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2023

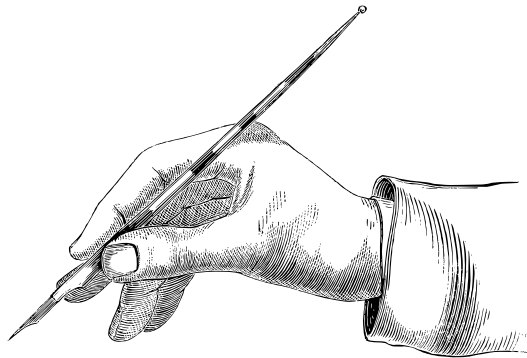
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# OXFORD HOUSE

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Stories

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# **OXFORD HOUSE RECOVERY STORIES**

**2023**

Every year, Oxford House residents and alumni are invited to send in their stories of their Oxford House experience. These recovering individuals are sharing their stories in order to help other afflicted by alcoholism and drug addiction to understand the hope afforded by Oxford House.

Oxford Houses offer their residents the opportunity and time to use peer support, a safe living environment and a disciplined system of operation to achieve the behavior changes necessary to achieve long-term recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction. Some of the stories are from current residents; some are from alumni. Some have been in recovery many years; others are just starting their recovery journey. All have a story to tell and the authors strengthen the sobriety of themselves and others by telling their stories.

**Oxford House, Inc.  
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## OXFORD HOUSE STORIES – 2023

### ALABAMA

#### **Cathleen Hunter -- Resident**

I've been wanting to do this for a while and tell my story but sometimes it's scary to be honest with everyone. But here it is and, hopefully, my story will help someone. I was sober for 9 months when I relapsed in March of last year. I started using for 3 months; neglected my responsibilities; lost my job and became an irresponsible parent. I was so irresponsible that I left my children with a man whom I thought was a good person but who turned out to be a sex offender and who almost killed my son, Damon. I had run a background check on him; however; he had given me a false name and false spelling. I was so out of my mind that I believed everything that was told to me. I lost myself and didn't even realize it until it was too late. On June 21, 2022, I found my son, Damon, barely breathing. He was severely beaten and we called 911 just in time for him to be air-lifted to the hospital. They told me that my son only had a 30% chance of making it through the night.

DHR swore that I would be able to be with my son that night after the police questioned me; however, DHR told me I wasn't allowed around my son for a week. They took my other two children because I had poor judgment in people with whom I left my children. The night that I found Damon, I dropped to my knees and begged God to save my son. I told God. and I made a promise that day, that I would walk the path he wanted me to walk and I would never touch another drug again and that I would do whatever it took as long as he saved my baby. For a week I reached out to DHR begging them to let me see my children. My whole life had been turned upside down and everything I ever loved was taken from me and I only had myself to blame.

I hated myself for a very long time. I didn't know what I should do except to stay off of drugs and pray to God every day. Then I found this rehab and decided I knew what I needed to do. I surrendered my life over to God and I've been praying every day and working so hard every day to be a better person because that's what I promised God that I would do. I am now 10 months sober. I have found peace in my heart and my mind and my soul and forgiveness from God. I've healed from so much but it hasn't been an easy journey. I still don't have my children and I'm still fighting every day but I know that I'm getting closer to my goal. I know that I'm getting closer to what my true calling is; I know that God has a plan for me. Before I went into rehab, I had no hope; I just knew that I had lost everything I loved.

My son Damon now is out of a coma and is talking, writing, reading, playing, singing and even has his personality still. He still can't walk but he is in a rehab for physical therapy and occupational therapy to help him get better and he's getting better day-by-day because God is healing him and I believe God will restore him 100%. I haven't seen my oldest son, Nathaniel, or my youngest son, Justin Jr., since October of last year. I'm fighting so hard every day and this is a tough battle that I'm fighting but I know where my focus is. I know what I need to do and have do to be better so that I can be better for them. I won't give up!

After graduating rehab, I needed further assistance and found an Oxford House to continue my recovery journey. Choosing to move into Oxford House was the best decision I've ever made. I

have a recovery family and an amazing support system. I needed the accountability and help to transition back into a normal lifestyle and they have given me so much more than I could have dreamed of. I love my house and my roommates and I love our Oxford House family. I would highly recommend Oxford House for anyone trying to change their life around for the better. With us you have a whole support system filled with love and understanding. It's an amazing experience! I pray that my story helps someone. All because of my addiction, I made choices that I never would have made if I had been sober but I forgive myself for this and all I can do is keep trying to do better every day and I'm so proud of where I am. I've changed so much about myself and I will continue to change every day; I'll be better than what I was the day before. I've learned so much from this situation and I just cannot wait to have my babies back. Oxford House gives me even more opportunities to become a better me!

### **Jessie Fike – Alumna**

Oxford House saved my life. I had lost everything; my house, my family, any finances, and all hope. I had no insurance or I.D. Oxford House took me in at my lowest and provided me with a safe place to live, the structure and accountability to build a solid foundation of recovery, and the love of a family I've never had. I am now an active alumna, I have my family back, and I work in recovery. Oxford House made my best life possible.

### **Michael-Brandon Atchison – Alumnus and Outreach Worker**

My parents were murdered when I was 8 years old. I lived in foster care until one of my aunts and uncles got custody of me. I had met them only once. They only wanted me because of the money my dad had just gotten. They beat me and made me clean their house and do all their chores. When I was 12, my aunt with whom I had grown up got custody of me after seeing bruises on me. I moved from Alabama to Pensacola, Florida.

I had never seen anyone do anything but, when I was 12, my aunt's husband gave me crack cocaine. I ended up doing every drug there was and got hooked on pain pills. I ended up getting married in 2008 and had my son in 2009. My ex-wife went to prison a couple of years later for 4 years. I had my son before she went to prison and the whole time she was there. When my son was 5, I moved back to Alabama after being gone for 20 years. I tried to start a new life and quit taking all drugs but I quickly found out that I was addicted. I then got arrested for so many different things and I was court-ordered to 6 months in rehab. I even cheated that and only did 3 months. My son went and stayed with my aunt and uncle who didn't do drugs. My ex-wife got out and I ended up letting my son go live with her because she had changed her life and married a rich man.

I ended up going to over 9 rehabs. I got arrested for public intoxication over 15 times with many other arrests. I could complete rehab but couldn't stay sober. So, after my last arrest, I went to rehab in Louisiana and, when I got out, God finally put Oxford House in my life two years ago and I was able to learn how to be a productive member of society. I was wanting a job as an Outreach Worker for months but I ended up relapsing 8 months after I got there. I'm glad I did because when I was finally able again to be an Outreach Worker, a position that was only an hour away from my son, became available in a new area in Alabama. So now I'm an Outreach Worker and completely love what God is doing in my life.

## ARIZONA

### **Nicole Kosmata – Resident**

My journey of recovery began when I accidentally put myself into cardiac arrest in my disgusting studio apartment, on the run from probation. I was completely out of reach of my phone, unable to get up to answer the door even if I could, by some miracle, reach out to anyone. All I could think about was how embarrassing to die like this ... but clearly that wasn't God's plan for me. After what seemed like hours, I was finally able to get up and get my phone and the first call I made was to my home health agency to get on a wait-list for rehab. They called me back almost immediately and offered me a bed 2 days later and I spent those next 2 days packing everything I owned and putting it all in storage. I was leaving my relationship and my life all behind, which for any addict seems impossible, but I knew it was time.

I spent just shy of 2 months in treatment before I got an interview with Oxford House Ski Valley and was accepted. I was beyond grateful and also extremely terrified of the change but I felt good. I was on IPS and had to make a schedule with my probation officer every week, find a routine, be held accountable and, were it not for the support that the women in my House provided, I might not have made it through that.

At my first chapter meeting, I nominated myself to be of service as the female HSC co-chair and was accepted into the role (knowing absolutely nothing about what I had just signed up for) and, with the help of the other chapter officers, I quickly learned how to fulfill that role and be of the best service I could. I worked 2 jobs and completed my RSS certification and got a car and pursued a career in the mental health field.

After some time, I attended my first state association meeting where I stepped up as the state secretary and nominated myself as a candidate to run for the World Council. To my surprise, my state selected me to run for the resident seat for Az. In September of last year, I went to the World Convention and was elected onto the World Council and I am living in complete gratitude. Oxford house has changed my life. It has given me room to grow and thrive and be of service and, as a result of all those things, I have become a better person. I have now successfully completed probation and I still have a job in a treatment facility in Tucson, Az. I'm currently enrolled in school for behavioral sciences to pursue a career as a therapist for substance abuse. I don't know what my future holds but I know that I wouldn't have gotten this far without Oxford House and the amazing family I've made with the people here.

### **Chance Epple – Alumnus**

"My name is Chance Epple, and this is my story in Oxford House. I was residing in residential treatment in Phoenix, Arizona after serving a one-year sentence in county jail. While I was in treatment, there was a presentation held about a recovery home call Oxford House. I was at the halfway mark of completing treatment and was on the search for a sober living situation that would be beneficial for my recovery. To be completely honest, I was dreading the fact of moving into sober living based on my past experiences. Most sober living facilities only care about the money, and personal recovery in not a priority, at least in my experience. So, I had attended this presentation on Oxford House, and was instantly interested because it sounded different. When

I was a week from graduating treatment, I had an interview set up at Oxford House Tres Palms, and was starting a new job. When I did my interview for Oxford House, I was a little nervous considering I've never been asked so many questions trying to get into a recovery home or sober living. But I knew when I first walked into the house, that was where I wanted to be. The guys in the house were all welcoming, and the vibe was great. When I completed the interview and was accepted into the house on November 15th, 2019, I was beyond grateful and motivated to do the next right thing. At my first House meeting, I was voted to be president of the House. I got my first taste of the democratic process and really enjoyed the dynamic of how it all worked. I was hungry to learn all that I could.

After the first two weeks, the outreach worker who was also residing in the same house took me to another Oxford House to attend their House meeting. It was a great experience, especially seeing firsthand how other Houses operated under the same model. Two weeks after that House meeting, I attended my first chapter meeting. This was a learning experience in itself because I was unaware that Oxford House had operated on different levels. I was nominated as the Male Housing Services Chair for Chapter 1 and was voted in unanimously. I had no idea what I was getting myself into at this point but I had to strive to keep learning and this was the point where I learned to be of service to the best of my ability.

Arizona was a new state to Oxford House, and Houses were being opened left and right. I assisted in numerous house trainings, as well as well as in the interview process for new members. Right when Houses starting booming, COVID hit. Everything was restricted but my motivation didn't stop. Even though having meetings and trainings via Zoom was a challenge, I never missed one and continued to offer my hand for support. I was really bummed out that the World Convention was postponed due to COVID. But I knew that there would be another opportunity.

While residing in Oxford House I learned how to live with integrity, how to be self-sufficient, and how to be of service. With these tools under my belt, I was able to accomplish personal goals I had set for myself. I was able to get my driver's license back, as well as get a new car. I learned how to budget money and separate the needs from the wants. I was able to rekindle family relationships and other personal relationships. One of the most important things I learned, was how to hold myself and other people accountable. I had no idea what accountability was until moving into an Oxford House. This was very beneficial for me. In July of 2021, Arizona had started the State Association. I jumped at the first opportunity of service and was voted in as the Chapter Services Chair. I was able to see how other chapters operate and witnessed several types of unity.

In September of 2021, I attended my first World Convention! It was Amazing! Such an experience in itself! I met so many people from so many different areas and the whole experience filled my heart with so much joy. I couldn't wait to share the knowledge and experience with fellow members back home. During the convention, I was strongly encouraged LAST MINUTE to run for Oxford House World Council. In my head I was freaking out but I figured, why not? I think the part that got me most was standing in front of almost 1800 Oxford House members from all over the country and seeking to qualify myself for a position I knew nothing about. Once I learned that I had been voted into a Resident voting member position for the World Council, I was like "Damn, that's crazy!". While serving on the World Council, I learned so

many different things including about different committees and the history and purpose of the World Council. I got to meet and know other World Council members.

I moved out of Oxford House in April of 2022 in good standing. I'm an active alumnus for Chapter 1 as well as the Central Arizona Alumni Association. Without Oxford House, I wouldn't have the great life I have today. I am forever grateful for Oxford House and the lives it saves daily.

### **Jessica Parks – Resident**

My name is Jessica Parks. I'm going on 3 years sober. I started my recovery process in 2020. I was completely lost. I lost my beautiful children and went on a bad run for a good month. I realized in July that I needed help and couldn't do it alone. I checked myself into rehab at Granite Mountain. I had a lot of up and downs fighting to find my house and fighting to get my kids back.

I graduated in 2020 and moved into Oxford House, which has helped me with being held accountable and holding others accountable. Oxford also helped me get my two beautiful children back into my custody. I left Oxford after I got full custody and bounced around for awhile until I realized I was slipping back into my addiction ways. I applied again to Oxford was accepted back. Once again, Oxford welcomed me with open arms. I absolutely love Oxford and everything they have done for me. The women empower each other and it's just hands-down the best sober living!

### **Gary Begay – Resident**

I'm still sober!

### **Adriana F. – Resident**

"My name is Adriana. I was raised in a small town called Picacho AZ. From an early age, I remember going to the bars with my dad and, anytime my dad would get into fight, the bartender would take me behind the bar so I wouldn't have to see the fight. I have seen prostitution, black-outs and a lot of fights between my parents and lot of cops as well. We moved to California when I was 8 to start a new life and I remember my dad stopped drinking to be the best dad he could be. I started to get into trouble in high school – shoplifting, buying alcohol and just being a disrespectful teenager. We moved back to Arizona when I was 16.

When my dad passed away when I was 17, I lost so much of myself because my dad was my best friend and my favorite person on the planet. I started to drink occasionally around my family; then I started hiding my drinking. I left home after graduating from high school. Then I started to do more than drinking and smoking weed; I got into cocaine and had a complete breakdown and attempted suicide. That's when I moved to Prescott, Arizona, in 2018. I lived with my aunt but I made the decision to live out in my car and I started back up in drugs. Then in 2019 I got pulled over at Sonic and got arrested for having marijuana in my possession.

In 2020 I started to learn more about recovery when probation said I had to go to treatment. Then I got kicked out because I broke the rules and I threw a fit and they called the police and



Officer Mendez told me that if he got another call about me, he would personally arrest me and drop me off at jail. I was living on the streets, always in some type of a situation where I couldn't defend myself. I finally went back to the same treatment facility and graduated this time but, within 24 hours, I relapsed and probation found me and told me to go to sober living. That sober living help plant the seed of recovery in my head. Once I got off of probation, I decided to leave that sober living house and went back out to use again.

It had gotten out of hand, to the point that I don't remember how I got from one town to the other town. I asked a friend who was a member of Oxford House how to apply and do the interview process. She helped me out a lot. I got accepted to Oxford house Yavapai and was a member of that house for over a year. I grew in my knowledge from that house, I became part of my chapter as female HSC. I planned an Easter egg hunt, and a very awesome summer bash. I started to notice my mental health was becoming an issues because, in my first house, another member and I tried our best to uphold the Oxford model to the new members but it was so hard when the other members were there for the wrong reasons. I noticed that I went from being a seasonal member to a senior member and having to tell the other members if you vote to keep someone who just will just relapse in the house I will have to let chapter know. I did my very best to try to keep the house afloat by doing all the positions getting all the books ready so we can have at least an hour-long house meeting and not a two hour one. In January, chapter came to the house and flipped the house. I wasn't reaccepted back into the house, I was so mad at everyone who was part of that house flip.

The next day the outreach worker came over and talked to me and told me I should reapply at her house at the time – Oxford House Iron Springs. I got an interview, oh my goodness, that interview was rough and I learned more what was happening at my old house and I had no idea what had been going on. So, I couldn't answer all the questions. But I did get accepted into Iron Springs. Oh my goodness! I was moving into a different house and just learning how to be an Oxford member again. It made me fall in love with Oxford all over again and I remembered why I wanted to be involved in the first place. I'm very grateful for my second chance with Oxford and the amazing outreach worker who didn't give up on me. Now I work an honest program with my sponsor and I am there for my chapter when needed and I am helping the new females who move into the house. Sincerely Adriana "

### **Joshua Scott – Resident**

I got to Oxford House Enigma on Feb 1st after doing 3 months in county and 28 days in an inpatient treatment program in Holbrook. I lost contact with my mom 2 weeks before getting to Oxford and, with the help of Oxford, I found my mom in a shelter and got her into an Oxford House for women. I'm also still going to court looking at a 180 day sentence but I've gotten a couple character letters from the chapter officers and I might not have to go back to jail at all. Making it mandatory to be working a program Oxford has also introduced me to NA and amazing testimonies from which to learn and grow. My life has been easier to live soberly just from being an Oxford House. From other members giving me rides to work and meetings because I do not have transportation in my own, to chapter officers giving me a chance to participate, words cannot express how grateful I am to have Oxford in my life and a part of my recovery.

## **Kelsey Harris – Resident**

My name is Kelsey. I am 28 years old and I am an addict. I used to drink a lot and it made me make irrational decisions. I was in a good relationship with a good dude. He had a lot of learning to do though. I felt like I wasn't enough and left him. I ended up moving back in with my mother and I drank every day. I was on Facebook dating and found this guy who would end up being my downfall. The first day we met was one of the most fun days I has had in a while. Eventually, I was staying out late or not coming home at night. It worried my mom so she set a curfew which I broke. I ended up being kicked out and I had no place to stay. My mother said I could go live with my father and my brother. My father is a addict and my brother also became one. I thought my brother was clean though. I didn't think much of it at the time but I could hear them hitting the foil in my brother's room.

Eventually I found an apartment that I could afford and I asked the guy I was seeing to move in with me. It started off in a way that I thought at the time was normal. I was in love. We drank every day. He drank even more than me and I thought he was an alcoholic, not me. Eventually, he started letting homeless people stay at our apartment. He said it was to help them out and give them a place to shower. I had no idea what would happen. One day I came home from work and he showed me that one of his friends had given him a Crystal Meth rock. I was pissed. I wanted it out of my house. I felt like it offended me because that was my dad's drug of choice and I would never do that. Well, probably no more than a couple of weeks later, I was super depressed. It turns out I was in an unstable relationship with a narcissist. He was mentally and emotionally abusive. So, one night we were hanging out in his friend's car and they were smoking something on a foil. I was so depressed as I had undiagnosed bipolar disorder. So, I convinced them to let me smoke it. It was the worst mistake I had ever made. After just one hit I instantly was addicted. I spend all my paycheck on fentanyl. I had just enough to pay my rent and then buy fentanyl. But that was it. I never had any money for food. I would try my best to hide it at work.

Eventually I started doing the thing I never thought I would do. I would be dope sick so I started smoking meth. In my sick addicted brain, I thought It would help me to not be sick. But it made it worse. Then, not long after starting my addiction, my mom stopped by my house and gave me earth-shattering news. My brother had been high behind the wheel and crashed into a pole. He died instantly. My heart shattered into a million pieces. I used fentanyl even more now to stop the pain. Eventually, with all the traffic of homeless people staying at my apartment, they threatened to evict me. Multiple times. It took my not paying rent for them to finally evict me.

