

Testimonial of a NCPHP Past Participant 11/24/16

"I became involved with the NC Physicians Health Program in the late 1990's. My drugs of choice were alcohol and benzodiazepines. My use eventually caused me to become severely depressed and suicidal. I went to my doctor who recommended I go in the hospital, and I refused. I went back home and went to sleep, but was later awakened by a sheriff's deputy kicking my bed telling me to get up. I had been involuntarily committed and spent a week in a locked unit. After getting out of the hospital I self-reported to NCPHP and met with Bob Vanderberry who started the program.

I managed to stay sober for 3 years, which was the length of my monitoring contract at the time. Sadly, after completing my monitoring with PHP I convinced myself that I really didn't have a problem with addiction. I began drinking heavily again within the year and taking benzodiazepines. This led to my marriage ending before I was finally arrested for assault while I was under the influence. I went to jail overnight, and 2 days later met with the clinical director and medical director at my place of employment and they gave me the opportunity to refer myself to PHP. At this time, I met Warren Pendergast, who was the director of the program. It was recommended I go for an evaluation at a treatment facility, and spent 6 weeks there. To say this was an eye opening experience is an understatement. There was no ability to delude myself into thinking I didn't really have a problem with addiction and alcoholism. One of the most memorable experiences I had while in treatment was when I went to my first Caduceus meeting there, and I was asked to share how I'd ended up in treatment. I tried to minimize what I had done, and one of the members of the group interrupted me and told me that she was appalled that I could speak about being arrested for assault so casually and even make myself out to be a victim!

I completed treatment, and I signed a 5 year monitoring contract with PHP. This time, I had no delusions about the severity of my addiction and alcoholism. I attended AA, went to Caduceus meetings, and was mentored by Clark Gaither and others over the years. I went through meetings with the medical board, and when I would speak about the stress of this with Clark at our meetings, he would always remind me that the consequences of my use was also supposed to be a reminder of the severity of my disease. His axiom: "People relapse because they forget the pain of their addiction." My consequences are a reminder of the pain that I never want to go through again.

I'd been in an institution and locked up in jail. The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous tells me that the only thing I haven't experienced is death as a result of my disease. With the help of men like Bob Vanderberry, Clark Gaither and Warren Pendergast and their love of helping addicts like me, I have been able to stay sober since May 19, 2003. I credit PHP with saving my life and helping me to return to practicing medicine."