much," said Stacey. "They never gave up on us." When Ed talks about why he thinks Victory Programs is different from other agencies, he first mentions the staff: "They try so hard when they see you're trying. They want to see you successful in your recovery. At other programs they would do drug testing and kick you out if you failed a test." All that approach did for him, he said, is make him plan out when he could get high and not test positive. "It wasn't the right frame of mind for recovery. It didn't prepare you to go out into the world where those types of tests and punishments weren't going to be there." At Victory Programs, there is no drug testing. Instead, the organization promotes honesty through recovery. If you're struggling, you can talk to your counselor. "It helped me to live a more honest life," said Ed.

"I feel like I've studied for the test. When I go back into the world I will be ready to face the challenges because I've studied."

Stacey and Ed just celebrated their sixth month of sobriety. Stacey has completed the program at Joelyn's, is currently living at home with her parents, and has been reunited with her two sons. She is hoping to be able to get into a program that will allow her to continue her recovery with her children. Ed is also looking to continue his recovery and is interviewing with programs. He is thrilled to get to see his children every weekend and finds joy in being able to say goodnight to them on the phone and wish them a good day at school. Their path is not an easy one, which they acknowledge, but they say their relationship is stronger than it's ever been and they're hopeful for a future free of drugs. "I'm becoming the man my father raised me to be," said Ed. "It feels good to be living a healthy life, a life surrounded by my family."

HOLIDAY EVENTS

Celebration of Life Thanksgiving Dinner

Tuesday, November 20 at the Hynes Convention Center, Boston

Celebration of Life is the Boston Living Center's signature event complete with a free, full-course Thanksgiving dinner and musical entertainment for people living with HIV and their loved ones. There are many opportunities to volunteer at the Celebration of Life! Visit www.vpi.org for more information on how you can get involved!

Homes for the Holidays

Thursday, December 6 at Club Café, Boston

Each December the Homes for the Holidays event celebrates leaders in the field of AIDS housing with the Peter Medoff Award. The award is given to exemplary leaders and advocates for their efforts in creating, sustaining, and progressing funding resources for affordable housing for people with HIV/AIDS in our communities. Homes for the Holidays is a joyous event in the spirit of the holidays with good food, festive refreshments, and a silent auction. Tickets will be on sale soon at www.vpi.org.



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Building a healthier Boston Living Center

IT'S CLEAR HOW vital Elissa Goldman's role as Nutritional Services Manager is when she sits in the BLC dining room. Every few minutes a BLC member stops by the table to say hello or ask for advice. One member, trying to lower his iron levels, brought over a can of V8 juice to ask if it was a smart drink choice (the answer: one cup would be fine).

With an undergraduate degree in Health Sciences from Ithaca College and a MS degree from Simmons College, Elissa knew she wanted to be a nutritionist since high school. She brought her passion for healthy eating and living to the BLC just under a year ago. In a short period of time, Elissa has implemented a host of new programs aimed at improving the health and wellness of the BLC members, and since the BLC's merger with Victory Programs in March, Elissa's role has only expanded.

Since the Boston Living Center was built around its meals program, providing free Monday night dinner and lunches Tuesday through Friday, Elissa's first task

was to work with the BLC's Director of Nutritional Services, Michael Bacon, to assess the 6-week meal rotation and ensure all of the meals were crafted to optimize nutrition. "If we had a meal that contained a starchy vegetable (i.e. corn or peas), we looked at replacing it with a less starchy vegetable like a green or carrots," Elissa said. "For our vegetarian option each day I looked at the 'fake meat' options and tried to replace them with vegetable-based options."

In addition to the daily meals, Elissa has made it a priority to educate members on how to make healthy choices on their own. She has engaged members in a 6-week, hands-on cooking class using the Cooking Matters® program, which just graduated 13 members. She has taken members on grocery store tours, giving tips on how to spot the healthiest options and how to read nutritional labels. September unveiled "BLC Cooks Up," a cooking and nutrition class with an original class curriculum designed by Elissa and made possible through a grant from Gilead Sciences, Inc.

Elissa now travels to Victory Programs' residential homes working with Program Directors to offer additional nutrition services to clients in recovery from substance abuse. Recently, she gave a cooking demonstration to the residents at New Victories showing them how to make chicken kebabs on the grill. At Joelyn's Family Home, she showed the women how to make quiche since they often have a lot of eggs and milk available. "The key to giving these lessons at the recovery homes," she says, "is to teach clients how to be creative and healthy with what they have on hand."