I started living on the streets. I was friends with boosters. So. it wasn't long until I started stealing as well. I stole our huge 5-person tent so we had a place to live. We moved by my apartment. I remember the guy I was seeing would always leave all night and sometimes for days and wouldn't come back for a long time. I would suffer in the tent and be sick detoxing waiting for him to come save me. Our relationship was really suffering once we started using together. I was living in this twisted fantasy that he was my prince charming and he would always support me. He couldn't even support himself. One night we had a fight and I walked out into traffic. I waited there for a car to come and hit me. But my higher power was watching over me and gave me the will to move. The next day, the guy I was seeing and I had the biggest fight ever. I was sick of it all. The homeless people had trashed my apartment with tagging. The guy I was seeing would break windows all the time. It had turned into a total trap house. I had lost my job by then

because I would be sleeping at work. I had two good jobs as a bookkeeper but I couldn't stop using. I remember him telling me about this rehab he went to. I called my mom when I finally had enough and asked her to pick me up and take me there. She was so happy.

She picked me up right away. I looked awful, sick, and defeated. So, then I checked into Arizona Rehab Campus. It didn't last long. I missed my boyfriend. I still had this weird fantasy that he was out cheating on me and, if I didn't go find him, he wouldn't stay with me. So I left and went to go find him. He was mad that I left. The first thing I did was smoke. It took me 6 entire days until we had a huge fight and I realized this isn't a life worth living. He will not get clean for me. I need to do this for myself. Do I want to die out here and have my mother lose another child?

I decided to hop on the city bus with a bag full of my clothes and went back to the Arizona Rehab Campus. This time I stayed. I completed a 30-day program and my life was changing. I was making female friends which was something about which I always had challenges. I was learning about addiction and the brain. I was finally starting to recover. I knew 30 days wasn't enough so I went to the IOP program across the street. That is when I met a member of Oxford house. She was a BHT there. My plans were to move back with my Mom. But I knew where that would have landed me. Back to drinking. Back to the dating sites. Back to my ex-boyfriend. Then out using again.

I needed to find a stable living situation. We decided that I needed to move into the Oxford house. So I applied and waited. I had the interview and was accepted. But I still had to wait. One day I noticed the one I wanted to get into had a vacancy. So I called them that day and they said that I could move in that week. It absolutely changed my life forever. It was the best decision I have ever made. I have gained control of my life back with Oxford House.

About a month after moving in, they made me house president. Boy, that position helped me grow. I had to go to the Chapter meetings. But I loved it. So, I expressed my love for it and was nominated Chapter 12 Comptroller. I accepted. Finding a recovery home where there are expectations of you and accountability is strong has been such a great asset to my recovery. Our house requires you to go to 3 meetings a week when you are a newcomer. Having that requirement has made me have a program that I work constantly. In my house, the girls are not just roommates. We all have become a family. At first, I was nervous but even the girls have noticed how much I have grown. I kicked the guy to the curb. Even after he got sober, it was still toxic. And although I should have stayed single, I reconnected with my original boyfriend who continued to love me the same. He had grown since our time apart. Got a promotion at work. Bought a car. But he was still there and forgave me for everything I put his heart through. He is the kindest person I have ever met and he supports me in my recovery. Without the Oxford House I would probably have moved back out on the streets and died. I am truly grateful for this place. My higher power made everything work out so I could get involved in Oxford. Now I'm learning a new house position and I will grow some more.

On Monday May 29th. I will have been clean from drugs and alcohol for an entire year. I could not have done this without the Oxford House or without other addicts who have gone through the same thing that I have. We support each other. The life I have today is so amazing. I have my passions back. I have my will to live. I know in my heart that my big brother is so proud of me. I will continue to make him proud. He lives on in my heart. My name is Kelsey I am an addict and I have 11 months and 25 days clean today.

### **Rudy Rios – Resident**

Oxford drastically changed my life once I started getting more involved and being of service for others. I love it. I never thought I would be involved in a community like Oxford. They are very welcoming and have been treating me like family since I came into an Oxford House. I'm currently the HSC Rep for Chapter 7 and it's been a wonderful experience doing it. I'm grateful and blessed for the opportunity to live and be a part of Oxford.

## **DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

### **Calvin Parker – Resident**

I was an alcoholic and drug addict who was sleeping on family floors and couches. I had 60 days at Harbor Life Recovery Center and, when I left Harbor Life, I walked into Oxford House to stay clean and sober and live with others. They all want to do the same and not pick up and use. I've learned a lot and have served in different offices in the house.

## **DELAWARE**

### **Chase Garrison – Resident**

OH Cordon was my very first Oxford House. I will be forever grateful for that house! In that house, I started my journey on how to be a human being again. I bucked like most of us do, I broke rules and inevitably relapsed. I moved out of that house to a new one where I felt at home with like a legit family, I tried to get involved and learn a little bit more about Oxford house itself rather than just focusing on myself.

The houses and my program built me up strong enough to go home and pay for the mistakes of my past and stay sober through it, with sooooo much support from the people I met in these houses (my family)! I was eventually capable of being asked to move to a house that was struggling and restart it and help to make it a safe home to the next struggling woman who just needed a little help and structure to move forward in her life.

I couldn't take care of myself when I first moved into these houses; I didn't know how to be a person who cleaned up after herself, paid bills, did chores and listened to people!! I can do that today (though I'm still working on listening to people 😊) but I truly don't believe I would be where I am today with over four years clean, productive member of society, willing to help ANYONE who asks or even be a person people actually call to ask for help (because that was never a thing before). I don't know!

Oxford House saved my life and taught me how to live, I am and will forever be grateful for Oxford House Delaware!!

## FLORIDA

### **Jared H. – Resident**

"I was an addict – a hard-core addict for whom when I got high, all else would go out the window. I was born in Boston to a well-off family. I had everything I ever wanted growing up. I was an excellent athlete and had scholarships. My mother died when I was 4 and I grew up with my dad and maids who lived with us. I started smoking weed and drinking at a young age. I I drank and smoked alcoholically from Day 1. We hung out and drank and smoked; I never wanted the party to end and I would continue on when everyone else stopped. I continued drinking alcoholically through my teens and 20s, doing coke here and there, but smoking continuously. I got married and continued to drink and smoke.

I was in a motorcycle accident that nearly claimed my life and, when I started taking pain pills, my disease took over. My pill-taking caused a divorce then I continued taking pills more and more. I went to prison the 1st time over my addiction for stealing and selling; I got out and went right back to it. I gave up on life. My friend Introduced me to speedball and that was it. I smoked and shot up to the point where I was homeless and hiding from my family. I used day in and day out and being homeless was nothing. I went to prison again for burglary I didn't care. I was one of the worst addicts that people had ever seen. I hid from my kids and family. I was homeless; getting high 24/7 and robbing every night to pay for my addiction. I was out of prison for a month and a half when I was picked up on armed burglary charges. I didn't care. I tried getting sober one time in 2019 but didn't give it my all and inevitably relapsed after being arrested about 5 more times. The judge offered me drug court and I was ready. I was beaten and tired. I went in and gave it my all this time. I was able to build a strong program and support system and I've been sober ever since. I had been through hell in my addiction from people dying with me being and being stabbed and everything.

Now I am putting my life back together I have a relationship with friends and family and, most importantly, my children. Oxford House has been a great part of my recovery "

### **Lisa Grant - Resident**

From the moment that my outreach worker at the time, Tyler Sykes, came to pick me up and said, "You can keep doing what you was doing and continue to be the person you are or you can try doing things the way we do things in Oxford." He guaranteed me that I would live a life I couldn't even imagine because it would be so filled of love and opportunity. Well, I liked what he had to say so, when he dropped me off, I had three job interviews on the spot that same day and I continue to keep driving to be a part of this amazing family that I never thought I could have. The laughter, fun and relationships that I have made while I have lived in an Oxford House proves that my outreach working was right. I couldn't even imagine that I could be so loved, motivated and driven to do better – not only for myself but to help the next person and make them feel as important as he made me feel that day.

Thank you. Tyler Sykes, and, most definitely, thank you, Oxford House!

## **David Canada – Resident**

Well, my story is a long one and it's been a lifetime of trauma and drugs to mask it. I've been incarcerated so many times. ... I used drugs inside and out; I've dealt drugs inside and out. I thought it was how I had to live due to the way I had had to raise myself. But, in November 2021, I went back to where I thought I belonged but not before I overdosed and ran from law enforcement. I knew then I needed a better way of living. I have kids and I didn't want them to see me like that so I got myself into treatment while I was in jail. I was placed on probation and given the opportunity to fix my life. I completed White Sands and moved on to the next step for iop because I knew I needed more help before I went out there. So, I spent 7 months there, then found a family called Oxford and there I found the feeling of being a part of something and a family of unconditional love. I got involved in this family and, progressively, I got better in life. There are so many brothers and sisters all over that have your back in Oxford House. I so wish I would've found it sooner but God has a plan and times it right so now I am in a great part in my life, thanks to Oxford House.

## **Joy Nazary – Resident**

Hello. My name is Joy. This is my story. Growing up, I was very blessed with a very loving and supportive family who always told me I could do anything I set my mind to. Too bad I didn't believe this about myself. As a teenager, I started experimenting with drugs. I experienced a few different "traumas" with men that would send me spiraling into addiction. By the time I was 25, I had been arrested for multiple DUI's and drug possessions. I went into treatment and stayed in recovery for about three years. In this time, I was working, going to school to become a professional artist, given birth to a beautiful baby boy, married the most respectful and kind man, and had a house and a car. This would not last long. I had major scoliosis. I was told I would have to undergo major back surgery. I ended up getting rods placed from my neck all the way down to my lower back. I ended up getting prescribed pain medication and got addicted yet again.

One day someone brought meth to my house. I never took pain pills again but I was completely in another world addicted to meth. My love for the drug surpassed my love for anything or anyone else. I left my husband, lost the house and the car, and my son went to stay with my parents. I moved to Pensacola, Florida, with a man who was abusive in multiple ways. We lived in tents, sheds, and garages for many years. The fear and loneliness and defeat that I experienced was all-consuming and I didn't see a way out. At one point we even lived in a tree on a wooden pallet up in the tree with the tent sitting on top of it. This was to keep the tent from flooding, considering we lived in a swamp far in the woods. I was not in good physical health due to my back and the drug use. I only left the woods a handful of times. I remember he would sometimes put the makeshift stairs down when he would leave and I felt trapped. The crazy thing is that I probably would not have left anyway. I had become totally dependent on him. Finally, one day I screamed to my higher power, "Do what you have to do just get me out of here". That same night he got arrested. Two people that knew I was out there saw his arrest on jail view and came to the woods and brought me to their house. He got out of jail and I went back to him. This was a continuous cycle that was centered around the fact that he made drugs and I was addicted to the drugs he made.

I finally got away from him and did not go back. I was living by myself in a ladies shed. One day, he returned. I was very strong against him and resented him very much. He totally disgusted me. He told me I was going to have sex with him and I told him that I definitely would not. He held me down and raped me. This day, ironically, would save my life. I just didn't know it yet. Months later, I discovered I was pregnant. I was still in active addiction and lost my baby to foster care. I started working a case plan to get him back and was living in a domestic violence shelter. I had to leave the shelter because I was considered "safe". I interviewed for a place called "Oxford House".

The ladies accepted me and came to get me from the shelter right then! When I got to my new home, they had a dinner ready and all of the women sat around the table together and I knew right then that I was in the right place. These women surrounded me with love that I had not felt in so long. I got my relationship back with my parents, sister, and older son. I completed my case plan and before my baby was one, he also became a resident of Oxford House Tabicat.

I could not even hold my head up when I moved to Oxford House. Now, over two years later, I am still living at Oxford House. My parents and family are so grateful. They had me as a missing person and now we have a better relationship than we have ever had. Their prayers were answered. I feel like that experience happened to humble me and make me grateful for the little things. I can relate to many people and have no room to judge anyone because I have done it all. I am in a place, now, where I am able to give back what was so freely given to me. I want to continue to live in Oxford House for a while and possibly even work for Oxford House one day. I love being involved in our chapter meetings and now our state meetings. It is a surreal experience for someone who used to live in a tree all alone. Now I am so blessed with many true friends on the same path. Thank you, Oxford House, for helping me to hold my head up, hold me accountable to my recovery, and to have my family and children back. One of the first words my two-year-old said was "Aye" at a House meeting.

### **Ronald McDuffie – Resident**

When I found about Oxford House, I chose to move from a friend's house out of a bad situation. I thank God for Oxford House every day. I have grown more in my 7 months here than in my life time. It has saved my life and gives me strength every day.

### **Troy Goodner – Resident**

First off, I've been an addict for around 6 year. Before that I worked for UPS, and a few other well-known companies just as any other American. I had the good job, the beautiful family and even the white picket fence. I had, at one time, my own business and I thought life couldn't ever change. Then some life-changing events happened and I met drugs and alcohol and within a short period, Meth, cocaine and jail. Without really counting, let's say I was in and out of jail 15 times. It was always small stuff but it eventually led to worse and deeper drug and alcohol use. Each time it got harder and harder to recover and each time I would search and look for a way out. But, every time you go to jail, you start over; every time you go to jail, you lose everything; every time you go to jail, there's never a opportunity for recovery just more disappointment. I can't tell you how many times I looked for help while in jail, or even asked the staff if there was a place where, once I was out, that I could go I could seek help and be around people searching for the same goals – kind of like a 'reunited to society' program but,

believe it or not, I always came up empty-handed and was always just dropped off at the corner to the mall here in Bay County and was told 'good luck.'

This last time I had a very special person in whom I confided and she told me about Oxford House. I want to say that if it wasn't for my opportunity to be at the Oxford House and to have the group of men and the encouragement and the stability that I have in being able to have a place to call home, being able to do programs and classes for my recovery and to be able to seek employment and have a place that's affordable that I can grow in as I get myself ready for stepping back into the community, I would be probably sitting in jail – probably still on drugs and alcohol, going down the same path that I was before. Without dragging it out too much more, I want to thank Oxford House and I encourage any person that reads this – any congressman, any judge, any state attorney, any probation officers – to know that this program works! Nothing like this out there is 100%; there's always going to be a hiccup; there's always going to be the bad Apple; there's always going to be the ones who say "I told you so" but I'm going to tell you this; if I didn't have this program and Oxford House wasn't here I would probably still be the person like you see on the street; probably still the addict who's not working a full-time job and the one who doesn't have the future that I have in front of me. My name is Troy Goodner and I was an addict. Thank you.

### **Samantha Wilson – Resident**

I'm originally from St. Louis Missouri I came to Florida in June of 2022 and spent some time at the Salvation Army. Oct of 2022 is when I finally came to Oxford House with a year of sobriety already, I had been white-knuckling my recovery. I was working a program but needed more. Oxford house has offered me the tools I needed to change my life in ways that I didn't know were even possible. Accountability and the life-long connections I have made since being here has taken my recovery down a path that I didn't expect. After just a few short months, I was elected Chapter chair, which has given me the opportunity to help others in their recovery while giving me a solid foundation along the way. In my personal recovery I have found that helping others is the key to my success. I attend 5-7 meeting per week along with my spiritual life through church. I am at a loss for words on the structure and guidance I have gotten from Oxford house. I take pride in my house and the people who live in it. I am forever grateful for Oxford and I am proud to say I will always be involved with this organization in one way or another.

Before I decided to reach out and get help. I was in really bad shape from being on a long meth binge. I was so gone that I thought my parents where trying to have something bad done to me. It was so bad I wouldn't even go outside no matter how bad I needed to go. I finally feel asleep that Friday on the 22nd of July and didn't wake up until that Saturday night. I immediately thought mom and dad were trying to kill me. I instantly thought about burning my mom's house down because I was sick of feeling like the last second of my life could end at any time. I was so scared of what might happen that I called the police and told them I was going to hurt my mom and dad or they was going to hurt me. They took me in an ambulance to the hospital admitted me in psych unit from that Sunday until the 28 of July.

I knew if they released me to go back home, it would be just a matter of time and I would be going through the same stuff. They asked where would you like to go. So the outreach worker at the psychic unit made some phone calls and said you can go to in Navarre Florida to rehab. ... As I went more and more through treatment, I decided that I couldn't go back to Arkansas.



So I was talking to my counselor and I got information about sober living down here. Before I even knew I was being given a discharge date, I started getting phone numbers for the women's Oxford Houses here in Pensacola. I did the first interview and got accepted.

When the lady was going over everything, I thought it was some type of occult because it seemed too good to be true. I had a rough time at first trying to surrender to the rules and finally did. So, I got a job and started being involved in Oxford. What keeps me here is the service and the recovery community, learning how to be of service to others in Oxford and working slowly to get my life back. I went from being HSC treasurer to vice chair recently. Oxford, in the little bit of time I've been here, has allowed me to develop a passion for protecting it and helping people who want to change their lives. I don't know who to thank but I'm grateful to be able to be involved in this great place. I know my family is very grateful. If I never would have found this and given a chance to be here, I would have died out there.

### **Alexa Farris – Resident**

"My name is Alexa Farris. I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, at Good Samaritan Hospital on March 7, 1995. I am one of three siblings. My parents always took care of us and did whatever they could to keep us together. DCF was in and out all the time; my parents both were alcoholics. They eventually divorced and one afternoon when we were with my mom and her boyfriend and my brother, sister and I were jumping on the trampoline, we could hear them arguing inside and my mom came out crying. Her boyfriend lived in a three-story house out in the woods that was close to a cliff that was 35 ft tall and my mom, without hesitation, jumped off. All three of us were hysterical and immediately ran to the edge of the cliff and saw her holding on to a tree branch which soon snapped and we saw her fall into the shallow body of water beneath us. It just so happened to be the day that my dad came to come pick us up and he pulled up at just the right moment. He saw how upset we were and all we could do was point to where our mom was. Without hesitation, my dad immediately got on the 4-wheeler and drove down the trail to where my mom was while my mom's boyfriend was just standing on the porch doing nothing at all. Soon after this, the ambulance showed up and took my mom away. We didn't know if she was okay or not. My dad took us home shortly after this happened and left us there while he went to the hospital. My sister was only 12 at the time and managed to keep me and my brother together and took care of us while no one was home. My mom ended up staying in the hospital for months and had a lot of reconstructive surgery on her leg, foot and back. She shouldn't have made it that night but I have always been thankful that she did. Soon after all this happened, my parents got back together and my dad took care of her. It didn't take long for my mom to become addicted to the pain medication she was on and all I could remember was never seeing her doing anything but lie in bed and eat her pain pills and drink.

