



Robb's Road to Recovery: A Journey of Resilience, Renewal, and Rediscovery

The path to recovery can be a winding road, fraught with challenges, setbacks, and moments of self-discovery. Robb, a Peer Recovery Coach at Victory Programs' Jamaica Plain Recovery Center (JPRC), knows this all too well. As the first person you meet when you walk into the center, Robb's warm demeanor and welcoming smile belie the depth of experience he brings to his role—experience hard-earned through years of battling his own addiction.

Robb's journey began with an idyllic childhood that took an unexpected turn when his mother fell into addiction. "Life was perfect when I was a kid," Robb recalls. "I had a hard-working dad and a stay-at-home mom. It was just the picture of what you want in life. Then, when I was around five years old, my mother got addicted to drugs and alcohol, and everything changed."

As a curious child, Robb was drawn to the very substances that had disrupted his family. By the age of ten, he was already experimenting with drugs—and Robb truly believed it to be an experiment. "I thought that by trying it, I could use my experience for good. I was going to figure out a way to help people like my mom, somehow, someday," he explains.

As he grew older, Robb's life echoed that of his mother. He spiraled into a decade-long cycle of addiction and recovery attempts, with each setback pushing him further away from those he loved most, including his daughter. The turning point came in 2018 when Robb woke up in a detox center after a blackout. As he was about to sign himself out, something stopped him dead in his tracks: the date. "When they told me it was September 7th, I was stunned," he says. "My grandmother died on that day, and it's the same day as my mother's last relapse. It made me feel like I should stay another day. If I can make this work, it could be my date, too. But it could be a day to look forward to."

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The early days of Robb's recovery were far from easy. His determination to reconnect with his daughter fueled him, but he still felt like he was missing a vital piece. He explains, "I was working hard to prove to my daughter that I was trying. My recovery was more about her than me, which I think she knew. So, I gave up trying to do that. I have to do this for myself. I need to fix whatever I can about me and live for me. Trust that the pieces will fall into place."

Today, Robb has made it his life's mission to help others walking a similar path. As a Peer Recovery Coach, he draws on his experiences to connect with those seeking support at the JPRC. Whether offering a listening ear, sharing his story, or simply being a consistent presence, Robb is determined to help others find their way to recovery. He explains, "I live by this saying [from Paul Shane Spear] that goes, 'As one person, I cannot change the world, but I can change the world of one person.'"



A Message from Sarah Porter, Executive Director

At Victory Programs, we often discuss living and working “in the gray.” It recognizes that things exist in a middle ground between black and white, neither completely one way nor the other. Circumstances can be both good and bad simultaneously. Reasonable people may be in difficult situations, and terrible things can happen to anyone.

Living in the gray means accepting life as a continuous flow. It means there is no hard-and-fast rule we must always follow. Each situation is unique, and we need to respond accordingly. This requires adaptability and flexibility, which are crucial in navigating life’s complexities.

The paths to health, healing, and stability are different for everyone. There is no exact roadmap to ensure success, as what works for some may not work for others. While certain factors may improve outcomes, they are not universally applicable. Our responsibility is to assist others in

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navigating this path and to encourage them to embrace the complexities of life.

Not everyone is equipped to function in this way. Some people find it scary to live in the gray. Some even find it offensive because they believe they must have all the correct responses to the world’s most challenging situations. In the gray area, no universal laws dictate wrong or right. There are no best answers or perfect choices. The only sure thing is that there’s no right path, no absolute truth. Living with this idea is strange. It means constantly inhabiting the unknown. While this strategy can be incredibly empowering for individuals accessing services, it requires insight and empathy from case managers dedicated to empowering each client to find their own stability, recovery, and healing from the traumas of homelessness.

As I think about the recent Grants Pass ruling, which criminalized homelessness, and Massachusetts’ new limits on the family homelessness system leading to children spending nights on the streets, I am reminded of the importance of living and working in the gray, embracing ambiguity. These situations are incredibly complex and don’t have straightforward solutions. Everyone deserves safe, healthy, and stable housing. Yet, unfortunately, not everyone has access to it, often through no fault of their own. Threatening people with arrest when they have no other



options is the epitome of adding insult to injury. I commend our state for its tremendous efforts to house homeless families over the past year; however, I also recognize the limitations. Despite the heartbreaking immediate and long-term impacts, there’s no simple solution or quick fix.

So, for today, we choose to keep going, acknowledge the pain, and respond with urgency and decency in the best ways we know. As an organization and as individuals, we must continue to work towards keeping people alive, acknowledging individuals’ dignity and humanity, creating opportunities for success, and fighting stigma at every turn.

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In his personal life, Robb has rediscovered the joys of simple pleasures—what he calls “porch therapy,” where he writes poetry, plays guitar, enjoys a cup of coffee, and reflects on how far he’s come. “I found my artistic side again,” he beams. “I’m back to doing the things that bring me joy.”

He also rekindled his relationship with his daughter and finds joy in their shared moments. “We have specific TV shows and movies that we watch together. But when she comes over, we always make sure to watch *Gravity Falls*. We try to watch at least a couple of episodes. It’s pretty cool to hang out with her again,” he grins.