It is clear that Elissa is passionate and excited about the work she does at the Boston Living Center. "Through the programs and health promotion I get to touch so many lives," she says. "It's amazing to play a part in allowing the members and clients to become more educated about how to stay healthy while they're coping with HIV/AIDS and substance abuse recovery."





Bringing color and life to the BLC

LUIZ PENA HAS been a member of the Boston Living Center for more than 10 years, but has been an artist his entire life.

Born and raised in Brazil, Luiz attended the Quinlivar School in Belo Horizonte. "I wasn't very popular as a child," says Luiz. "But when it came to art projects all of my classmates asked me for help. It was something I was really good at."

In 1984, Luiz moved to Boston and does interior painting and excels in faux finishes. His passion, however, lies in his artwork. Some works are serene and relaxing while others are abstract and raucus, but all are explosions of color. Luiz prefers to use oil paints and as he explains his work "Crow in the Light" he lists five separate shades of blue he used to create depth in the painting. "When I was young yellow was my

favorite color," he says, "but as I grew up and painted more and more I love them all equally. Without color you have no life!"

Since being diagnosed and joining the BLC in 1991, Luiz has taken part in the art classes offered by the BLC to work on his craft and takes tremendous pride in showing off his beautiful pieces. "Glimpse of Grace" is hung in the BLC dining room and features a sting ray moving effortlessly across the ocean floor, while a tall ship sails in the distance. Rafael Garcia, the BLC Meals Program Manager, is a particularly big fan of this piece saying, "I love having it here in the dining room. I wish I could buy it!"

In addition to creating his own work, Luiz is now teaching a class in collage in the BLC's art room on Thursdays from 1-3pm for members.



Boston Living Center remembers art teacher Randy Goldberger

ON MAY 14, 2012, the Boston Living Center officially dedicated their art space in memory of a longtime supporter and local sculptor, Randy Goldberger. Randy, who passed away in January 2012, taught art and sculpture classes to members of the BLC and sat on the board of directors for more than 16 years.

Her friend, Andie Finard said, "Randy not only excelled at teaching clay sculpture, she was a wonderful listener, who believed that getting the BLC members to talk and open up, was as important and moving as their art."

The Randy Goldberger Art Studio provides a lovely sunlit space for members to gather and work on art projects from jewelry making to painting to sewing. All art classes are free to members. Thanks to the many donors who made the Randy Goldberger Art Program Fund possible.



My Day at Women's Hope

By Lori Manzelli,
Victory Programs' Communications Coordinator

VICTORY PROGRAMS' WOMEN'S Hope is a short-term program for women struggling with drug and/or alcohol addiction. The women who walk through the door are making their first steps toward recovery, most coming directly from detox programs. Days into their sobriety and having just gone through the physical struggle of ridding their bodies of the chemicals they had become dependent on, the clients at Women's Hope spend their 14-28 days in residence beginning to sort through the emotional toll of addiction. In honor of National Recovery Month in September, I decided to spend a day with the clients at Women's Hope to help shed light on a population for whom many do not have sympathy.

I arrived at the program on a sunny September morning and was warmly greeted by the women at the start of the 9:00 am group meeting, the first of six throughout the day. The morning group used short readings to spark conversation and introspection. The first piece urged the reader to let go of the need to be liked and to focus instead on finding contentment

in one's own self-approval. Some of the women took a cooler "I don't care what anyone thinks about me" approach to the topic, while others struggled with it more. One woman admitted that an abusive relationship left her questioning her own self-worth. "After so many years using," one woman said, starting to cry, "I'm not even sure who I am anymore. How can I accept myself if I don't know who I am?"

During the break between groups, I talked with the residents. One woman told me that her boyfriend graduated from another Victory Programs site and has been her biggest supporter during her recovery. "I was so selfish when I was using," she said. "I was using heroin in front of him even though he is in recovery himself. He told me, 'If you fall down 50 times, I'll pick you up 50 times.'" This is her third time coming to Women's Hope.

Program Director Carla Clements-Shands was kind enough to spend some time with me while the women were at lunch to help me better understand the ins and outs of recovery. I asked her how often the women who come through the program relapse. She told me a client calls to come back around every 30 days. "Look at it like this," she said, "if the doctor tells you to lose 25 pounds - no more cake, no more ice cream, no more sugar - what are the odds that you'll succeed the first time? We dehumanize addiction," she said. "We look at people struggling with addiction and make moral judgments about them. People need to be reminded that addiction is a disease, not a character flaw."