In 2005 we moved to Holt, Florida on a farm and life was great I made a lot of new friends and became active in sports. Fast forwarding to 2014, when I was a senior in high school, I ran track and was on the weightlifting team. I met this guy when I was getting ready to leave from the weight meet we just had. He was there for open gym where past graduates could come and play basketball. Soon after, we began talking. He was 7 years older than me; I was 18 and he was 25. I didn't care about the age. I just thought at the time it was cool that an older guy liked me. I began sneaking out of the house, lying to my parents about what I was doing and skipping school. My parents didn't approve of the relationship but I didn't let what they thought stop me from seeing him. After I graduated from high school, I moved in with him.

On September 8, 2015, Blake and I had our first child. After he was born, my life started becoming full of chaos. Blake was gone all the time selling dope and he introduced me to cocaine. It didn't take long for me to become addicted to it. It got so bad that we were using all of what he should have been selling to people and I had to come up with the money to pay his dealer back every time because he would blame me for it being gone all the time. The using never stopped and our relationship got worse; he would beat me and lock me in the room if he felt like I was saying something wrong or not doing what he wanted me to do.

Fast forwarding to 2022: At this point, Blake and I has been together 8 years, still using and nothing's changed but having more children. We had a total of 5 now and I was pregnant with another. I was still holding my job at Taco Town where I been at for the past 7 years, I would go to work high and pregnant with bruises all over my body, thinking no one would notice or say anything. But, boy was I wrong! I had co-workers and customers asking me what was wrong with me and I would always lie to them an tell them I was fine . I stuck it out with Blake for so long because I wanted to keep our family together and I thought that maybe one day he would change and I honestly felt like I deserved to be treated the way I was. I never thought I was worth anything more then what I had.

On August 20<sup>th</sup>, my whole world was turned upside down. I had a miscarriage and dealt with it alone. I was at work and felt sick. I ended up getting off early so I took a shower like I always do after work. As I was taking a shower, all I could see was a pool of blood beneath me and I was in so much pain I ended up pulling my daughters lifeless body out of me her feet first and her head was stuck because she was breached. I began screaming and crying for help but no one would respond until Blake's mother showed up. She immediately called 911 and got me out of the shower while I was still holding part of my daughter's lifeless body. I tried so hard to get her out but nothing I did or the paramedics did would work and I could not fathom seeing my daughter's lifeless body between my legs, I just wanted everything to go away. Shortly after getting to the hospital and had surgery, I woke up and she was gone. The nurse came into my room asking me if I wanted to see her and I said 'no.' She came in two more times asking the same question when I told her 'no' again, she responded that: "If you don't see her before we take her to the morgue, you're going to regret it for the rest of your life." So I gave in. When I held her 5lb body, I couldn't do anything but cry I looked up at the ceiling and told God to take care of her and said I was sorry for being so selfish because I felt like her passing was my fault. However, the main reason why she passed was because she was breached and her umbilical cord was wrapped around her neck. It cut off her oxygen and she suffocated. After I prayed, I heard someone say to me, "Let her go. Everything is going to be ok." I don't know if it was God or if it was just on my head but I listened. After I gave her back to the nurse, I felt so ashamed and couldn't help but blame her death on me and my addiction. I wanted to die in that hospital. Before I got released, I spoke with a case worker who was planning on coming to the house to take my other children and I immediately lost it, I told her I would do anything to keep them.

I called rehab centers all over the state of Florida and finally found one to take me in Florida Springs. I left the hospital and went to Panama City the next day. I was in rehab for a month and, after getting out I went to Bethel Village and stayed there for four months.

In January, 2023, I moved into the Oxford house that saved my life. I am around women who help me be a better person and hold me accountable for everything I do. I am thankful for the opportunity I have had living here, I am continuing to learn and grow in my life and strive to be

a better person and mother every day. I'm staying strong in my recovery and do not let anything affect what I am doing now. I'm 9 months clean now and so proud of how far I have come in such a short period of time. I am not where I want to be yet but I am getting there.

Everyone has a story to tell and this is mine!

### **Kortnie Clark – Resident**

My name is Kortnie, and I am an addict although, up until recently, I couldn't admit that to myself, let alone anyone else. I have struggled with addiction for the majority of my adult life. In 2003, I was diagnosed with a debilitating illness for which I was prescribed narcotic medications. The recovery process was a long and painful one but, over the course of months I began to get better. Unfortunately, my depression and anxiety began to spiral out of control as did my addiction and my life became unmanageable. I did have periods of sobriety, and in 2014 my incredible, beautiful son, JJ, was born. My miracle baby. As amazing as it was to be a mother, such a gift from God, I struggled with Postpartum Depression. I was also given opiates after giving birth and I relapsed shortly thereafter. I struggled in silence to get clean. My son's father and I had been together for nearly 20 years at that point and, although we loved each other very much, our relationship had started to become very toxic. JJ always had everything he could need or want as he grew up, but looking back now, he didn't have the one thing he needed the most; a sober mother.

On 8/30/20, DCF made the decision to remove JJ from our care and put him into foster care. Although that should've been enough to keep me clean, it simply wasn't. I went even deeper into my addiction. On 10/29/2021 I entered treatment and I never looked back. I went in broken, lost and desperate. Most of all though, I was sick and tired of living the way I had been living. I couldn't do it anymore. I left everything behind including JJ's father and the life we had built together. He vowed to get clean while I was in treatment but he really struggled. Ultimately, he lost his life to this disease but his memory will live on forever in the hearts of those who loved him the most.

I was in treatment for 11 months and, during my time there, I discovered Oxford House for Women and Children. I knew that would be the key to my continued sobriety and reunification with my son. I became a resident. On 4/12/2023, I was reunified with JJ in court for good, after two and half years. I never gave up, and never stopped fighting for him or for me, because he's worth it and so am I. Oxford House gave me the chance to mend our relationship. We're now able to build a life together, surrounded by a support system filled with amazing people in and out of recovery. I wake up today with a grateful heart because of how far I've come, and I look forward to each day not with fear, but with hope. Thank you, Oxford House, for all that you do.

### **Shawna Peterson – Resident**

Throughout my years in active addiction, open DCFS cases and in and out of treatment facilities, I exhausted every option with any hope or reality of life as I once I knew it. I could either choose to take myself & my son back into the environment he was taken out of by the courts or I could choose to buckle down and make a choice to let Oxford give me a new life, a life worth living not just surviving. With the gift of desperation, I re-entered an Oxford Mommy & Me House.

I have been able to overcome so many things while living in Oxford House. Success can look so different and it comes in many different forms. I was able to gain full custody of my son, return to school, work a job within the recovery field, establish healthy relationships and have so many other countless blessings. While working on my own personal recovery, I have been given the opportunity to do service work within the community and even in my own House and others within my Chapter. I am able to share my experiences, good and bad, with my Oxford sisters who have moved into the house during my tenure here. I have no doubt in my heart or mind, Oxford saved me. Oxford gave my son his mom back.

## HAWAII

### **Raye Kekona**

“My name is Raye Kekona, and I'm a recovering addict. Today I have 2 years, 1 month, and 23 days clean. What started my journey to an Oxford women's house, I was incarcerated at for drug offenses with a 10-year sentence. After completing my minimum sentence, I was given an opportunity to go to Poailani residential drug treatment. I successfully completed and graduated from the program. I arrived at Oxford house in Ewa Beach. I was able to get employment a week into my stay here. I also went to NA meetings and started building my foundation here in this Oxford House. The structure of this house helped me to build a stable foundation for my recovery. This house has helped me to live in society and be productive in my recovery. Within 8 months, I had two jobs and was able to buy [myself] a brand-new car.

Oxford has provided a safe and structured environment for me. Today I have a bank account and a savings. It's because of Oxford that I'm able to reunite with my family and children. I have gained a lot living here and being part of this program. Today I am the house president of the women's house of Makalea St. I'm very proud of all the goals I have achieved being here. I would like to thank Oxford for giving me a chance to rebuild my life. Thank you for the support from the women in my house, Jeremy and Nalu. Thank you for the memories that I have to take with me as I start my new journey [of] reuniting with my children and family on the Big Island. The tools that I've learned from Oxford I will use in my life today. Recovery is a lifelong program. ”Mahalo!”

## ILLINOIS

### **Charles Swalley – Resident**

"Oxford house has truly given me a life worth living. It's shown me what healthy relationships can look like. It's taught me responsibility and accountability by being a safe place for me to make a mistake or two and most importantly learn from them. I've had people that I couldn't stand in the beginning become my closest advisors and friends. People I never would have associated with become brothers. It has shown me what to strive for in life.

It's been the crazy dysfunctional family that I have always wanted my whole life but without any of the dangers that come along with that. Taking new guys under my wing and teaching them the principles we live by and watching them hold me accountable with those same

principles brings joy in my life. From the 5 deep pre-meeting drives to the loud and obnoxious house meetings that last three hours, I know every guy is trying their hardest to recover is someone I can trust with my life. Watching men pull themselves out of the gutter on their own accord and learn to live a new life inspires me to constantly do better in my own!

All that being said, there have been bad days, too. Watching beloved members relapse is hard. Having one of my guys completely disappear off the face of the world was even more difficult. The blessing is that I learned I could stay clean through it and that I wasn't the only one hurting from it. I was always told and tell everyone who comes through that just because someone leaves, it does not mean you have to stop loving them, you just have to love them from a new address. Sometimes that address is another house.

Overall Oxford House is a blessing I never deserved. Everything I have been through in life told me I am not someone who lives well with others but now I couldn't imagine living another way.

### **Michael Smith – Resident**

Growing up, I never lived anywhere longer than a year as we moved a lot and I never was able to have friends or people around consistently. Being as hyper as I was, I got in trouble everywhere we went, which probably helped contribute to us moving a lot. I was put on Adderall at 6 and it made me extremely erratic for about 2 years until my mom decided it wasn't helping me. At 7, I was kicked out of a school for getting into a fight with a teacher and throwing a desk through the classroom window; the state decided to put me in multiple foster homes for roughly 6 months, then a psych ward for children to be evaluated for another 6 months.

After I was released back to my family, I was sent to live with multiple family members to see if any of them could help with my anger and energy; none could. My mom decided to send me to my dad's, where I'd meet him for the first time at 10. He had a mental break and hung himself in the next room. I watched the ambulance people carry him out; he survived. My mom took me back and I was more aggressive and wilder than before.

Three years later, I went to my father's again because he thought he was better and able to handle life and me this time. The first year of living with him, I started drinking, smoking weed, doing pills and selling all the drugs I could find under his guidance. Over the years, the drugs got harder and the experiences that came with them got worse. I eventually started going in and out of prison and, after about 6 years, including county trips, I gave my best shot to become sober but didn't have any real guidance on how to do that so I relapsed harder than ever.

I was at a point where I was about to return to prison or die when I was introduced to Oxford. I took all the money I could get my hands on and got a hotel and stayed there for a week and a half sleeping and eating. I eventually ran out of money and, by the grace of God, was accepted into my first Oxford House. The members accepted me as family and showed me positive guidance and strength on how to live in sobriety.

I have since then helped start multiple other homes and been elected as the first Illinois state alumni chair. I now chair AA meetings and participate in the community.

**Pawel D. – Resident**

I found Oxford House right after leaving treatment. It was a better decision to move into a sober living house than to go back home. Oxford house helped me find stability and support and motivation. I've met many wonderful inspiring people. Oxford house was there for me since the beginning of my journey, and I will always be grateful for that.

**Shelley Crary – Alumna**

Before I moved into Oxford House, I was living clean and sober but nowhere near living a life in recovery. I was in another sober living home, just going thru the motions, paying my rent and doing my chores, really just doing the bare minimum so I would have a place to sleep at night.

A friend of mine told me about a women's Oxford House opening in Peoria. I interviewed for a bed and was one of the first two women to be a part of Oxford in my area. With guidance from my outreach worker, I quickly learned how to set and maintain boundaries within the home and for myself, as well as the beauty of accountability and holding others accountable. I got to relearn how to be a responsible, reliable and dependable person while living in Oxford.

Fellowship, self-reliance and self-respect formed the foundation where I began to build the life of recovery I wanted for myself. I started going to outside meetings; I got a sponsor; I got involved in chapter, HSC, fundraising, and the State Association. I am always more than happy to go to other houses/chapters and offer my support where it's needed and help others help themselves. Service work has become one of the most rewarding aspects of my life!

Now as an alumna, I am forever grateful for the year I spent in Oxford House. I really learned so much about myself and my capabilities. It gave me a safe place to find my own voice, to grow as a person and work a program of recovery that best suited me without fear of judgement. I love my Oxford family!

**INDIANA****Ashley Layton - Resident**

I'm a recovering drug addict I'm tired. I had 3 years sober; then I messed up and now I'm sober again. I lost my brother 7 days sober: he is my reason for keeping up my fight.

**Christina Priest – Resident**

I was addicted to drugs for 10 plus years; went to jail for 6 months; got out; got into Oxford and have now been sober for 10 months.

**Trista Atkins – Resident**

I've been sober 1 1/2 years and I am learning how to deal, cope, and live a sober and happy life.

### **Marlena James – Resident**

I am 30 years old and I have 5 kids. I have struggled with my addiction since I was 11. I have been to countless treatment centers. I honestly don't know exactly how many times I've been arrested but I've been in and out of jail since 2013. I have lost a lot due to my addiction. I have lost all rights to four babies; they all got adopted and it's so hard to forgive myself. I have to live with that for the rest of my life but I hold on to the hope that when they turn 18, they will come find me and I believe that God will bring them back into my life. I thank God for my Aunt Jennifer because she has my 8-month-old baby girl, Zayla, and has been taking care of her day and night and being a mom to her that I wasn't able to be at the time. By the grace of God, I still want the chance to be the mom that she deserves. and I am willing to do whatever it takes to make sure she never sees me high.

I thank God for this Oxford House because it is giving me hope on living life on life's terms without having to use and giving me the chance to be the mom and woman God intended for me to be all along.

### **Melissa Anderson – Alumna**

My Sobriety Date is October 15 2018! I came to Oxford House Ophelia in 2020 right out of prison with nothing to my name! Within a couple months, I became the chapter HSC! Oxford taught me how own my actions and to be an adult again. Since Oxford, I have gotten my license back after a 15-year suspension. I have a new car, s job that I had had for 3 years now, my kids back and our own home! Today, we are house-shopping and looking to buy my first house! Staying involved after moving out of Oxford is what has had helped me stay sober! ❤️

## **KANSAS**

### **Kasia Hoover – Alumna – Outreach Worker**

Oxford House was not my first choice of housing. As I neared my completion date of the re-integration treatment I was in, I had a housing voucher. I looked for housing with no luck; it just wasn't in the cards for me. I remember the in-person interview for the Monarch Oxford House. I was nervous and had no idea what to expect. I was in complete shock when they said "welcome home." I couldn't believe they accepted me for me. For once, being an addict seeking long-term recovery, I was accepted and I belonged.

During my membership, I learned a lot about myself and how to communicate effectively and what it really mean to be accountable for my actions. I was able to bring my children for the last 6 months of my membership and that structure and support enriched the experience of reuniting with my children. During the three years I lived in Oxford, I became peer-support certified and held our state budget and finance positions.

Since moving out, I have been an alumni officer for our state association, and I work for FORA as outreach in southeast Kansas. I'll keep sharing the Oxford concept and model so others like me can have this opportunity.

### **Preston Cressler – Alumnus**

I was born in a small town, fell in love with my high-school sweetheart and had a child with her within a few months of our graduation from high school. She passed away due to an asthma attack. It was one of the hardest things I ever had to deal with, OR SO I THOUGHT! I had a hard time dealing with it and so I turned to alcohol to help me deal with my emotions. Fast forward 8 years: I met a new lady who is still my wife today! When we first got together, I was drinking a lot and, once I found out we had a son on the way, she asked me to stop drinking. I had a hard time staying clean of alcohol and being able to hide it. Instead of getting sober I turned to using meth off and on for almost 10 years while having 3 more kids in the process. My wife ended up kicking me out to my drug use and I spiraled downwards from there.

I had multiple arrests and just couldn't stop using until one day I had just had enough. I had spent 12 days in jail which was normal at the time but, when I got out, I truly had nothing: nowhere to go; no money; literally nothing! I went to my sisters' home and asked if I could stay at their house till Sunday! The answer was yes! That Sunday has changed my life forever.

I got accepted into Shocker Oxford House in Salina KS. I was the newest member in Oxford in our chapter at the time so they decided I'd be one of the lucky ones to go to the World Convention! It was amazing and I wanted more! I came home from World and hit the ground running. I enrolled in college and didn't stop there. I graduated from college with a 4.0 GPA and I'm now a journeyman electrician. I have had the luxury of starting and helping open 5 Oxford Houses in my chapter in the last 2 year's I was chapter chair for a full year. I graduated drug court at all-star level 2 and I'm proud to say that my wife and I are living together again and have another one on the way!! I am also part of the Alumni West for the state of Kansas.

Oxford House changed my life and I will always be in debt to Paul but, with that being said, his dreams have become my dreams and I want everyone in the world to have the same opportunity I did! Thanks, Paul, and Oxford House for teaching me how to live! Clean and sober!

### **Ashley Hennessy – Alumna and Outreach Worker**

I am a woman in long-term recovery, and what that means to me is that I have not found the need to use any mind- or mood-altering substances since 03/24/14. I grew up thinking drugs and the drug life was normal so, at the age of 15, I by myself went down the same path I saw my parents take. For 15 years, I was in my addiction, I was what you would call a "trash can junkie", doing any drug I could get my hands on. When asked today what my drug of choice was, I say "yours, more and free." I wanted whatever you; had more of it; and I wanted it to be free. After fifteen years in and out of jails, treatment centers, and prison, I finally had enough. During my last prison stay, something clicked and I refused to ever go back. I got out on February 29, 2015, I ended up in treatment for about a month and a half and that's where I made the decision to start my life over.

I went to an Oxford House in Topeka, KS. It was the only women's house there at the time and it stayed full. After 6 months in Oxford House, I went and opened my first house for women with children and I opened 2 more during the following 2 years, I got involved I was part of chapter, I was the Kansas State reentry chair for 2 years, and helped plan the world convention



in Kansas City. I was finally part of something; I was accepted. Those are things I wanted my whole life.

In 2019, I was given the opportunity to go work for OHI in Arizona and that was the most amazing decision I had ever made! To open houses in a state there were none was such a reward on its own. I came back to Kansas in 2021 for some family issues and that's when I started working for Friends of Recovery Assoc., as an outreach coordinator in Topeka, where I advocate, train and assist Oxford Houses in Kansas. In 2021, I was awarded the Tony Perkins Award at the world convention. Oxford House saved my life and helped me figure out who I was and how to live. I learned to build incredible relationships with women because of my Oxford House experience. I will forever give back to the organization that taught me how to be me clean and sober. I just celebrated 9 years two weeks ago thanks to my Oxford House family. Oxford House for life!