Robb’s journey was not linear but has been a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the transformative power of second chances. “It took me more than a decade and probably a dozen attempts [at recovery], but I feel like I can do whatever I set my mind to now with a little hard work and focus,” Robb reflects. “As far as open doors go, I feel like I can choose whichever ones I want to go through.”

Finding Common Ground at Monday Night Dinner



“During some of my shifts, as dinner winds down, I’ll hear some quiet music begin to play. When I look, I see a few people gathered around the piano, chatting and playing with the keys. I love the genuine nature of moments like this,” says Michelle, third from the left.



Every Monday evening, a tradition unfolds at Victory Programs’ Boston Living Center (BLC) that has been cherished since the center’s inception. **Monday Night Dinners are more than just meals; they symbolize community, compassion, and togetherness.** They date back to the earliest days of the BLC, which began as a humble gathering for men living with HIV/AIDS at the height of the epidemic. Today, the tradition continues, bringing together people from all walks of life to share a meal and connect.

Regular volunteers are the heartbeat of these dinners. Michelle, who works in clinical research, was drawn to the BLC by the opportunity to make a consistent impact. “I enjoyed my first time volunteering at the BLC so much; it was an easy decision to keep coming back again and again,” she shares. “Volunteering weekly allows me to create long-lasting connections. I started to remember their habits, preferences, and style of jokes, which is really nice.”

Radhelki, who started volunteering five months ago, initially joined to earn volunteer credit but quickly found something much deeper. He says, “Being a regular volunteer means I can build relationships with the members and see the difference we’re making week after week. It’s been fun interacting with people I wouldn’t typically interact with.”

For many of our volunteers, the people they serve and work alongside truly define the BLC experience. Dan, a dedicated Monday Night Dinner volunteer, has been part of this tradition from the very beginning. Over the years, he has built strong connections with the members and shares, “Coming in every week after all these years, I can tell the BLC means a lot to the members. I hear people say it’s like their home—a place where they can find comfort, a friend, and space to just be.” Julia, a high school teacher from Austria spending her summer in Boston, echoes this sentiment: “The BLC is just different. There’s a sense of family that puts smiles on everyone’s faces. Knowing I helped put those smiles on the members’ faces really made a difference for me.”

Though Michelle, Julia, Dan, and Radhelki come from diverse backgrounds, **they find common ground every Monday evening, standing side by side behind the plexiglass food line.** Together, they serve meals, build connections, and give back. By coming back week after week, they are taking part in sustaining the sense of community that makes the BLC such a special place.



Dan, pictured here cleaning dishes during a shift, has been volunteering at the BLC for more than 30 years!



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SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT:

Janine Busby, a Champion of Community and Compassion

Janine Busby is a beacon of generosity in her Boston community, dedicating her life to uplifting those around her. As a Boston Police Sergeant Detective and Captain of the 40+ Double Dutch Club's Boston chapter, Janine's commitment to service and community is woven into every aspect of her life.

"I've always worked very closely with seniors and young people, even when I was a young person," Janine shares. Through her leadership in both her job and club, Janine organizes annual initiatives to support families and children, going the extra mile for those in need. "We do turkey giveaways, sponsor families... We don't just get them a few gifts; we sponsor everything."

One day, as she explored ways to extend her efforts, she discovered Victory Programs. "We were going through lists of organizations in the area around the holidays, and up comes Victory Programs," she recalls. Intrigued by the breadth of services offered, she reached out to see how she could help. Janine received a list of in-kind needs for the holiday season, and she sprang into action, rallying her network. "We managed to get everything on the list. We bought some wrapping paper, and I brought my co-workers and Double Dutch ladies with me to drop everything off. There were a lot of us and a lot of boxes; it was overwhelming in a good way... seeing my people come together like that, getting all of these things that people really needed."



Janine, fifth from the left, with members of the 40+ Double Dutch Club.

Since then, Janine's commitment to Victory Programs has only deepened. She continues to find unique ways to bring smiles to the faces of the individuals and families served across our programs. Last Halloween, she spearheaded an effort to collect donations for our family shelters and went above and beyond. "We donated essentials like pajamas, blankets, and toys, but we also collected extra things like costumes and decorations for the different programs. I wanted the kids to feel the holiday spirit," she explains.

When asked why she gives back, Janine's answer is simple: It's just the right thing to do. "Especially for those who are hurting, I just want to make sure I contribute to the positive. Throughout our lives, we come across people in need

and in their darkest moments. They need somebody that has empathy and patience... I want them to know there are people out there that want to support them and are not giving up on them either."

As a leader, Janine continues to inspire those around her, ensuring that giving back is more than just a moment—it's a movement. Her unwavering commitment to serving her community reminds us of the profound impact one person can have in making the world a better place.

Thank you, Janine, for your generosity, compassion, and dedication to making a difference. Your contributions are deeply appreciated, and your efforts continue to inspire us all at Victory Programs.



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