Knowing the increased likelihood that someone struggling with addiction will relapse, Victory Programs keeps an "open door" philosophy. As long as the person seeking help is not a danger to themselves or others, they can always come back to a program. As we talked, a former client looking to come back into the program called. "What do you mean you're not doing so good?" Carla asked the woman on the other end of the line. "What did we talk about before you left?" I listened as she spoke to the client with authority and friendliness, stressing personal responsibility while giving support. She gave the woman on the other end of the phone all the information she needed to get into detox before coming back to the program. "That's how we do it," she said to me. "You have to take the shame out of the process. That's why people come back to our program. There's no shame in getting help." Women's Hope can boast its share of success stories of women completing the

program, getting further treatment, living a sober life, but there is a small level of success in the stumbles as well. "They want to come back. They haven't given up on getting well. They take the program very seriously."

Carla facilitated the final group of the day, the Monday community meeting. There were some concerns about stealing in the house, which need to be addressed. "No one here needs to take anything. All you need to do is ask for help. Everyone in this room has been where you are. Everyone here will help you."

One woman who had been at court the entire day raised her hand. "I need help," she said as she started to cry. "I went to court today and DCF (Department of Children and Family Services) took my son away." There was a loud gasp in the room. Many of the women in the program are mothers themselves and soon almost everyone in the room was in tears. "I could have used today after I found out, but what was the point?" she said. "He's going to spend the night in a strange place with people he doesn't know." Carla used a calm and steady tone as she said, "DCF isn't the end of the world. Remember, there is some good to this. Tonight you know that your son is in a place where no one is using drugs. You're in treatment," she said. "That's a good thing. That's going to help you get him back." The meeting ended not long after that exchange and I headed home.

Carla was right. When people think about addiction, and more specifically people struggling with addiction, we make moral judgments. We have a picture in our mind of what they look like, what type of person they are. We blame them for making bad choices, we decry their selfishness for hurting their families, and we think they're weak because they don't stop using. That day, I met 19 women of different ages and races, from different types of families and socioeconomic backgrounds. I met mothers and grandmothers, daughters and sisters. I listened to them talk about the guilt they felt about stealing from their parents, hurting the people that wanted to help them most. I saw pictures of their children and grandchildren. I saw them learning from each other, leaning on each other. I saw in them my friends, my family, and myself. In one short day I learned that a person's past shouldn't dictate their future. These women are in treatment. They want help. I, for one, would rather spend my time sharing in their hopes for the future instead of judging them for their past. I hope someday others will do the same.



ReVision Urban Farm celebrates its fresh new look

VICTORY PROGRAMS' REVISION Urban Farm in Dorchester was abuzz on Friday, July 20. Staff, neighbors, and supporters strolled about the farm on Fabian Street to commemorate the completion of major renovations. Guests explored the new, year-round greenhouse, the striking concrete amphitheater where the morning's remarks were being held, and enjoyed breakfast in the shade-providing gazebo.

Amid the excitement two young guests stood out. Tarrell Williams, 9, and his sister Artihana Foster, 6, munched on fresh strawberries as their feet crunched against the rock-filled pathways surrounding the planting fields. These young ReVision Urban Farm fans were guests of honor with their

mom, Nicole Lewis. Residents of ReVision Family Home across the street, they were excited to join in the festivities and talk about why the Farm is so important to them. During her remarks Nicole said, "There are many benefits to having an urban farm in the community such as having easy access to vegetables and fruit, using my EBT card at the Farm stand on Blue Hill Avenue to get a 50% discount, and having a nice view in a sometimes not-so-nice city. My kids enjoy planting various things with farm staff and they constantly ask if they can work with them. The farm benefits us all and I'd like to thank the hard working team—Jolie, Sara and Shani—the countless volunteers and the numerous donors for all they've done for me and my family."

Tarrell was given the honor of cutting the ceremonial ribbon surrounded by his sister and mother; Jonathan Scott, Victory Programs' President & CEO; Edith Murnane, Director of Food Initiatives with the City of Boston; State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz; State Representative Russell Holmes; and Jessica del Rosario of the Boston Foundation.