## **KENTUCKY**

### **Courtney Fugate – Resident**

I moved into Oxford house right after I celebrated two years clean and sober. I got the opportunity to move into Oxnard House Rows, which is in Chapter 7 in northern Kentucky. They welcomed me with open arms, and they gave me love and care. I got the opportunity to be able to move into that sober living, two years clean and have one of my children live with me, I was only in Oxford house for less than two weeks when I got the opportunity to go to the World Convention last year. I learned so much in that little time about Oxford House and I came home on fire.

Three weeks after being home, I got asked to move to Oxford House in Middletown as a core member to help get that house back on its feet. Knowing that my outreach worker had that much faith in me gave me even more drive to do what was right for Oxford House. I am now the chapter chair for Chapter 13 and I hold two positions in my house. I am the fundraising chair and I also hold a state position. I continue to grow in Oxford House. As long as I continue to look at myself as art, and always remain teachable, then I will be able to do all things. My Oxford house family is huge and I will never be able to express how much gratitude I truly have for Oxford House.

## **LOUISIANA**

### **Shane Miller – Resident**

Been clean for seven months!

### **Roderick Jackson – Resident**

I'm a addict who's in recovery and looking for a better life. I made bad choices using drugs and I just want to get my life together!

## MARYLAND

### **Avery S. – Resident**

I came to Oxford House straight out of treatment in January 2019, I thrived, focused on my recovery and was able to celebrate my first year clean. The Spring and Summer of 2020 was a strange year for everyone and, unfortunately, I took my will back. I got honest with my housemates, and I was properly expelled, but I left on good terms.

I was able to reinterview, and I was accepted. I have been residing in an Oxford House ever since. I have been able to focus on my recovery, as well thrive outside as well. I work five days a week; my daughter is with me every weekend and she stays with me at the House. I have been able to pay off my debt, get my license, and get a car. I am forever grateful for Oxford House.

### **Tyra Brown - Resident**

I was addicted to pain medication, went to recovery and then to the Oxford house Saorsa. The Oxford House has helped me out in a tremendous way. I'm so grateful to be a part of such a great fellowship.

### **Wallace T. - Resident**

I grew up in South County Maryland until I was 12. I played different sports and was forced to go to church every Sunday. We moved to Annapolis, Maryland, when I was 13 years old and I started running into the street life: marijuana, alcohol and fast women. As I grew older, I started using and selling more narcotics. From the ages of 16 to 30, I had no responsibilities. Then I had my daughter and I got married to her mother. We were together for seven years. After my divorce, my addiction became unmanageable -- everything from PCP to alcohol. I saw myself putting drugs before everything else so I started my recovery in Mountain road for 30 days in Baltimore, then went to Evolve for five months; from there to at Opportunity Ministry for five months, Grace House for three months and then I landed at Oxford House. I am currently working at the Hvac apartment complex in Glen Burnie, and part-time I leave on the weekends.

## MISSOURI

### **Brent Ross – Alumnus**

I was in my active addiction for 10 years and on my way back to prison, lost and confused. I was addicted to the fullest and I didn't know what I was going to do with my life I knew that I didn't want to use anymore. I was sitting in Greene County on my way to do prison time when my sister-in-law suggested that I try to get into some kind of recovery program that she had heard about – a program called Oxford House. She had set me up with an interview with our outreach worker. He had set up a phone interview and let me interview with the House and hoped that I'd get in. I'd never been in a rehab nor had I ever been in a recovery house but I was lost, desperate, scared and just wanted something different. I had an interview and they accepted me but they didn't have a bed open yet and the judge wouldn't let me out unless I had a recovery

house. So, I sat in county for four more months and then I kept calling every week to talk to Mikey, the outreach worker. He never gave up on me and finally they had an opening at the Calvary House in Springfield, Missouri. A few weeks later, Mikey came to pick me up. He was the first person to ever give me a chance; the first person to believe in me and he gave me a sense of hope that maybe I am worthy of living a life without drug. I came to Oxford on September 19, 2021. I got clean in Greene County and I have stayed clean because of Oxford House. Oxford has taught me how to be a grown man; taught me how to do my own laundry; taught me how to cook; and told me how to be a productive member of society. They gave me hope and I haven't let go of it. I have been part of Oxford since that day.

I'm an alumnus of Oxford since 2022 and it took an army of recovering addicts and a recovery House known as Oxford and Chapter 4 to give me a sense of purpose; to give me a life that I never knew I could ever have without Oxford. I don't know where I would have been. I look forward to seeing the future that Oxford has to offer and I am in debt for the rest of my life to Oxford. Thank you for giving me this chance and showing me that life is better without drugs and for giving me the recovery I needed. Thank you, Oxford!

**Billy Cline – Resident**

I was a hard drinker for 40 year's. I got into Oxford House Moffett in Joplin, MO. Michael Gustafson introduced me to what Oxford House is. I have been to World, Missouri, and Oklahoma State conventions; it has been a blast. I have seen Springfield grow with eight Houses. I love it!

**Brandy Shannon – Resident**

I came to Oxford House, looking for a drastic change to help save my life. I wanted a new way of life -- a Recovery life. I needed and wanted what I saw everyone in Oxford House had. Lafayette

Oxford House, the 12 steps, DAA, my awesome SPONSOR, AND OXFORD HOUSE helped save my life. I'm very grateful for all of them."

**Rhianda R. – Resident**

My name is Rhianda and I am an addict. My clean date is November 7, 2019. I moved into Oxford House Aster in Kansas City, Missouri on November 9, 2019 when I was 2 days clean. I was scared and had lost all hope. My bottom could have been at lot worse honestly but, by the grace of God, I heard those 2 words from the women who interviewed me, "Welcome home!" and for that I will be forever grateful. Since living in Oxford and working my 12-step program of recovery, I have had a major surgery, navigated a major pandemic and all that came with that, a divorce, the death of my beloved grandmother, the death of my infant niece, career changes, my children growing up, friendships gained, friendships lost and living day by day- life on life's terms. And through it all I have stayed clean!

Oxford gave me the accountability I so desperately needed. But, after awhile, I realized Oxford has given me so much more. I have my voice back. Oxford has given me a safe place to come home to, and a place to work my recovery. I have regained my self-confidence and self-esteem and I have peace and serenity that I have never felt before. I don't have to hide behind drugs or alcohol any longer for people to like me or for me to be seen or heard. I stepped out of my

comfort zone and was elected HSC co-chair for Chapter 9 and then Chapter Chair. Being able to give back to the organization that has given me so much was life changing. Helping the newcomer in Oxford is something that (I feel is a privilege. To show them the way and replicate to them. I never want to forget where I came from. I love my house so much and the women and children I live with. They are my family. As I type this, I have tears in my eyes. Oxford House saved my life. Without a doubt. For that, I will be eternally grateful!

**Jessica Shockey – Alumna**

I am a recovering meth addict of 18 years. During my addiction I lost precious time with my two oldest children and broke my family's trust. Through my time in Oxford, I was able to rebuild those relationships. My family all trust me again and my kids are with me for the summer. I was also able to become a mother again and brought my newest daughter into the world on November 16th 2022. I was in the mommy and me room at Oxford House Hovey and my daughter was able to come home with me. Just recently in April we decided to move out and got our own place and start her a little family. I still stay involved with Oxford and get frequent calls for guidance. I also got a new job at the Springfield Recovery community center. Where I work with peers every day. Currently this week I am in my certified peer specialist training to get my CPS and enrolled in college to start in August. I owe Oxford my life.

**Lindsay Middleton - Alumna**

Hi, my name is Lindsay and I am an alcoholic and an addict. I am not going to go into my substance abuse history because that would take way too long and that isn't who I am today. Let's just say I definitely qualify and have completely changed my life around. I have lost many loved ones, been to jails, institutions and cheated death multiple times. Today, I am an Oxford House Alumna from OH Hammond Place, Chapter 9 in Kansas City, MO. I resided there for over 2 years and held every position in the house at least once. I also had the pleasure of serving as Vice-Chair, HSC Chair for Chapter & Secretary for the State Association. Along with those, I have been active with AA/NA, my sponsor, working the steps, sponsoring others, holding a job consistently for the past 4 years, and fixing my credit.

My relationships with others are strong and I actually moved out with two of the strongest people I know, who are also alumni! Oxford House helped hold me accountable, gave me a sense of responsibility, a purpose within the house and in life. It taught me how to have healthy relationships with women and how to lift others up instead of tearing them down. I learned how important it is to work a 12-step program of my own, outside of the house! If it wasn't for the tools that Oxford House provided me, I wouldn't have made it this far. I will forever be grateful to the women and men who welcomed me home!

**NEBRASKA**

**Troy Eskey – Resident**

I moved into an Oxford house 6 days sober. I haven't looked back. I have no idea where I'd be without the life I've found helping others. I moved in for me; now I'm able to help others.

### **Jeff Schmidt – Resident**

I graduated from the Salvation Army ARC in February 2021. On April 14th of 2021, I contacted Ken Norman and asked him about vacancies in Oxford. He told me he'd check and call me back. He called and said he had a house (Farnam House) that had openings and I should contact them. I interviewed and was in the same day. Without Oxford and the friends I have made there I would not be celebrating 4 years sober in August. I just celebrated 2 years at Farnam. A big 'Thank You' to the Farnam guys and especially to Ken, Yale, and everyone else in Oxford for all the support,

## **NEW JERSEY**

### **Roxanne LaPlant -- Resident**

My recovery didn't start to blossom until I moved into my Oxford House. I kept putting a couple months together and then relapsing. It wasn't until I added the sober living foundation and fellowship to my plan that my sobriety blossomed and I made it past a year clean. I'm a single mom and I live in a mommy and me Oxford House. This place has saved me and my daughter.

## **NEW MEXICO**

### **Jonathan Fields - Resident**

I was born in a small town in northern New Mexico. I started drinking when I was 8 and started experimenting at the age of 11!! I got hooked on methamphetamines and I continued doing that until I was 35!!! I'm ex-army and did that until I was 26 yrs old. I have three kids (two girls, one boy). I have been married for 14 years. I went to a year-long program and then came in to Oxford house on October 22, 2018 and I have been on this journey ever since!! I've done all the House positions and have done chairperson, secretary, and housing services chair!!

## **NORTH CAROLINA**

### **Bear Jarrells – Alumnus and Outreach**

My name is Bear and I'm a man in long-term recovery, what that means to me is that I've recovered from the seemingly hopeless state of mind and body because I've not taken a drink or used a drug since July 5, 2019 and I have worked a 12 -step program.

When I was getting close to the end of my stay at a rehab facility in South Carolina, I had no idea what the next move was going to be. My parents wouldn't let me stay with them and my brothers felt the same way; my now ex-wife was in Colorado and didn't want me. I was at a loss. It was suggested to me that I look at a sober living house in Charlotte, North Carolina. So, I did and I found one, it was not an Oxford House. It was an independently owned "company" that had a few houses scattered through Charlotte. I talked to the owner and, since my parents

were willing to ‘loan me’ (write a check to the owner so I didn’t use it on other stuff) the money to move in and live. I didn’t know what to expect and, when I got there, I was horrified. It was filthy, not welcoming at all, and very little direction was given. I spent my first few days alone, cleaning the filth to stay busy and going to meetings with the guys at night. I was sober so that was good, right? About a week in, I noticed my roommate was drinking in the room and hiding it. I brought it to the house manager's attention and he said, “It'll be taken care of”. I had that same talk two more times. After a little over a month, I had had enough. I was working on Step Three with my sponsor and I told him that I was done; I was going to give up and move back to Colorado, beg my wife to take me back, and grovel for my job. It was a ‘just leave in the middle of the night’ type of deal. While I was saying this, my sponsor’s phone got a text message from his buddy, an Oxford House outreach worker. It was asking if he knew anyone who was looking for a bed. A bunch of guys were moving out of one house on the same day. I was given a number and an address and was told to pick up the phone and dial.

The next day I had an interview at Oxford House Stillwell Oaks in Charlotte, NC. I was scared and had no idea what to do or what to expect. When I got to the house, I was welcomed at the front door, asked how I was doing, and asked if I'd like to see the place before we talked. As we were walking around the house, I noticed that it didn’t reek of depression and guilt, it smelled like fabulous and hope. By the time I was done talking and laughing with the guy who gave me the tour, he said, “I like your vibe.” Anyway, the members of that Oxford House voted me in and the next day I was moving in. That was on a Thursday. That Sunday was chapter and my sponsor said to get involved so, at that chapter meeting in new business, they asked if anyone wanted to be Housing Service Chair. Since no one volunteered, my hand went up. I had no idea what that entailed but I was now the Housing Service Chair for Chapter 22.

As I went to different houses, I learned the Oxford House Model, then I started teaching the model to others. I had found not a house but a home to live in, to grow in, to recover in. I know I was voted in as Housing Service Chair because no one else wanted to do it and the chapter members just wanted the meeting over, but I’m so glad it happened,

Oxford House has taught me how to work with people, how to budget money and time, how to take constructive criticism, and how to live with others when all I knew was how to take from others. Oxford House is a huge part of my story and I thank God every day that Oxford House was there for me and will be there for thousands more just like. It has given me a blessed home to live in, and I am proud to be employed by Oxford House too. I have never been disappointed in saying ‘yes’ to Oxford House. If you're new and reading this, don’t be afraid to raise your hand, volunteer for a committee, and get out of your comfort zone. I promise that it will change your life in the best way possible. Bear Jarrells, Outreach Worker, Wilmington. NC

### **Madison - Resident**

Hello, my name is Madison and I am a person in long-term recovery! To me that means that I haven’t found it necessary to change the way I feel using a mood- or mind-altering substance since December 10, 2019. I’m from the Outer Banks. I was raised in a one-parent household where I never saw any drinking, smoking, or breaking the law. I was brought up by my mom, aunt, and grandmother equally; they all played a monumental role in the person I am able to be in sobriety. I picked up my first drink when I was 13 and over the course of 10 years, I would cause chaos, destruction, and make choices that ultimately led me to be homeless at the age of

23. I hadn't made it to a quarter-century old, and drugs and alcohol were my God. I went to treatment in Raleigh, NC for the first time in 2018. After a year and a half of fighting myself, I was finally able to build a foundation in recovery and got sober the following year. I spent 390 days in treatment (that time) and moved to my first Oxford House on January 3, 2021. My initial goal was to just do enough so I would stay in compliance and after 90 days, I said I would be gone! Upon my first experience, I had no intention or desire to learn or be a part of anything, I just wanted to "do my time," and move on with this great new community I had built in recovery. I was participating in every area of my life except my House, I never attended any OH meetings or events, and it started to have an effect on my life. Our outreach worker came to our House meeting one week and warned us that if we didn't start participating, we could all find somewhere else to live.

After a very tough decision and months of fear, I moved to Oxford House Longfield; where I flourished. Over the next almost 2 years I became involved, I went to events, I was eager to learn everything I could about the Oxford House Model. I became chair for Chapter 11 and went to my first convention. I became immersed and passionate about everything Oxford House. I became helpful and responsible; a person who could be called on for a solution. Oxford house gave me much more than a place to live; I was given confidence, skills and patience as I learned to be an adult in recovery. I was even given a position as a Peer Advocate of Wake County. I get to spend my days being helpful and giving hope just as it was given to me by Oxford House. I've never been so honored to be a part of something. Thank you, Oxford House, for welcoming an alcoholic like me, for trusting an alcoholic like me; and for teaching me things I will carry for the rest of my life.

### **Sam Dunlap – Alumnus**

I was addicted to opiates for more than 12 years before coming to Oxford House. I had a great childhood and was very athletically talented. So, when I went to high school and was too small to go out for football, it made me feel as though I didn't fit in. I did wrestle and enjoyed that for my first two years of high school. It all started the summer after my sophomore year when I hit a growth spurt and gave up on wrestling. So, I began using drugs and selling them to fit in with the skateboarders and rebels. In my mind I was the man and I found my identity in getting people the stuff they needed. This identity would keep me on this road for many years ahead. But it started in high school with marijuana, ecstasy and cocaine. Then, when I got out of high school, I met a guy who traded me pills for my cocaine and I saw just how people couldn't resist these substances and I decided to try them. Eventually, I was not even making any profit because I was doing all of my profit. To make a long story short, I lost connection and I needed relief from withdrawal and was introduced to heroin.

I was in and out of jail and rehab for the next 10 years and I would have short stints of sobriety here and there. So, in 2020, I started going to a MAT Clinic and I responded to an ad about housing because I was about to be homeless. My parents were moving and I was not invited. So I got an interview and got accepted but later got a call that I wouldn't be accepted because a buddy I had used with was there and wasn't comfortable. Then I found another house even closer to the clinic and I got an interview and went for an in-person interview in February 2020 and I moved in on March 1, 2020. Neuse Timbers Oxford House gave me a great place to recover. I got involved in service work for my chapter. This would eventually open the door for me to become an Oxford House Peer Advocate. They took a chance on me and made me feel like I

had a purpose and identity again. This would lead me to another house that was in need of help. So I moved into Harps Mill in April of 2022. I moved out on February 15 of 2023. I am still a Peer Advocate and I will forever be indebted to Oxford House. It truly changed my life and has given me more than 3 years of clean time. Thank you, God, Oxford House and Morse Clinic (MAT), for giving me the tools that have given me the new life that I get to live today. "

### **Jessi D. – Resident**

I was raised in broken households. I grew up with divorced parents and a father who has spent the majority of his life in active addiction. He would take me with him whenever he would go to pick up drugs, and I would be stuck in a house with him as he would then use. I knew what drugs and their effects were before I reached the 5th grade. After elementary school, I lived solely with my mom. In my early teenage years, I would smoke weed and drink occasionally at parties. I knew to stay away from drinking heavily, pills, and needle drugs because I refused to go down the same path my father did. Once I reached 19. I went through a traumatic series of events that resulted in me having an abortion. I then entered a period of isolation and terrible relationships to shove down the emotions and the pain from what i had gone through. I told myself for years I would never do drugs stronger than pot or psychedelics because I didn't want to spend my life in and out of treatment like my father had. However, one day an ex of mine brought cocaine over to my house and I knew I had found my escape from the heavy emotions caused by my childhood and the past year of trauma. I was hooked instantly and knew I had a problem. So, I then broke things off with that ex in the hopes of cutting cocaine out of my life. A couple of boyfriends later, I started a relationship with my smoke shop co-worker. Working in smoke shops, I had access to plugs that could offer whatever I was looking for. We started down a terrible path of using every day. A year later I was hiding my addiction from family, friends, and even my boyfriend. I was snorting up to two grams of cocaine a day; I had a deviated septum, and my nose was turning black.

I was 19; it was the day after Christmas and my smoke shop boss sat me down for an intervention. Two days after that on December 28th 2022, my family surprised me with an intervention of their own and I was sent to treatment in Asheville. I spent 45 days in treatment, and when I got out, I immediately went to sober living. I found a home group, a sponsor, and I stuck with recovery as I was watching friends from my old life, and friends from treatment return to use and pass away due to use. As I watched so many people leave my life, I used it as motivation to work harder on my own recovery. On Easter 2023, I made the mistake of returning to my hometown to see my old boyfriend, and I had a glass of Champagne.

This relapse led me to have to leave my original sober living but Oxford House brought me in with open arms. I found a community of strong women whom I've built a bond – a bond I've never had before. I'm sober, with an amazing job, and I'm in an Oxford House of outstanding women. I'm finally seeing the miracles that so many people in recovery said to stick around for.

### **Mike Mcguirt – Alumnus and Outreach Worker**

My name is Mike Mcguirt. I grew up in Charlotte, NC. I started drinking and smoking pot at 14 years old. I was in a very abusive house where physical, mental and other forms of abuse were commonplace from the people who were supposed to love and protect me. The alcohol and pot numbed the thoughts and pain of those experiences. I quit school and left home when I was 17



years old to get away from that environment. I got involved with selling and using cocaine along with many other substances and became a very violent individual. I was in and out of jail for the next 20 years. I inflicted my inner pain on other people to make me feel better along with the substances which masked any feelings of remorse I may have had. Through my addiction and mental health issues being untreated for many years, I lost many things including family.

At 19 years old, I went to California, running from some federal charges and quickly fell into the same old street life that I had been living in North Carolina. After a stint in the Los Angeles County jail, I decided that I should come back to North Carolina. I was quickly picked up by the FBI and was sent to federal prison for 2 years. I was released from federal prison in when I was 23 and returned to my violent drug addictive lifestyle for the next 20 plus years. I learned how to manufacture methamphetamine and began to make, use, and sell methamphetamine on an extremely large scale. I had it made and found the love of my life. My run lasted exactly one year.

I can remember telling the guy that I was with when I made meth for the first time that I was going to prison. That's exactly what happened. On February 21, 2009, four swat teams raided the place where I was staying and my run was over. They told me that they had spent 1 million dollars to arrest me because of my past and they wanted to be ready for anything. When I got into the back of that sheriff's van, I felt an overwhelming sense of relief that it was finally over. I knew that I was going away for pretty long time and I was relieved to not have to live looking over my shoulder anymore. I was convicted on a host of charges and sentenced to 12-15 years in the North Carolina Department of Corrections.

At the near end of my sentence, I had to figure out where I was going when I got out. I had no family support or support of any kind for that matter. I had talked to a young guy on the prison yard about Oxford House. He had stayed in one in Greensboro. So, I sent a request to my case manager about Oxford House. She called me to her office one day and told me that I had a phone interview with Oxford House. I had a pre-screening interview with Jesse Wilson. I was really nervous because I felt like, with my prison history of violence and gang activity, that no one would help me and I would be released homeless. That's the hopelessness that incarcerated individuals feel. Well, only by God's mercy, did Jesse accept me for placement into an Oxford House.

I was released from prison on November 19, 2019 and went straight to Oxford House Mayridge in Charlotte. I didn't know how to live in the free world anymore. I had lived in violence for so long that it had become ingrained into me. The guys at the house saw my distress and dragged me to it seemed like 100 AA meetings. Then I got a sponsor and started to actually work a recovery program. Things have skyrocketed from there. Now I work for Oxford House and with the man who decided to take a chance on a man like me. I have the largest family anyone could ever ask or hope for and real friends whom I love and respect for not only their accomplishments but simply for the people that they have become. I also have the privilege to go back into the same prison that I spent time at and help men that are serious about changing their lives get the opportunity to do so. I have been blessed in so many ways today. I will forever be grateful to Oxford House for being here to help the broken have a place to heal.

### **Demetria Hunter – Alumna and Outreach Worker**

My name is Demetria Hunter. I am 40 years old and my clean date is December 7, 2021. What that looks like for me is: I haven't had a drink or any mind- or mood-altering substance in 537 days! I came to Asheville in 2018 after doing a 3-year prison sentence. For 23 years I had abused drugs and alcohol because I thought that was the life I had to live to survive.

I've had childhood traumas since I could remember (5 years old). As I grew up, I began committing crimes to survive life and to afford the constant abuse of drugs and alcohol. I continued to spiral out of control until the above clean date. One day after I couldn't find another bottom to hit or create, THE PAIN GOT GREAT AND I SURRENDERED! I found the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous, and it has saved my life! During this time I have been employed, obtained an NC driver's license, and now lease a vehicle. My credit score is climbing, and I have a checking account. These are the things I either lost during active addiction or never had at all.

In April of 2022, I completed SAIOP(substance abuse inpatient/ outpatient program), DWI assessments, and driving cases were either dismissed or taken care of after 7 long years pending. As I stayed free from all mind/mood-altering substances I decided to further my education in Peer Support through the Sunrise Community and Wellness Organization. In June 2022, I successfully completed a Peer support course called Peer University. At the end of the course, I was offered an internship for Outreach Programming in which I took part for several months. In August of 2022, I had the opportunity to take the CCAR Training course which, at the time became very overwhelming and I thought I wouldn't make it through it. But I kept going and graduated with an amazing group of men and women who continue to show me why I've stayed. In September of 2022, I had the opportunity to take the North Carolina Peer Support Specialist Training course which was very intense. This was a major turning point in my recovery. I began to see my assets and contributions to the community. I was able to understand fully why I'm here.

Today I am an Outreach Worker for Oxford House, Inc. It has been a journey and a lifetime to go. With my 12-step program, my sponsor, and such a great connection and network of people, I can live fully and whole one day at a time! I AM DEMETRIA HUNTER. "

### **Jessica Davis – Resident**

I have been using for ten years. I had tried rehab and doing it on my own a few times but never got far. Since I've been living in an Oxford House, I've been clean six months; I've got a job; I've gotten my relationship with my family back and its better than ever. I've got a job where I work with kids that I never thought I would be able to have. I'm lucky that I got the opportunity to move in my Oxford House. I truly believe I have made it this far due to the connection to the women in my House.

### **Robbie Sizemore – Resident**

"I fought a long 20-year battle with addiction. From alcohol to meth and back again. I hated my life and drugs only made it worse. One day I decided that enough was enough. Honestly, I looked in the mirror and was horrified at the skeleton that was looking back at me. Well, thank goodness that my higher power is a kind and loving and faithful God. That was January 5, 2021. I went to

jail that day for an outstanding warrant. I was able to detox and start eating better while I was in jail. I also decided I had to take action now because if I went back to the streets, I was gonna die and I wasn't ready for that. I wanted to live. So, I begged the judge to send me to rehab. He agreed and I was released to go into a year-long faith-based treatment. During that year, I struggled a lot. Surrender of the mentality we are accustomed to isn't easy. But, I learned to let go and let God.

I have a little over 2 years clean now and I'm not looking back. I like the person I see in the mirror now. I have a long way to go but God says He has a plan for me so I just keep grinding it out and doing the next right thing. I didn't get clean on my own. There are lots of people who pushed me and gave me hope throughout the process. And I could not have even put one foot in front of the other without my higher power. He gives me strength and courage to face every obstacle head on. I am overcome by His grace and His goodness.

Oxford house has made a HUGE impact on my life in recovery. What good does it do to stop using if you continue to be miserable??? I ended up spending an extra year at the treatment center. I worked as a staff counselor and enjoyed helping others. But I decided it was time to face the world and I found myself in sober living. After bouncing around from house to house and being ready to give up, I found Oxford House. I had a great conversation with Jimmy and moved into OH Dagobah a couple of days later. Now I'm surrounded by family on a daily basis. We have a tight-knit house and I feel at home there. OH has definitely improved my outlook on recovery and has given me peace for today and hope for tomorrow. God bless.

### **Alyssa Robles – Resident**

Prior to August 1st I had never considered the possibility of getting clean. I went to treatment for 3 months and while I was there, I was strongly urged to not go into Oxford House. My care team did not think I was ready for it. Being the stubborn addict I am, that made me want it even more. I reached out to several areas. After talking to one of the outreach workers in the triangle, she urged me to look into Wilmington. Man, did that change my life.

I arrived at College Rd Oxford House the same day I left treatment. I was immediately welcomed and felt at home. I was surrounded by women around my age with the same goals in life – to get our shit together and stay clean. I immediately got involved with housing services to help me break out of my shell. When I came into OH, I was shy and quiet. I kept to myself. Once I joined HSC and learned the OH way, I started to blossom into the kind of woman I always wanted to be but never knew how to be. I started internally in my own house that was struggling and eventually branched off to help other struggling houses. My HS Chair took me under her wing and trained me how to provide service to our community and how to support and encourage houses.

I've been part of multiple house clean-ups and rebuilding. I was blessed with the honor of being asked to help open a 5th women's house in Wilmington. I am now running for HSC Chair. I love everything OH has given me. I love the growth it has inspired in me. I've never been the kind of person who could understand principles over personalities and now, because of the OH way, I've learned how to accept constructive criticism and how to give it. I've developed a family not only with in my house but with the other 16 houses in Wilmington. Because of the principles in OH, I've become a dependable employee at my jobs that I've been working at over

the last several months without quitting or getting fired. I've been able to be a mom to my children. I've been able to be a sister to my younger siblings. I am finally returning to the daughter my parents raised and missed so much while I was using and becoming a walking corpse. Today I am alive. Today I am clean. Today I can give back to this recovery community to help the next drug addict or alcoholic coming in fighting for their lives to find a new way of living. OH will forever be my home even when it's time for me to move on into the next chapter of my life. Oxford House is the turning point of my life thus far and the gratitude I have is indescribable.

### **Loranda B. – Resident**

"I was Introduced in late 2021 to Oxford house and I stayed and was at the Grace house from September until February. I worked and remained sober while there but I didn't go to meetings or get a sponsor or do anything to help my recovery. I just worked and slept and stayed to myself. I ended up being dismissed in February of 2022 because I had a positive drug screen for alcohol I knew I hadn't drank but still was dismissed. So, I went and got a hotel room and within two days I decided that, since I had been accused of drinking, then I may as well do it. Had I been working a program I probably would had never made that decision; however, that's what I chose to do and within 4 hours of taken my first drink, I had crashed my vehicle into three other cars. I broke both legs and didn't know if I'd ever be able to walk again. That sent me down a very dark road and I was introduced to fentanyl and continued to drink even after I just went through all this. I was so mad. And I pointed fingers at Oxford for having me leave over a false positive; however, they didn't make me relapse or take that first drink. My relapse lasted almost 9 months to where I had overdosed 3 times within a week. I did all those things I swore I'd never do. The pain finally got bad enough to where I still was in a wheelchair, and I just wanted to be sober again and so I did what I was taught to do and I reached out for help. I was in a motel room nasty with bugs and just that feeling of being loaded, scared and lonely and me asking God to get me thru the night and I'd reach out for help then next morning and so that's what happened.

I made a call to some friends in an Oxford House and within 30 minutes they were there three cars deep and had me out of that motel room within 10 minutes. I went to detox and then I put my pride aside and called Indra house in Hickory and got an interview and they accepted me here. I've been sober almost nine months now and I'm finally walking again and out of a wheelchair. I still have a long road of recovery with my legs but, within 3 months of getting sober, I was able to finally after almost a year of being in that wheelchair, to take my first steps. My first steps were to a meeting of all places. Oxford House gave me a second chance and for that I'm truly grateful.

I think I needed that relapse and I needed to be humbled and go through what I did so that I don't go back. I try to be of service and work an honest program and be an example to the other women coming in. I still have a long way to go but I've learned it's not a race and it's okay to have bad days as long as I don't use – no matter what. I've met some solid women in recovery and I've opened up so much more this time. It's still hard for me but I'm doing it and I have Oxford House to thank for that because they've loved me while I'm beginning to love myself. I was Blessed to be able to go to the state convention and I learned so much about Oxford house and what they stand for and just seeing such pure joy was amazing. I never want to forget where I came from and I want to remain grateful and so I will continue to grow in Oxford House and continue to be of service and stay sober one day at a time.

### **Carlton A. Pannell - Resident**

My name is Carlton Pannell and I have been in Oxford House since October of 2022. I have grown tremendously in my recovery since I've been in Oxford House. Along with the NA fellowship and my Oxford House family, I am reaching goals that I never thought I would achieve. Oxford House has given me a safe clean environment in which to work on my recovery and learn how to become a productive citizen. I have been able to maintain a job, pay my bills and help others. I am grateful for Oxford House and will continue to be part of this great organization for a long time.

### **Dara Wolfe - Resident**

I was born on January 5, 1998. I am 23 years old and a Native American. I grew up in Robbinsville, NC. I have two brothers. Growing up, I was always around my parents' friends who liked to throw parties every day and drink beer. My parents would argue and fight every weekend and cops would get called. That led my dad to beating my mom up. When I was between the ages of 6-7, I went to Cherokee with my dad for the weekend and my cousin Punky and I were in the bath together. My dad was so drunk and he came into the bathroom where we were and yanked Punky up out of the bath and forced himself into her. I remember us screaming and my Aunt Michelle came running in. After this incident happened, I was not allowed to go back around my dad. A couple of days later, my aunt called my mom and told her that the feds picked up my dad at work and now he was in custody. Maybe two months later, we were sitting in a federal courtroom with my dad being sentenced to 15 years in prison for raping my cousin. After this happened, my mom's drinking got worse so eventually my brothers and I got placed among family. We stayed away for a year from my mom until she proved to courts that she was fit to take care of us. She immediately moved us to Candler, NC and married my stepdad, John. Eventually, after living in Candler for a school year, we moved back to Robbinsville with John. During this time, my brothers moved out and got their own place. I couldn't visit them unless John agreed. Also, when we moved back, my mom's health started to decline. In 2009, she got put on dialysis; she had to go 3 times a week to get her blood flushed out. Being in school and trying to take care of my mom was really hard. She lost her eyesight so she always needed help with walking places and I was the only one there to help her. Later on, we moved back to Snowbird and she bought her own house. I was still going to school and taking care of her. I ended up graduating in June 2016.

I moved out of my moms and moved to Bryson City NC. Whenever you graduate high school, the tribe gives you a big amount of money. I got a check for \$127,000 and met my kid's dad, Jordan. At the time I didn't know he was so heavy into his drug use that I used to buy his drugs for him. At this time I was experimenting with weed and then later on I was doing roxy 30s, meth and Fentanyl. I was buying bulks of weed and 30s to sell. I ended up getting pregnant. I eventually moved back with my mom and lived and took care of her. During this time of me moving in with her, she decided to quit going to dialysis because the doctors told her that it wasn't working for her. She knew I was pregnant before I even told her. At the beginning of April, she went on hospice. I was the only one who she allowed to take care of her and give her morphine. She passed away on April 8, 2018, three months before my son, Phillip, was born. On July 29, I was admitted into mission for appendicitis. While in the hospital I had gotten my appendix out and not a day later I gave birth to Phillip naturally. During my hospital stay, I had

numerous surgeries such as bowel obstructions and messing with my intestines and later I got sepsis. During this time, I had flatlined on the operating table and they called my family in to make a decision. I ended up on a ventilator. Coming out of coma, I had to learn how to write and walk again. I have never seen so many people in my life who cared so much about me. Phillip got placed with his grandmother until I came out of the hospital. Whenever I came out of a coma, the police department was there to get my side of the story. My older brother Joe had gotten locked up for touching his girlfriend's daughter. The police came and asked what I remembered him wearing and how he would act whenever he would come and see me. He is currently in prison now until 2029 so he got 12 years.

I went back home with my family and took Phillip with me. During this time, I still did not give up on drugs. I was still trying to function while taking care of him. Jordan and I tried raising Phillip in trap houses until finally safety got involved. I was so into following his dad around that I didn't care to see him or send him presents. I was so far gone, living in trap houses and sleeping on couches. I started shooting fentanyl and meth and got locked up in jail for violating probation. I eventually moved away from Cherokee to Sylva, thinking I could just do a little.

I started calling around Asheville, got accepted into a respite home and then, a week later got accepted into an Oxford House. Oxford house has changed my life and living with strong women in recovery helps and gives me hope. While being here, I had stuff brought to my attention that I didn't realize I was doing. Oxford House helps me be more involved in my recovery and do service work. Oxford House is a new way of life if you apply yourself and are willing to do the work.

### **Matthew J. - Resident**

I stayed in an Oxford House before and had over 18 months when I left. Stayed clean for another 9 months, then I relapsed. I decided to come back for the accountability.

### **Kimberly Vandyke - Resident**

My name is Kimberly VanDyke. My recovery date is 4/24/2023. I've been a member of the Winstead Oxford House in Rocky Mount, NC since April 23, 2023, and I am truly grateful for each and every day.

I remember the day I had a newborn and a one-year-old and I calling my mom and telling her I needed her to take temporary custody of my children because of the relationship I was in and wanting to get out and being in fear that I could not care for my children alone. If I left, I was walking away with nothing but the clothes on my back because the house and vehicle belonged to his family. I feared his family taking my children away and splitting them up or even my never seeing them again if I chose to leave and knowing that I couldn't stay because I was unhappy. I contacted my mother and she said yes and drew up the papers. The day I went to see the lawyer I remember holding my youngest and looking at my oldest and saying to myself that this will be ok; however, it wasn't. As I signed the papers, my soul left my body, I handed my boys over and went outside. I hit the ground and cried. What had I done? But, at this moment, I knew I couldn't take care of them on my own; I couldn't even take care of myself, so this was the right decision – or was it. This was the start of my addiction. I've been an addict and alcoholic since that very day; I would get clean and sober every time I went into jail or prison or get sick

and tired to the point of going into rehab; however, every time I got out I always found myself in the same situation and would relapse. During my journey of addiction, I fed into prostitution, stealing, lying, and no true friendships. Everything was about a dollar, ride, or one way or another to feed my addiction. I didn't care for others, I didn't even care for myself. I guess it's safe to say I was aiming for death. I couldn't tell what was real and fake. I didn't care. Men came and went, friends came and went, and I went through homeless, being raped, abused, and broken, but none of this ever mattered. I didn't like the person I had become. My life was a lie. I lied to the people I loved and to anybody that bothered to ask me a question got the same. The worst lie is a lie I told myself, the biggest one was it's all going to be okay and I am ok, but was it? Was I? I came to a fork in the road, death, and imprisonment, everything was a one-way road and that road was my way, I lost self-respect, I hated myself, I hated everybody, but the one thing I really lied about was that I loved my children. Don't get me wrong, I did and do love my children, however as I sit here today, I remember all the broken promises, the holidays I missed, the tears my children cried when I said I would call or be there, and never did. I remember my boys refusing to go to sleep one night as they told my mother, "My momma said she is calling me to pray and talk", my boys cried themselves to sleep that night as my mother held them and she cried too. I gave my family a number of endless nights worrying about where I was, am I ok, am I dead or alive, or even where to start looking for my body, so many times they prayed I would get picked up and people would actually let me sit there and stop getting me out. That was my biggest thing every time I got locked up. I always found a way out, through lies and prostitution and again my addiction. I can say my addiction always had a different idea for me than God had for me, but I see today that I had to experience and live that life to be able to be where I am and be able to help myself and others.