"It's good for my kids to know where their food comes from," said Nicole. The event was a reminder that the Farm is not only a resource for fresh fruits and vegetables, also has an effect on even the youngest residents. With the help and generosity of supporters big and small, the Farm will continue sharing its bounty with the community and beyond for many years to come.

Looking for a way to give back?

Volunteering is one of the many ways you can give back and the best thing about it is it doesn't cost a thing! By volunteering your time at Victory Programs you will have the opportunity to work directly with, or in support of, homeless individuals and families who are also struggling with addiction and chronic conditions such as HIV/AIDS. Volunteer opportunities include: helping at our ReVision Urban Farm by preparing vegetables for the upcoming growing season, serving lunch and/or dinner to our members at the Boston Living Center, or working directly with clients at one of our residential treatment programs. Whatever volunteer opportunity you decide on you are sure to gain invaluable experience and a better understanding of Victory Programs.

Meet our Volunteers:

Rob Fernandez and company, ReVision Urban Farm Volunteers

Rob Fernandez, Vice President at Breckinridge Capital Advisors, was looking for a fun and interactive way for his team to get involved in the community. Rob, who also serves on Victory Programs' Board of Directors, was thrilled to learn that ReVision Urban Farm welcomed corporate groups and jumped at the opportunity to volunteer. He and his team recently set aside their standard to-do lists and spent two days at the farm getting their hands dirty! The group spent time harvesting, cooling, and preparing vegetables for the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, which currently happens at the farm weekly. They assembled CSA boxes and arranged vegetables for the shares, which were later distributed to CSA members throughout the community. "Volunteering at the farm was an incredible experience. I found it very rewarding," says Patrick Araujo-Lipine, an associate at Breckinridge, who was able to incorporate some harvesting tips he learned at the farm at home with his wife in their own garden. Rob believes corporate volunteering is a great way for companies to get out of the office and can be an excellent team building opportunity. "I got to know my colleagues on a different level. It was a lot of fun to support an organization in the city as a group and spend time with coworkers that we

would never really spend time with outside of work. It brought us together as a team."

Dan Zavala, BLC Cyberspace Volunteer



Dan Zavala, a master's candidate studying Library and Informational Science at Simmons College, is an intern at Somerville Community Access Television and volunteers at the History Project which documents LGBT history in Boston. Dan had an interest in learning more about HIV/AIDS while also using his technical skills to teach others and help them develop professionally. He soon found the Boston Living Center, and has been volunteering at the BLC's Cyberspace, a computer lab where members have access to computers and the internet, ever since. "What I like most about volunteering at the BLC is the sense of understanding, accomplishment, and appreciation the members feel when they learn a new technical skill that I am able to teach them," says Dan. Within the few months that Dan has been a volunteer at the BLC, he has helped to create classes where members can learn basic computer skills, Microsoft

programs, and get help with cover letter and resumé writing. "Each time a member shakes my hand I feel that I am making a difference and contributing to their own personal and professional development, as well as my own."

Monica Salas, BLC Meals Program Volunteer

Volunteers are the heart of the meals program at the Boston Living Center, each year helping to serve over 40,000 hot, nutritious meals in a family-style setting to people living with HIV/AIDS. Monica, who is currently studying various applied arts and is considering pursuing a certificate in culinary arts, has been a volunteer of the BLC meals program since 2010. Monica helps set-up our dining room, prepares and serves lunch to our members and helps clean up by washings dishes, pots and pans, and sweeping and mopping floors. "The [BLC] members are lovely and interesting people. I find it really rewarding just to volunteer in the kitchen and help the meal service go smoothly for the members," says Monica. Monica, who used to pass the Boston Living Center on her way to work everyday, was intrigued by the BLC's mission and was eager to get involved any way she could. "There is always such a diverse and fun group of fellow volunteers. Everyone is kind and pulling together for the same purpose. I look forward to it every week."

Jessica Strauss, ReVision Urban Farm Volunteer

Jessica, a retired high school teacher and a full-time professional artist, has been a regular volunteer at ReVision Urban Farm since the summer of 2011. As a farm volunteer, Jessica helps with planting and harvesting vegetables, weeding, turning compost, working with the soil, and cleaning up farm edges for the neighbors. She enjoys seeing the vegetables she helped plant progress every week, but what she enjoys most is working and interacting with the different volunteer groups that come to the farm and feeling the positive energy of Jolie, Shani, and Sara, the ReVision Urban Farm staff. Jessica believes fresh, delicious, local produce is something that shouldn't only be available to the lucky few who are able to have a home garden, but to anyone who would like it. "I love the diverse ways that ReVision [Urban Farm] is serving the community—through positive work for a range of people, through making fresh vegetables more readily available and helping to transform the land and the neighborhood," says Jessica. With the help of Jessica and many other volunteers just like her, the farm is able to continue providing high quality, fresh and nutritious vegetables to all.