On April 23, something within me sparked and I cannot explain it. It was something bigger than me, but it was powerful. I surrendered and contacted the Oxford House with both feet and full force. I was tired and it was time for a change. I got accepted in and the tears began to fall although my addiction still tried hard to play with my mind. On April 24, 2023, I packed all my items and sat them on a corner waiting to be picked up to start my new road of recovery at the Winstead Oxford House and I was letting nothing stand in my way. I didn't know what to expect, I didn't know how to act. I was all in and quickly realized this was what I needed. The ladies really welcomed me in and, at this point, it was my first REAL time at not only recovery and myself but true friendships that are going to last a lifetime. I am forever grateful to the woman, outreach, and Oxford House as a whole. I am pushed to be all I can be and I am truly grateful for that. I feel that sometimes we may get stuck and, when we get stuck, we need a reminder to be all that we can be and offer ourselves more. That is where friendship comes into play. My friends offer me advice, suggestions, a listening ear, and the power to be all I can be. This testimony and the ability to be able to tell you all my story is one!

Today, on July 7, I'm 75 days clean and sober, becoming a productive member of society, realizing I have strong leadership skills, getting dentures after 16 years without, being baptized on July 16, seeking better employment as I am currently a crew trainer management at McDonald's full-time, working on a relationship with my children and family, the possibility of a position at the hospital and every day growing and improving more and more. I have a sponsor with whom I am working my steps. A lot of people in the house as well as outside look up to me in more than one way and sometimes I don't know how to take it, but I do gratefully. At one point, I didn't even want to be in my own skin. Now it's crazy to me when newcomers say they just want to be around me or that they look up to me or come to me for advice, today I was asked

how do you get to be so positive and beautiful. My answer was gratitude, the program, and friendships, but also a look in the mirror as a reminder of how far I really have come. Although my life is a working process and I know all will come within the right time, My life is amazing today, I love Kimberly today and I truly love myself; I work and try to help others every day as well as myself. Today I am grateful to be alive, clean, and sober, and I love myself for I am finding out that I am an amazing individual, and I am here to say recovery is possible if you are willing and only want it. Don't allow anybody or your past to hold you back from what you are designed to become. You are amazing, give yourself a pat on the back for you are doing the thing, keep pushing!

### **Christina Cross -Alumna**

Hi. My name is Christina Cross. I am 48 years old. I started using at age 13. My life consisted of anything that made me feel better. I continued to use off and on using different substances and then quitting just to pick up another in its place. It was not until I turned 42 years old and ended up in prison (A gift) that my life would take a drastic turn. I met many different people who would come and share good news to us. These same individuals picked me up from the prison and brought me to their homes. As they looked for a home for me, the Oxford House was suggested. I was scared as ever to be put in a home with people I didn't know. I had been kicked out of so many places and the ones I didn't get kicked out of, I ran from. Our Oxford House had an outreach worker living in the house and she told me that I had to hit the ground running, if I wanted to make it.seemed like I took that seriously and got a job, a sponsor, and had the Oxford policy as direction of how to live in a house and respect others; how to clean; how to make my bed and even how to stay still long enough to feel pain and be ok. There are so many gifts that were received just by walking out to the best of my ability the Oxford way.

I stayed in the Paramount House for 3 years and now I rent a house. The job I started at \$7.50 an hour now pays me \$18.50 an hour. My husband and I have been married for 7 years and are now in a position to own our own home. All just from showing up, the best I could (not perfectly) and sticking and staying. I am forever grateful for being given an opportunity to live in a beautiful home, safe from drugs and alcohol and having accountability to get this thing called recovery. Thank you, Oxford!

### **Jessica Scollins – Resident**

Hello my name is Jessica Scollins. When I first heard about Oxford House, I was unsure about it but I'm very glad I decided to take the advice from my peer support from my IOP class. That class was life changing. I learned a lot in there that I use everyday. I moved into my first Oxford House on Monday, October 24, 2022. I'm now coming up on 11 months of being in Oxford House. When I first moved here, my role was to be chore coordinator, so that was something that I was familiar with. Then as time went on, the rules were tough. Having a curfew makes sense and I'm glad that I decided to go through with it. It took me about 3 months until I landed a solid job with 40 hours a week. I've been a Flooring Specialist at The Home Depot and I absolutely love my job. They always say the hurricane comes before the sun. The struggle was real; moving to Raleigh was huge, let alone moving into a house with women. Living in Oxford House has shown me a lot like "Jessica, you're not the only one going through something and you're not perfect." Saying the Serenity Prayer at every House meeting really hits different in my life now. I was put on contracts in Oxford House but I listened to the consequences and



actually sat with myself and I have learned a lot, about helping the next person. I've done a full circle. I volunteered at a thrift store I'm familiar with and, for once, it felt good in my life to give back. I also attended my first 3 mandatory Chapter 21 meetings and signed up to be the Chapter Secretary and I love it. I have a place in the chapter and I have a voice. Within 5 months of being the chore coordinator, I was made the treasurer of the house and this is where I learned how to budget and have a game plan for the important bills that held priority of the house. Then I was nominated by the chapter to attend the OXFORD HOUSE STATE CONVENTION. I SHARED LEADERSHIP & SHARED RESPONSABILITY. Having the privilege to attend an Oxford House convention was an opportunity of a lifetime and I learned a lot. GOD IS GOOD. After my 6-month term for that role. I was made the check signer of my house and made the housing services committee member and I think that is the best role I could have gotten. I've also been nominated to attend the Oxford House World Convention in September; by then, I will be 10 days away from a year sober.

Moving into Oxford House was handsdown the Best Ultimate decision I've ever made in my life. It has shown me so much of who I am as a person and what I'm really capable of. I've amazed myself and I'm so proud of myself and where I'm headed I've made life-long sisters in Oxford House and I continue to help the next person. It's an overwhelming feeling of JOY when you take you out of self and put your focus on the newcomer. I love my sobriety, my sponsor, my family, my house, my job, my Oxford House Alumni. Every day I Thank God for the life I live. Its because of Oxford House that I can help spread the word. My name 'Jessica' means 'By the Grace of God'; 'Scollins' means 'To be of service to others.' I'm here loud and proud living out my name.

### **Brooke Jackson -- Resident**

HELLO! My name is Brooke Jackson and I am a grateful recovering addict! I am writing this letter to express my gratitude to the recovery process and how my journey in Oxford has impacted my life and my recovery. I started my recovery journey in July of 2019 by going to treatment. I did a lot of relapsing and had a lot of stays in hospitals and institutions, all the while remembering recovery and what it could bring to my life if I really gave it a chance. In December of 2019, I decided to make the conscience decision to go to treatment again after a 4-month binge because I got tired! I was ready to give this thing a chance. In early February of 2020, I came to the conclusion that I needed to take another route and decided I needed to be somewhere where I could solely focus on myself ,and develop skills of independence so I could function like a normal adult in society. The treatment program I was in was a good program; I won't deny that; but the notion of being my sisters' keeper to the point where if I saw someone doing something off the wall or out of character, I needed to hold them accountable, even if holding that person accountable disturbed my mental health, became too much causing an actual decline in my mental health was leading me to being hospitalized. I had no problem holding my peer accountable, but it began to be excessive to me because I found myself so worried about pointing out other people's flaws and character defects that I wasn't looking at myself, and the part I played in things. It triggered me because my whole life in addictive addiction that was a huge character defect of mine, worrying about others and not worrying about myself.

So, one day I heard a few people talking about Oxford House and I did my research and asked a lot of questions. From my understanding, being in Oxford would give me the opportunity to grow independently and develop skills to readjust to the normal world all the while abiding by

rules and structure. And I was okay with that. I understood that I was still have to hold people accountable but it gave me space to just focus on me, and growing and learning myself and how to coincide with those around me. I joined my first Oxford House in February of 2020. I was a nervous wreck but was anxious to start a new venture in my life. The Oxford house gave me a sense of peace, it made me feel like I belonged again.

Since 2020, I have relapsed countless amounts of times. I found myself tired, but not tired enough to give it my all until November of 2022 when I got back in recovery and got into another Oxford House. Something about this go-round was so different in a positive way. I said to myself “This must be a special place because no matter how many times I’ve left, I was welcomed back with open arms”. I’ve encountered a few bumps in the road but NEVER gave up. Living in Oxford has taught me unity, unconditional love and respect for others in this process. I’ve obtained leadership skills and most of all my life in recovery has prospered so much. I love helping the newcomer get adjusted because I understand how it is being new and scared of what is yet to come. Having a warm smile greeting you coming into a new experience can put all that fright at ease.

At first I struggled with the thought of living with a whole bunch of other women that I didn’t know, until one day I realized we all have one special thing in common, we all are fighting to stay clean and change/save our lives and that alone put my soul at ease. Since being in Oxford I have managed to stay clean; I work; I am enrolled in school full time getting a business studies certificate and I have aspirations to go back to school after I have completed that. I have dreams of being a substance abuse counselor. I have my children back in my life, my relationship with my family has improved and, most importantly, I have unconditional love for God and myself as well. These were all things that I did not have while I was in addictive addiction. I can honestly say being in an Oxford House has saved my life and for that I am forever grateful!

## OKLAHOMA

### **Johnny Worst – Resident**

I sacrificed to stay sober. If I give up all I love in order to be right, some would say I was selfish. I would say, No I was selfish when I was running down dope, getting locked up away from all I loved. At least now I can be more a dad then I was ever before. I had to give up what I thought was my life anyway but, remember that Jesus said, “Let the dead take care of the dead” so I was dead only to be brought back to life, thanks to what the Oxford House had to offer and being led by God. I love the fellowship; the compassion to help when one may be about to fall; to feel safe when I can't remember ever really feeling safe in who I was; the freedom to help guide and support the people in our house. I have so many more things to say but I just think it's already in front of us – God's purpose to love and to stand. I love all of you.

### **Steve Dover – Resident**

My name is Steve Dover and I'm an alcoholic. My sobriety date is December 28, 2018. Looking back on my life, the first time I drank alcoholically, I was about 14/15 years old. I was at a friend's house drinking whiskey and Coca-Cola and when we ran out of pop, I kept drinking the whiskey. I went home and threw up on my brother, and my parents didn’t make me go to school

the next day. So, incidentally, it went without consequence. As the years went on, other things started to enter my life such as drugs. Years went by that I didn't drink but not a day went by that I wasn't on some sort of mind-altering substance. As the kids got older, with police knocking on my front door, my drug use slowed down and I found alcohol again. That's been over 20 years ago. Then commenced the daily drinking. Not every day was heavy drinking, but it was daily drinking. Fast forward to 2014, my wife passed away; she was not an alcoholic. So, to me, my voice of reasoning was gone. I began drinking to oblivion daily.

By 2016, I made my first trip to the hospital. There, a man brought the message of AA to my room, and when I was released, I asked him to sponsor me, and he agreed. I was probably the worst sponsee that walked. I lied to him, and I don't know how many times my sobriety date changed in the next ten months or less. I called him on November 09, 2016, and told him I would call him back in 2 weeks. The next time I called him was from the same hospital as he first came to visit me. He told me when I was ready to call him again. So, I ended up from that point on just going to work and going home to drink. Then, in December 2018, I went to the emergency room in Pawhuska and, just like out of the book, I begged the doctor for help. He sent me to a detox for 10 days and they told me there that my best chance for sobriety was to go to rehab. So, from there I went to Valley Hope in Cushing. At that time, they had an open campus; you couldn't leave the city, but you could go to town. I was so afraid that I would drink that when I was asked to go places, I would say yes but when the time actually came, I would hide in my room.

My caseworker told me that my best chance at sobriety was to move into a sober living house. There were some groups bringing a message into the rehab and Oxford House did a presentation. Some guys from the Oxford House Veritas in Stillwater brought the meetings into the rehab center with one of the groups and my caseworker contacted the House and they had an opening. They accepted me.

On the night that the group brought the meeting to the facility, some guys from that House carried the message in, picked me up and took me home in Stillwater. I started attending AA meetings. One of the men that brought the meetings to the rehab was also attending meetings in Stillwater and he became my sponsor. And as angry as I was with God, I had a safe place to start working the steps. By the time I did my 5th step, I was sitting in a double bedroom in an Oxford House in Stillwater and that was when I realized God did not make mistakes. What happened is he is a God of Mercy, he stopped my wife's suffering and put me in a place where I could work the steps and discover that working with others was truly what serenity was for. It's been over 4 years and I still live in an Oxford House by choice. I want to make sure that the next person who is scared they will drink, or use has a safe place to come and work a program of recovery so they can teach someone what recovery is. And that every suggestion they give you, is really a way to get you closer to God.

### **Randall Revels – Resident**

I got out of prison as a re-entry guy in Enid Oklahoma as one of Misty Hahn's guys at Citadel I was scared at first and was faking it to make it; just going to meetings to be able to stay and working my first legit job ever at boomerang diner on Oakwood. I was scared; I was nervous. I wasn't really a part of the House until Misty came in one day and said that there would be a softball tournament against the sheriffs. I was still on parole at the time and had a bad rap with

the police my whole life. She said this would be a good way to get back at the cops - lol -so I said. "Screw it; I'll step out of my comfort zone and do it." Boy, was I right! What is the best feeling in the world: playing against law-enforcement; sticking it to the man." But that they changed my life forever and made me feel comfortable with who I was. It made me feel like I was worth something. It made me feel alive and from that point on I wasn't faking it to make it anymore. I was becoming the person I wanted to be for the rest of my life, sober, happy and joyful and with more gratitude that I could ever possibly imagine.

I got a sponsor, and started working my steps and I set out on the mission that when somebody called me and said that they had a House in Norman that could use some guidance, I said, "Sure why not? It was closer to my family, so I packed up and I moved to Norman. I got actively involved and started putting my face out there, and, when the time arose, I stepped up at chapter elections with full intent to run for chapter secretary but then I heard that the Re-entry position was open. I said, "What's that? I am a Re-entry guy. I know what that's like. What's the Re-entry position like?" Ashley told me that it was a lot of dedication, and I would be working with guys such as myself as they got out of prison and were trying to better themselves so I jumped on it. I ran and I won. It was the best feeling of my life. I had a purpose I had hope for once in my life; my life had meaning. I got my first reentry guy. He did really well. I got my second one and he did really good. I got my third one and he didn't make it. He went back out but. you know what? As bad as it hurt, I didn't let that break me down. I continued to get my name out there and I continued to help people and I continued to be the person that my higher power wanted me to be and the person that Oxford had taught me to be – a giver and somebody who had moral values.

Then another thing came along. The central Oklahoma State reentry chair opened up. Whoever got this, would be the first one in a long time. I ran and another guy and I tied. It came down to who had what ideas for this position. Oh, I was so excited because" Boy, did I have some big plans for this" and I got the position. Oxford has taught me how to step out my comfort zone and be somebody that I never thought I could be and helped me reach goals and achieve things that I would never in my life thought possible.

This is a place that I call home. I've been in Oxford going on two years. Am I ready to move out? Probably not. I still feel like I have some good left to do. Even when I leave Oxford, I will continue to show my presence and show my love for this place one day. I hope I get to work for the organization that saved and changed my life. I love my Oxford family and I wouldn't trade you rejects for anything in the world!

## OREGON

### **Ariel Albright – Resident**

I was already almost 18 months sober when I came into Oxford. I was employed as a manager at a restaurant. I was devoting most of my time to work and putting my recovery second. I realized I didn't want to slave away anymore and wanted my recovery to be the priority in my life. While in Oxford House, I became a peer support specialist so I could use my lived experience to walk alongside other alcoholics and addicts. I found out what it meant to be of service, and always said yes to commitments. I stepped up to learn what I could about Oxford

so I could model a successful sober life to the girls coming in after me. I have done every position in my household and became involved in chapter as our auditor, then our treasurer and now I am our cochair. I learned how to show up for people and listen and be accountable. I had spent the entire time of my addiction fighting to live a better life for my daughter and I went from an intravenous user to a case manager in a local homeless shelter. I've built my credit up bought my first car and now I'm looking to move forward and join the Alumni family! I am so grateful to Oxford for teaching me how to be a productive member of society, for housing me while I changed my behaviors and all the women in my house for supporting me on my sobriety journey. The Oxford model is responsible for people overcoming the obstacles they faced after active addiction. We are so lucky to follow our predecessors. My name is Ariel and I am a grateful recovering addict. C+A <3

### **Lisa Gates – Resident**

I first started using meth when I was 14 years old and that eventually led me to a car wreck where I messed up my back. The doctors gave me lots of opiates. Then, in 2014, I found out I was pregnant with my daughter Kaylee. So, I checked myself into rehab so that I could be a better person and mother for my daughter and she would have a better life. I had two and a half years clean when my mom got put on hospice. She died December 19th of 2019. I had two and a half years clean but 6 months after she passed away I end up relapsing from not dealing with her death. I would get a couple months clean here and there and then go right back to using. That led me to a bad place where I was held hostage; tied down; had my finger broken and had to escape with my daughter. DHS then took custody of my daughter.

I moved into Oxford House to get stable. Now I am working at Subway and I'm going to get my daughter back soon. I am now stable and doing wonderfully. I have lots of support at the Oxford House. I am the house service representative, so I take the applications and do interviews. It helps me to remember where my addiction took me. Now my life is better and it continues to get better every day and I continue to grow. I am now 61 days clean. And tomorrow I am filling out an application for Kik housing so that way I can get my daughter back. I want my recovery and I'm surrounded by strong people who live in Oxford who also want the recovery which helps. I take one day at a time and remember to work just as hard for my recovery as I did for my addiction.

## **SOUTH CAROLINA**

### **Jerry J. – Alumnus**

A life-saving experience! When I arrived at the Cherry Grove Oxford House, I had never heard of or known there was such a place. I was warmly greeted the moment I walked in the door. As the days ticked off, I was reading and learned what Oxford House has to offer. I never planned on being in recovery but a few weeks. A week later I'm in the hospital. I have COPD and I had a flare up and off to the hospital I went. While in the hospital for 7 days, the guys in the Oxford Houses in the area got together twice to bring me a meeting. They cared. I got home and was welcomed back. It was a good feeling that all these guy's actually care about my recovery. I enjoyed learning about and visiting other Oxford Houses. Soon I knew I was going to stay. I was getting to go to conventions that were all about Oxford House and cared about the men and

women in them. I got really comfortable with our chapter and got more involved. I transferred to another Oxford House that was closer to the area of houses in our chapter and after I became the Chapter Chair.