"I love the diverse ways that ReVision (Urban Farm) is serving the community... helping to transform the land and the neighborhood."

- Jessica Strauss, *Revision Urban Farm Volunteer*



Victory Programs' Board Chair Elizabeth Dugan with VPI COO & Vice President Jim Pettinelli at the New England Human Services Charity Golf Tournament.

RECENT GIFTS AND GRANTS: HIGHLIGHTS

Thank you!

Because of your generosity, thousands of individuals and families will receive the housing and health services they need to reclaim their lives and get back on their feet.

Bank of New York Mellon Foundation - \$20,000 for the Boston Living Center meals program. Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the Peter E. Strauss Trust

BJ's Charitable Foundation - \$5,000 for Portis Family Home

The Boston Foundation - \$100,000 over two years for ReVision Urban Farm

Cedar Tree Foundation - \$30,000 for ReVision Urban Farm

Citizens Bank Foundation - \$10,000 for Victory Housing on Warren Street

Cabot Family Charitable Trust - \$25,000 for ReVision Urban Farm's 2013 operations

DentaQuest Foundation - \$2,500 unrestricted grant to Victory Programs

The Doe Family Fund - \$15,000 for ReVision Family Home and ReVision Urban Farm

Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation - \$20,000 for event sponsorship and an Out-of-the-Blue Grant

Franklin Square House Foundation - \$76,675 to replace the carpet and floor at Joelyn's Family Home

Gisela B. Hogan Charitable Trust - \$25,000 for the development of ReVision Urban Farm's Tucker Street site

John H. and H. Naomi Tomfohrde Foundation - \$10,000 for ReVision Urban Farm operations

Liberty Mutual Foundation - \$10,000 for Victory Programs' housing sites

MAC AIDS Fund - \$10,000 for the Boston Living Center meals program

New Balance Foundation - \$15,000 for ReVision Urban Farm operations

New England Human Services Charity Golf Tournament - \$3,000 for Victory Programs for participating in their annual tournament

Paul and Edith Babson Foundation - \$10,000 grant for ReVision Urban Farm

The Reebok Foundation - \$5,000 for the Youth Coordinator position of ReVision Urban Farm

Robert Lloyd Corkin Charitable Foundation - \$60,000 over three years for Victory Programs

Stop & Shop Giant Family Foundation - \$2,500 grant for ReVision Urban Farm operating expenses

TJX Foundation - \$4,500 for Portis Family Home

Walmart Foundation - \$25,000 for ReVision Urban Farm

This list includes all donations and grant received since July 2011.



Portis Family Home

ARTWORK



PORTIS FAMILY HOME in Jamaica Plain is a residential family shelter for homeless and very low-income women addressing substance abuse, and their children. Many of the residents may have also experienced domestic violence and are living with other chronic health conditions such as HIV/AIDS. Portis Family Home provides residents with recovery support services and vocational case management as families transition out of the shelter and into more independent and permanent housing settings. At any given time, Portis Family Home can provide a safe, stable and nurturing environment for up to eight families.

We asked the women and children at Portis Family Home to work together on artwork to share with the Victory Programs community.





OPENING DOORS TO HOPE, HEALTH AND HOUSING

965 Massachusetts Avenue Boston, MA 02118

Victory Programs opens doors to recovery, hope and community to individuals and families facing homelessness, addiction or other chronic illnesses.



4 Ways to Support Victory Programs:

- 1 Make a contribution**
Visit www.vpi.org or send donations to:
Victory Programs, Inc.
965 Massachusetts Avenue
Boston, MA 02118
- 2 Donate new items to our clients**
Our clients are always in need of items to start their own homes, specifically linens, toiletries and kitchenware.
- 3 Make a charitable bequest**
Bequests enable supporters to have a lasting impact on our services.
For more information, contact Development at development@vpi.org or (617) 541-0222.
- 4 Spread the word!**
Tell your friends, family and coworkers about our programs and ways they can get involved.

Be sure to check out our updated website, www.vpi.org, to learn more about Victory Programs.