I blamed the Oxford House for my new life – a life I'd never known. All I can say is, thank you, Oxford House. Because of you, I'm still clean – over 5 years now. Living on my own and going to meetings, I can still help the men and women that are newly coming to the program. I refer that the Oxford House is going to give them a better chance of making it. I'll always be an alumnus and I always put the Oxford House in my story. Thank you, Oxford House. You made the difference 🙏😊

### **Austin Land – Resident**

When I got released from jail back on 02/29/22, I knew that if I didn't find somewhere to go, I was going to go back to what I knew (drugs)! I started going to meetings and ran into Lisa L. As she was speaking at the meeting, I went to her and she gave her story. I reached out to her, wanting more information about the Oxford House and she gave me the information I asked for. I still thought maybe I needed some kind of treatment center but also knew that my home town was a BIG issue for me as well. I then got accepted into Oxford house Crescent Hill In Columbia, SC, a few days after. So I moved to Columbia into the Oxford House and that specific location at the time didn't work out for me so I moved to the Forest Acres house shortly after. I walked to my meetings every day, have done everything that was required of me by the Oxford House rules and I've been here a year now. ❤️

Oxford House saved my life and helped me tremendously through this journey! I honestly don't have a clue where I'd be today if I hadn't found out about the Oxford house. It's given me the structure that I needed; the accountability I needed; and it helped save my life! I love being active in the Oxford House chapter meetings, the unity events and. if I could rate Oxford House. It's most certainly a 5 out of 5! I'm so thankful for ALL that it has done for me!!

### **Donald Avery – Resident**

Been in Oxford House a year and 2 months and am doing good.

### **Maggie S. – Alumna**

After being arrested for DUI for the 3rd time and waking up in jail, I knew I needed help. My children were taken from me and I was at my rock bottom. I checked into detox in Greenville, S.C., broken and totally defeated from the disease of alcoholism. I had nowhere to go. I then went to a 30-day program in Orangeburg. It was there that I heard about Oxford House for the first time. I chose Columbia S.C. and was accepted into Elmwood Park Oxford House. I was able to recover in a safe place and be guided by other women who had been in my shoes. I started working the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and putting in the work to be sober and healthy. All the while I was being supported and held accountable by people in my community. After 6 months I was able to move my youngest daughter, Hazel, into Oxford House with me. We grew and thrived together. I became chapter chair and continued to work my program. After 2 years and 4 months in Oxford, I was able to move out and get my own place and also get my

12-year-old daughter back. I truly believe Oxford saved my life. I was able to work on myself without fear. I will be grateful for that for the rest of my life. Now I'm a functioning member of society, a good mom, a reliable employee and I'm at peace. Now I can carry the message. Thank you, Oxford! We do recover!

### **Mathew Holmes – Resident**

I was abusing opioids for close to a year and I wanted to stop, but I needed help. I got accepted to Morris Village in Columbia, SC at the beginning of June 2022 and completed a 28-day program. I then was accepted into the Summerlea Oxford house in July. I've been here almost a year and it's been great!

### **Alexis Beyer - Resident**

Hey y'all! My name is Alexis and I am indeed an addict. I am 28 years old and I live at Oxford House Parkins Mill in Greenville, South Carolina. I have been clean for 16 months now and I give all the glory to my higher power. I was a chronic relapser. I added it up and I have tried 25 different times in facilities and institutions. I just couldn't stay clean. I kept running back to the same people, places, and things. I couldn't sit with myself. I lost my daughter, never had a work ethic, had low self-esteem and some legal issues. I decided to try 1 more time. I went to a detox in Rock Hill only planning to stay that 5-7 day stay. Then I was offered their 6-week program and I completed that.

My counselor suggested that I continue in long-term recovery and try to go into an Oxford House. I called Oxford house Parkins Mill for a phone interview. I was so nervous! I knew I was willing to do whatever it took to stay clean & get back in my daughter's life. I was accepted in!! I have been a part of Oxford House for 15 months now. It truly has saved my life. I have learned so much while being in Oxford. I am a HSC officer, (I hold the secretary position), I have helped open new houses, fill houses up, and teach women and men what I have learned. I have my daughter at Parkins Mill for the summer. I am employable today. I am happy, joyeous, and free!! Oxford House provided me safe, stable living. It has shown me how to pay bills, work for what I want, and gain amazing friendships and relationships that will last me a lifetime. I am truly blessed today.

### **Micah K. - Resident**

I was a homeless alcoholic and lived in my car over 6 months. I got into an Oxford House and have been clean ever since.

### **Courtney James - Resident**

As a homeless addict with nothing left to lose, I was hopeless and ready to try anything, I didn't expect the enormous amounts of support and recovery help when I applied or walked into Oxford House. They had rules and it was to create structure, I loved my house specifically (Lula Spartanburg) because we had NO drama. We have had mild cases since I've been here but, as long as I continue and work these steps, I know I have 5-6 woman standing behind me no matter what. It is the best gift I've received in life other than my children, mom's I never knew I'd have, sisters from all over, so many stories I could relate to, and, most importantly, love and peace. I

wouldn't be here at all, but especially in this position] without Oxford (Lula Spartanburg) and, most importantly, my amazing women who fight for me daily. Much love - Courtney

## TENNESSEE

### **Hannah Orme – Resident**

Hi! My name is Hannah Orme and I am a beyond-grateful recovering addict. Like most, I came to Oxford lost, ashamed, scared and unclear of what the future may hold for me. All I knew was that I truly wanted to be clean this time and be a better mother to my children. I'm a chronic relapser so this time around I was ever more afraid I would not get it together in time before I lost my life. I got a job, started working a thorough program, and made very close friends with the ladies in the Oxford House. As time has passed, I've come to realize life is short and I don't want to waste any more time on getting high.

I'm coming up on my one-year birthday of being clean! I can honestly say that without being here at Oxford House Nyes, that wouldn't be possible. I'm an assistant manager at my job, I have three of the most amazing best friends in this house, and my babies have the best version of their mom back! I would have never thought I would be the president here when I started out and be helping others like I do now. Oxford is my HOME! I love sharing this place with everyone I know and showing how it has saved my life! I am now certain of my future and can 100% say without a doubt that I love my life that God has laid before me. Thank you, Oxford!

### **Melissa White – Alumna**

I'm moved into with 6 months clean and I grew from there. I have since been able to get a job in recovery, get my own place, a new car, and become Oxford House Alumni Chair for TN. Oxford House truly saved my life!!!

## TEXAS

### **Shawn Perkins -- Resident**

I came to Oxford House in 2020 and it truly saved my life. It allowed me to know that I could be someone again even after all those years of addiction and going to prison. I had lost all hope and dreams and truly didn't believe I could be a good person again or enjoy happiness. After a year in Oxford, I decided to spread my wings and fly, so I returned back to my home town with four and half years of sobriety and accomplished all my goals of getting a house, getting my son back, and having a nice vehicle but I got complacent and forgot about recovery and ended up going through a horrible relapse.

I came back to Dallas, went through a couple of recovery programs and, eventually, Oxford opened their doors again and I'm currently living successfully with an amazing job, a sponsor, a love for NA and Oxford like no other and happily have five and half months of sobriety. So, to the newcomer: just because you go back out and try it again, I can personally tell you that if you're lucky enough to make it back, Oxford's doors will be open when you want to find



sobriety again and will show you a new way to live. I have a love for Oxford like no other and will forever treasure it in my heart!

### **Anthony Alexander – Resident**

My name is Tony and I am a Crystal Meth Addict. For 5 years Ms.TINA had me in her clutches. I was in true sense of the word a "TWEAKER". There's a line in the Big Book that says, "As we became subjects to King Alcohol, shivering denizens of his mad realm, the chilling vapor that is loneliness settled down. It thickened ever becoming blacker. Some of us sought out sordid places, hoping to find understanding and companionship and approval." This was me at the very end of my addiction – alone and seeking approval from people that I know I would never have hung out with if I wasn't using. Even when I was hanging out with the many, many sordid characters, I was seeking approval and being rejected because I was so needy. Finally, I had enough. I was about to be homeless and on September 22, 2018, by the grace of God, I made a decision. The next day as I was moving stuff into storage, I received a call from Homeward Bound Statewide Unit and they told me that they had a bed for me. While there I decided to change everything, beginning with sober living.

Oxford House it is. I interviewed at several Houses and ended up at Oxford House Pride on November 27, 2018. I have been here ever since. I have grown so much since I moved in. Working with my sponsor and home groups, my life has grown leaps and bounds. I owe it to Oxford and all the service work I get to be a part of. I have worked my way up to becoming the chair for the North Texas Region and I am considering becoming an Outreach Worker. In a nutshell, that's it. I owe this new life I have thanks to OXFORD HOUSE and sobriety.

### **Sarah Moon – Resident**

My name is Sarah and I am a grateful recovering addict. I was homeless for the 4th time and had my children taken from me and lost everything again, including my dignity. I went as low as escorting and was arrested for it. I had enough in October of 2019, I was tired of fighting for my life and searching for that next fix. I had my grandmother bring me to Corpus Christi, Texas to go to detox at Cinikor. Change people places and things. they said, so I stuck and stayed in Corpus. After residential, I was accepted into Oxford House Gabriel but it didn't work out at first; not having an ID, I was expelled due to non-payment of my EES. I ended up at Wenzholz women's house. I shortly started working after my arrival at Goodwill, February of 2020, I broke my foot and was let go from Goodwill; then Covid hit and that was hell. I ended up \$1500 in the hole. When I was 6 months clean, I began working at Gifted Hand, a private provider company as a CNA and paid my rent off in 3 short months.

On December 31, 2020, I moved back to Oxford and began being of service. Fast forward – 2 1/2 years of being secretary of chapter 5 and Interchapter Chair for 2 years straight. I learned to balance a check book, pay bills on time, and to be the guiding light at Gabriel House. Today, I am 3 years, 5 months clean, in April 11,2023 my fiancée was put in the ICU. I was scared. I thought he was dying and I couldn't do this alone I felt. Because of the program, the rooms and Oxford, we got through this tragic time without one thought of drugs. He is just fine now, working through a slow recovery at the hospital and still not knowing why he has swelling in the brain. Realizing the work of my higher power who I call God, my fiancée seemed to be healed, a true miracle. I have decided to move on from Oxford and my fiancée and I are moving

in together and getting married in a few months. Thank you, Oxford House, for my recovery and faith in the program. IOU EVERYTHING!

### **Jennifer Khan – Resident**

When I first came to Oxford House, I was on my last leg. I had absolutely nothing to my name except a few pictures of my children. Nothing was working in my life anymore. The drugs and alcohol had completely consumed my existence. Or so I thought. My addiction took me to places I'd never been. I was addicted to alcohol, various drugs and I hated my existence. With nothing left to lose, but everything to gain, I interviewed with Oxford House Santa Monica and was voted in. This began the process of a long road to recovery and sobriety. Words can express how safe I felt with women around me who understand what I've been through. I've been here 10 months now in the same house. And I've come so far and, for the first time in my life, I am so excited to see what I can accomplish sober. I've managed to hold down a job, learn and demonstrate my ability to successfully pay bills and be a productive member of recovery. I've managed to buy my own queen-size bed and tv...and my proudest moment so thus far is being able to buy birthday presents for my daughter whom I haven't seen in years. But, to know I could do that on my own, made my heart rest that much easier at night. I love the fact I can help other women in their journey to recovery as well. Oxford has done for me what I couldn't do for myself. And, for that reason and so much more, I will forever be indebted to Oxford and what they stand for.

### **Robin Roberts – Alumna**

"My name is Robin Roberts and I was born into addiction; it was the only lifestyle I knew. My mother left when I was around eleven, and my father died when I was 16; the only thing I knew how to do was keep going, and drugs helped me cope with all my childhood trauma by numbing everything all at once. I'm grateful today that I know how to feel, I can thank Oxford for that. Fast forward about 10 years, stuck in survival mode, still addicted, and now raising a child of my own. Relying on only the knowledge of all the things I wished my childhood would have been like, which was all just a fairy tale in my book. I loved my daughter more than anything, but I loved the drugs too, but two things no one ever taught me how to do was be a healthy reliable family member and also, how to not do drugs.

So, I struggled for 2 years, running from CPS, staying in hotels, just trying to make it to the next day okay until finally it wasn't working anymore. Needless to say, CPS then took my child away from me and placed her in someone else's care and wanted to terminate my parental rights. That sent me so far off the deep end; I almost didn't survive. I spent 8 months trying to hold myself together enough to convince CPS to give me my child back and they were not falling for it. I didn't know how to do it; I just didn't know how to go one day without using drugs.

And then there was Oxford. Once I was completely broken and I surrendered to the unknown and was willing to change and ready to do what needed be done, I walked into an Oxford House, I wasn't clean yet. It was just for an interview, right off the bat one of the girls said "If you want to live here, you're going to have to go to detox," I didn't even know what that was, but I was willing. I followed her suggestion and went to detox for 7 days and came out and went straight to a women and children's Oxford House. This is where the magic began; this is where I built my foundation. I built a family, I learned what a healthy relationship looked like and, more

importantly, I went from a single woman's spot to the woman and child spot after 77 days of moving into that Oxford House. Through the 12-step program, Oxford introduced me to, I learned how to live, a happy, clean life. It helped me get a job, it helped me be accountable and pay my rent,. I lived there for almost 7 months and now have moved out into my own apartment with my daughter. None of this would of been possible without Oxford and I will forever be grateful. Oxford showed me how to live.

### **Angel Marquis – Resident**

Oxford saved my life. I was lost and at my wits end. I was seeking a sober living residence with love, care and brotherhood. This was my first time getting clean. I was scared. It was through the outreach worker at the time, Letty, who gave me a chance to continue my sobriety the right way. Throughout my time in Oxford, I have done a lot of service work and continue to be there for the next suffering addict and will continue to give back to Oxford because, when I did not believe in myself, someone else did from Oxford and I want to be there for the next person who needs that support.

### **Jake Bell – Resident**

I spent most of my life in and out of prison. I started getting arrested when I was in juvenile, and I always went back. I've been getting high for many years I got out of prison April 18, 2022 and then I went to a halfway house. Then I moved into an Oxford House and I wasn't even there a month and I relapsed for a day and then I thought I was ready for the freedom but I wasn't. Then I moved into another Oxford House where I've been for the past nine months and, because of this house and the environment in this house and the people in this house and the environment of my chapter, I've learned a new way to live. I needed the accountability that came with it and now I'm about to buy a house. Oxford provided me a safe place to live and get back on my feet after prison. I never had that before; I always went back to using immediately when I got out because I didn't have a safe place to go. I didn't know about Oxford. I didn't know that there was a new way to live. I didn't know that there were people who were in recovery who could help me and show me how to live better and hold me accountable and teach me how to be an upstanding citizen in the community again. I didn't know and that's what Oxford is. Oxford saved my life! It's the best decision I ever made! I am now a vice chair of the chapter and I do service work within the chapter. I cannot tell you the opportunities that Oxford is giving me. it saved my life; introduced me to people with whom I will be friends with for the rest of my life. All I can say is that, if you want to learn how to live again and you need a safe place to go, Oxford's the place. It saved my life.

### **Kimberly Turner -- Alumna**

I've fought Meth addiction for 30 plus years and, only after finding my husband dead on Halloween Day 2020, did I decide to get my life together and admitted myself into a Treatment Center in Austin, Texas. After my 30 day stay at Recovery Unplugged, I thought I was 'good'. I went back home to VA. without any action plan to remain sober...needless to say, it only took 2 weeks to relapse. That was partly because of the trauma of losing my husband; partly due to not having a sponsor or attending meetings and the biggest part was returning to the people, places and things where I used for so many years.

After 6 months into my relapse and watching my family finally have enough of my pity party, I decided I was ready to change my life no matter what it took. I packed a suitcase and came back to Texas and went through Recovery Unplugged again but, this time, I listened and took suggestions because my life depended on it. One suggestion was to try sober living in Texas for a while. I agreed and got accepted into my first Oxford House, Huddleston. As much I I dreaded the thought of being 21 hours away from my family, this was a life changer for me!!!

Oxford House literally changed my life and became my second family – a sober family that I have never had before. It truly gave me a purpose to get up in the morning and be the best I could be. Mind you, this house accepted me without a penny to my name to move in with. The women helped me apply for scholarships, took me to job interviews, fed me until I got my first paycheck. I eventually got a job in Recovery and got a full Scholarship through Recovery Atx for my Recovery Support Peer Specialist Training and Certification.

With that, I got an amazing job offer at a brand-new Facility in Paige, Texas. With the money I'm making today, I have been able to afford major dental surgery and implants, I finally got a car of my own and on my own. I am self-supported and almost 2 years sober!!!

Today my mission is to help give back to others and help pull the next addict out if the hell I couldn't pull myself out of. I've referred many, many of my clients to Oxford House. They saved my life and so many others before me...we can only keep what we give away and Oxford House gave me the life I live today. For this I will forever be grateful.

### **Hiram Torres – Resident**

I was only going to stay the few months ordered by my P.O. After a couple of years, I got tired of asking when I could move out, then I stopped asking and just love the whole Oxford concept and just stayed. I don't have family I can hang out with as they all either drink and do drugs or sell drugs so Oxford House has become my family.

I've done all House positions, Chapter Positions, Regional Positions and am currently a member of the World Council. I think I will still be around for a minute.

### **Trinity G. – Resident**

My current Oxford home is not the first home I entered. But I can say it will be my last because, instead of running away and blaming others for my own personal issues, I have grown in a way I never thought I could. I have been able to accomplish things that seemed impossible to me. I have been able to be the mother my son always deserved. It's an everyday process and a continuous journey that will lead me to a future I never could have imagined.

Oxford isn't easy, but the bigger the struggle, the bigger the blessing. If I didn't have the family and accountability that has entered my life, I most likely wouldn't be sober. Oxford is a huge part of my recovery, and I will forever be grateful for where it has led me today.

### **Bryan M. – Alumnus**

Since my time in OH, I had taken responsibilities that have helped me mold myself into a more productive and mature being. I started from being the President and HSR after my initial 30-Day newcomer time and was nominated for the Male HSC Chapter officer position shortly thereafter. In my 2-year run with the Fort Worth area, I had been a core member in my first house, been a founding member of a new house and, in the third house in another chapter, I had stepped in to rebuild a house back up after a pretty big turnover of sickness occurred. After filling the house up and stabilizing the finances, I had returned to my first house due to an employment change and I am on the fast track to successfully move out here in the next few days out of OH and into the next chapter of my life with a few of the other guys here. OH has been a priceless part of my life and I could do nothing else but encourage it for those wanting to live a new life. The people I've met along the way have impacted me for the better. From the guys in all my houses, chapter officers, Outreach among others, thank you for being with me for the ride.

### **Brandon Gilmore – Resident**

I am a drug addict. This is my 3rd time in Oxford. My last relapse nearly killed me. I'm so grateful to be alive. So, a few days before I got sober, I was homeless and dehydrated in the Texas summer heat. I had completely lost my mind, having been on a meth bender where I had eaten a large amount of stuff. Well, anyway, I nearly died. I went into meth psychosis. In the heat of Texas, no money. no water. and somehow, I managed to pass out on a sidewalk after several days of no liquids. So, once I started coming down, I managed to make it to my sister's house and I had completely lost my mind. The police were called out and they transported me to the hospital where they told me that I had COVID-19. With the diagnosis of covid, I was unable to go to rehab so I left with absolutely nothing – no family and no money, I turned to the only friend that I had left who, thank God, let me come stay with her in Canyon Lake, Texas. So, I left the hospital which was Parkland Hospital here in Dallas and, luckily, I managed to walk in the Texas heat, still sick but luckily no cravings by that point. All of that had been removed by the grace of God because I feel like I was definitely done. So, I got to the bus station and I had to sit outside for eight and a half hours waiting on the bus to go to Canyon Lake which is in South Texas because of the covid-19 restrictions which were still in effect in 2021 here in Dallas, Texas.

I was able to get 45 days of clean and sober time and I knew exactly what I had to do next. I had to reach back out to Oxford House and get an interview set up, so I came back to the Dallas area to Waxahachie, Texas where my friend was living and I interviewed at London Fog Oxford House here in Dallas and I was accepted. I've been here ever since. This is exactly why I do what I do for my chapter. I have a lot of gratitude for my life and I want to share that with everyone else.

### **Jeremy Young – Resident**

I was released from jail to Oxford house with the clothes on my back-- scared and in fear. In the few short months being in Oxford, I've gained the tools to get my career back on track. My life is manageable; I'm no longer co-dependent or using drugs and alcohol to mask pain and

disappointment. I have in confident in myself and my future, thanks to Oxford and the program I work today.

### **Alexia White – Resident**

Growing up, I was surrounded with addiction in my family. My dad himself was only 3 years clean when I was born. Even though my parents never used around me or my younger brothers, we knew the harm it caused. I started sneaking cigarettes around the age of 10 and was drinking from time to time. When I turned 13, I broke my foot and the doctor prescribed me narcotics to help with the pain. I soon learned that I enjoyed the feeling of being numb and was hooked. I hid my addiction well in my eyes. I graduated high school early and even graduated college by the age of 18, but little did anyone know that I was addicted to pain pills and Xanax. I met my ex-husband and married him at the age of 19 and he showed me a completely different side of the world I was treading in. When I was 23, I decided to go through a divorce and met with my boyfriend, with whom I went through the roughest parts of my addiction. Along with experiencing homelessness, I became a victim of domestic violence. I always wanted something better for myself.

Finally, on August 2, 2020, I hit my rock bottom and called my parents as a last hope. They picked me up and let me stay with them so I could try to detox and get clean on my own. It didn't work; I started drinking my pains away and ended up getting arrested on November 8, 2020. The judge gave me two choices; either go back to detox and only get charged with Public Intoxication or face the 4 felonies he could charge me with according to the police report. Needless to say, I went to detox and straight from there I moved into Oxford House Walton in Fort Worth, Texas.

In my time of Oxford House, I have seen some amazing people who inspired me to be the best version of myself. Now, having been in Oxford for over 2 years, I hope that my experience helps others. I wouldn't have learned how to communicate with different people without Oxford. I am very grateful that I now see a long future in sobriety that will outweigh the 14 years of active addiction I was in. My advice to anyone is to always ask questions because there is always someone who knows the answer.

### **Karli L. – Resident**

I've always suffered from mental health issues, and my only escape was using. I was 11 years old when I tried alcohol for the first time. I was 17 when I had appendix surgery and was prescribed pain pills. From that point, I was hooked. Life on life's terms happened on a consistent basis and all I knew how to do was escape by using. My coping skills were non-existent. I would try over and over and over to get clean on my own but it wouldn't stick. Over the years I experimented with all different substances but none held a grip on me like hydrocodone. Unfortunately, I was buying different pills on the street and was given Fentanyl.

In my active addiction, I prioritized wrong. I neglected my daughter, bills, my physical and mental health, and my dignity and self-esteem. I would hit what I thought was rock bottom so many times and would have to start back over. On January 17th, 2023... I was almost killed by the person I was living with. I was choked out, beaten up, and given a concussion. It was unfortunate that it happened, but it also gave me clarity. I wouldn't have been in that situation if

I was taking care of myself the way that I should. I checked myself into rehab for the first time and made a promise to myself to be open minded and willing.

I moved into Oxford when I graduated inpatient, became involved in Chapter and the overall function of the house as a whole. My life has started to rebound in ways I could have never imagined.

### **Tasha K. – Resident**

My addiction was a whirlwind of self-destruction as it usually is. I went from being an actively-involved football/orchestra mom and successful general manager to becoming a homeless and addicted criminal. I lied to myself and everyone around that I had it under control for years. When covid shut everyone's lives down, I was an unemployed workaholic no longer needed anywhere. So I found people who needed me more than my employers ever did and ran me all over town to occupy my time more than with a tournament and recital on the same weekend. I was addicted to not only drugs but to the entire life style. I lost meaningful things one at time. First my husband; I was no longer the woman he met. Then my kids; their dad's house was a healthier place with a parent that was home more than 30 min at a time. After that, I lost my house because rent would take away from my gambling money. My freedom, clean record, dignity and self-respect were a few other things that I threw out the window.

After months and months in county jail, I found my motivation to get myself back and to be the mom my kids once had. I found my freedom from that detrimental lifestyle while sitting on my bunk burying my head in my Bible and self-health books. With the help of Oxford House, I have a bed in a house for the first time in years. I have held a legit job and can pay for birthday parties and Christmas presents again. My dignity and self-respect have returned. I have learned that the joy of helping a recovering addict is so much more rewarding than providing any dollar I made enabling their addiction. I don't recognize the woman I see in the mirror because I am no longer the boring mom and workaholic or the broken addict. I am a healing and determined Tasha in recovery and, if it's one thing I've learned, it is that I don't ever half-ass anything. So, I'm all in this and for the first time I am happy and fulfilled. I take pride in what I have overcome and look forward to reaching the rest of my goals.

### **Trachelle Lott – Resident**

I didn't think this would be the last time I got clean. I just wanted everyone off my back long enough to get my kid back. I walked into a sick Oxford House in November of 2019. I was asked by a member of another house to interview with them the next day. This woman said to me, "Either we're going to find out you're the problem or you're going to thrive." I was accepted and let me tell you, I THRIVED. Being in a strong house and taught by strong women how to carry on the Oxford Guidelines has set me up for success. Failure was not an option this time. I had a kid who needed me more than ever. Yes, there were many learning curves with the way I delivered my message sometimes. My passion for doing the right thing and following the model was very important to me. Seeing other people make the mistakes I made was very difficult. I wanted to save them some time and skip a few steps. But I have the understanding that that's not everyone's path. Some people may never make it. I've seen many people go out and never come back.

Seeing from the outside what my family saw with me crushed me. I'm grateful I've had the opportunity to become the person I've evolved into. I couldn't have done it without OXFORD HOUSE. The life skills that I've learned will be with me forever. Now when I daydream about the future, I don't see the old me with old patterns. The words I use are recovery-related and full of inspiration. A woman from a meeting once told me " You may be one of ones who dies in this disease." I'll never forget that moment. It has been a deciding factor in my life choices these days. They say "The progressive illness are always the same – Jails, institutions and death" I refuse to be that statistic. I'm grateful for Paul who helped create the Oxford House concept.

### **Latrisha Jackson – Resident**

I come from an alcoholic family and lost my mother when I was 6 years old. I was raised by my emotionally-abusive grandmother. I started drinking at 18 years old and had my daughter at 20 years old. My addiction was full blown by 24 years old. I moved to Austin and left my daughter with her father.

I continued drinking and using, became homeless on and off for 11 years living in Austin. I woke up on my friend's couch one morning and realized I needed help after 2 stints in a mental institution, a few times in jail and possible prison time. I detoxed for a week and went to a treatment center for 30 days. I was encouraged by my counselor to try Oxford House. I moved into OH Copperfield and haven't looked back since then.

## **VIRGINIA**

### **Jimmy Martin – Resident**

Hello, Oxford House Family. My name is Jimmy Martin and I identify as a person in long-term recovery. What that means to me is that I no longer need to use drugs or alcohol to deal with or hide from life on life's terms. My clean date is 08/21/2021. Before starting this journey, I spent 30-plus years in active addiction and was a raging alcoholic. My life was a trainwreck and I was a shell of a human at best. The term "less than zero" comes to mind often when I think of my past, even though at times it may have appeared that I had it all.

I interviewed and was accepted into an Oxford House in Virginia on 10/09/2021. That date is just as important to me as my clean date. After only a few days, it became apparent to me that Oxford House was exactly what I needed and that staying clean was possible. This will not be the only time you hear me say that Oxford House saved my life. It's a little hard to explain the moment when your shoulders drop and you're not scared.

You eventually open up to your housemates and start sharing. I finally had a safe environment to start working on myself. That would be my best description after a couple of weeks in an Oxford House.

Shortly after learning exactly how much Oxford House had to offer, I knew it would be a part of my life forever. I am honored to now be part of the organization that was and is still so instrumental in my early and continued growth in recovery and life.



## WASHINGTON STATE

### **Fabian Garcia – Resident**

Well, my name is Fabian Garcia. I drank and use drugs and was also involved in gang life for 36 years of my life. I am 45 now and have been clean and sober for 2 years and 6 months now. This is my first time ever in recovery. I quit cold turkey. I went into treatment after I got out of 30-day inpatient. My family told me that they didn't think I was ready; that 30 days of treatment wasn't enough after 36 years of a certain way of life and that I should look into Oxford House. Of course, I was angry, scared and upset but I truly see now what my family meant. I was not ready for 2 days; I stayed in the Motel 6 then called the Oxford House. They did an emergency interview for me and I got accepted into chapter 19 and the house is called Courage Oxford House in Tacoma, Washington. If it wasn't for this place, I would never have had the chance to work on myself; I would never have found the sponsor that I have or the great circle of recovery that I have built in my chapter and other chapters in Oxford.

Oxford truly saved my life! If I had not come to Oxford, I know deep down that I would have failed and gone back to my old ways of street life, alcohol, drugs and gang bangs. It was very hard at first changing from a different lifestyle. Things are a lot quieter today. LOL. There were many times that I would just want to give up and leave because I feel like I didn't fit in but the people in Oxford and the chapter officers in my chapter were always there for me with love. They pushed me to do it and I did not relapse.

Oxford is giving me the chance take my time and, when I'm ready, I'll go out to the real world and start giving back. What I've learned is that it's all about wanting to change; being positive, open-minded and helping others change. You have want it and some of us have to hit rock bottom to wake up and that was me. Today I don't run away from my problems. I try my hardest and, if I fail, I don't give up; I try again. For me, Oxford is about growing and helping others grow because we're all a little lost sometimes; we just need a little bit of help to find ourselves out of this Darkness. I call it the Twilight Zone and, praise the Lord, I am no longer there. Today, I have my 3 children and my family back in my life and when I feel lost, all I have to do is pick up that phone and I know somebody will be there with open arms. Much love to everybody; change is possible. If it can change this Mexican from 36 years of gang life and drinking and drugging, you also can change. You've just got to want it-- like I said :).

### **Letitia B. – Alumna**

After getting clean in treatment, I moved into Nevaeh II Oxford House in Tacoma, WA. I'd never before gone to treatment, worked a 12-step program, or lived with people outside of my family (unless you count bouncing around from place to place with random "friends" in addiction). All I knew was that I needed to be willing to try new things if I wanted to succeed in maintaining this new way of life I was embarking on.

I was nervous and excited. But from the moment I was interviewed, I felt welcomed. I learned how to live among others in a way I had never known existed. We worked through problems, together. We supported each other through rough moments. We celebrated the big and the small victories of our recovery and of life. We've seen people come in and blossom and grow. Sometimes people struggled to learn how to live a life with responsibility and accountability,

which made it all the sweeter when they got it. And sometimes they didn't and they had to go. We worked together to handle those situations with compassion and grace. And sometimes we had the opportunity of seeing people come back and try again.

The women of Nevaeh II became my family over the almost two years I lived there, and they remain a part of my family today. But, it didn't stop there, during my time in Oxford House I was blessed with an entire community of people in recovery who offered love and support.

Oxford House is a huge part of my recovery story and forever a part of my heart."

### **Christopher Mikesell -- Alumnus**

"Recovery and Community: My Oxford House Story."

After 2 failed attempts at living in Oxford House, I finally returned to Oxford House on June 22, 2015. I was 50 years old and had been struggling with addiction for almost my entire life. I had been in and out of treatment programs, jails, and prison, but nothing had ever seemed to stick. I felt I was doomed to an everlasting cycle of chronic relapses into the deep and dark pit of active addiction. I was at my wit's end and didn't know what else to do.

I had 2 previous brief successes with Oxford House and knew that Oxford House was probably the only option left to help me achieve a lifetime of successful recovery. I decided to give Oxford House living one final chance.

When I first moved into Oxford House Gregory Way, I was scared and uncertain. I only knew one of the housemates, and I didn't know if I could really do this. But the people in my house were so welcoming and supportive, and I quickly started to feel like I belonged.

I learned a lot about myself during my time in Oxford House. I learned how to live a life in recovery, how to manage my emotions, and how to build healthy relationships. I also learned the importance of community and support.

Here are some of the key principles that I learned during my time in Oxford House:

- The importance of community. Oxford House is a community of people who are all working towards the same goal: recovery. This sense of community was incredibly important to me, and it helped me stay clean when I was struggling.
- The importance of accountability. In Oxford House, everyone is accountable to each other. This means that we all must follow the house rules, and we all must support each other in our recovery. This sense of accountability was incredibly helpful to me, and it helped me stay on track.
- The importance of service. In Oxford House, we are all expected to stay clean and sober and serve the house in some way. This means holding a House Officer position, performing our daily and weekly chores in a timely manner, paying our EES on time, not being disruptive, and helping new members. This sense of service helped me to give back to the community, and it also helped me to stay clean. While living in my Oxford House, I learned and served in every House Officer position. I went on to serve at the Oxford House Chapter

level as their treasurer. After I moved on from 6 ½ years of Oxford House living and into my own apartment on March 11, 2022, I still hold a volunteer service commitment to the Oxford Houses of Kitsap County.

Oxford House is not a perfect place. There were times when it was difficult and challenging. But it is also a place of hope and possibility. It is a place where people can come together and help each other recover from addiction and learn how to live life on life's terms.

Living in Oxford House was one of the best decisions I have ever made. It gave me the tools and support I needed to get clean and stay clean. Oxford House was the perfect supplement to my program of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. It gave me that extra layer of accountability that I needed to get through those few "tempting moments" when I was weak and found myself contemplating a relapse. I am so grateful for the opportunity to have lived in an Oxford House, and I know that I would not be where I am today without it. Oxford House literally saved my life and it is both an honor and a privilege to continue to be of service to this outstanding organization. -- Christopher J. Mikesell, Funding Source Liaison, Oxford Houses of Kitsap County, Bremerton, WA

### **Vicky K. – Alumna**

I owe my life to Oxford. I went to rehab in 2015 and one of the first things I heard was to go to Oxford if you want to stay sober. I didn't listen. Surprising for an addict, right?! I limped through the next 4 years never getting more than a few months of sobriety. During one of my bouts of sobriety, I got pregnant. I stayed sober until she was about 5 months old. I then went full on in my addiction and was drinking all day, every day... counting down the minutes till my daughter would nap so I could pass out for a bit and then start drinking again. It was bad. I picked her up from daycare in a full-on blackout. I should have lost her with how I was living my life... I was watching her grow and missing every minute of it. Something changed, I'm not sure what but I knew I had to do everything I thought I knew differently or I would lose everything. I dozed on my couch for a few days and called the closest Oxford house for an interview. I was moving in just a few days later.

I was so resistant to the idea of Oxford in all my other attempts at sobriety but I knew I had to try. It was a beautiful experience. I learned how to have real relationships, hold myself accountable, and be the mother my daughter needed. Some days were harder than others but these women became my family. I moved out after 15 months and my daughter still talks about the Oxford House to this day. I thought this would be traumatic for her but she grew right along with me and loved every minute of it. I am celebrating 4 years of sobriety this month and tears are coming to my eyes as I write. I love my life and know that, without Oxford, I wouldn't have anything that I have now. I'm in a healthy relationship with a sober man; we just welcomed a baby into our lives, and my kids have a mom who is there... not just physically but mentally, spiritually, and whole heartedly... because of Oxford. Words can't express the love and gratitude I feel when I think of Oxford.

### **Keely Armstrong – Alumna**

Throughout my life I have experienced a lot of trauma, from the death of my siblings and my father and many other family members, to witnessing my parent's divorce, domestic abuse

against my mom who was beaten up by me and my stepdad and me. I was beat up by my ex-husband; I was sexual assaulted by my stepdad, and I struggled with my own mental illness. I had two loving parents and a great childhood up until the age of 12 when my parents split up, I was stuck with my mom. She struggled to raise me on her own. My mom couldn't pay the bills which meant living with no electric or home from time to time. My mom and my dad were both arrested for writing checks on a closed credit union account, so I was sent to Fayetteville to my aunt and uncle's when my mom went to jail. When she got out things were rough but slowly getting better.

At the age of 15, I started drinking, partying, with friends and getting into trouble. By the age of 15, I was a full-blown addict using cocaine, pain pills and alcohol. This was one of the lowest point in my life. I was alone, and scared. My life had become a trail of broken promises, shattered hearts, and wasted potential. I can remember crying out to God in desperation to please end it all. I no longer wanted to live. It was in my darkest hour. Over the years of my life, drugs and alcohol came in and out of my life whenever things were going wrong. It seemed to be the only way I could escape all the thoughts and hurt. Somewhere in my darkest hour I cried out for God and I felt this inexplicable pull to know my Savior more and the time to leave that old life behind. I fought it for awhile, fearing I could never get sober, fearing the future, and fearing I would never be good enough. FEAR IS A LIAR! I felt broken and alone – having lost everything from having a loving mother to a hateful stepdad who just wanted me gone. He forced my mom to choose him or me and I was soon sent to a boarding school in Montana. I've battled addiction for almost 30+ years. While married to my ex-husband, I was able to hide my addiction from him. I've been to countless rehabs and other programs, only to relapse time and time again. Each time, I would lose a little more hope that I would ever live without drugs, but it finally came to a halt when I lost everything and landed myself in jail multiple times. I had periods of recovery in the past, but feelings of depression, anxiety, shame, and self-doubt would creep back in. For as long as I can remember, feelings of depression overshadowed every area of my life. There were times of recovery, but none lasted. From 1997-2001 I had three children, and would eventually lose custody of all three of them. In 2004, I lost custody of my children to my ex-husband for being homeless and jobless. I was in and out of bad relationships.

I was in jail when I found freedom from the depression and I have seen God's love for me in new ways. I have now been clean from pain pills and cocaine for 10 1/2 years (May 4th will be 11 years) and sober from alcohol for almost 1 year 11 1/2 months (June 4th). I am so grateful to give back to the program that helped me get my life back. I've been delivered from drug and alcohol addiction. I've truly been blessed since I've turned my life around. I now have an income and my own place to live. I am trying to reach out to my kids and I remind myself daily that my higher power is not done with me yet!"

### **Nick G. - Resident**

I have been in recovery for just over 9 months. I have used since I was about 12 years old. I'm getting ready to celebrate my 50th birthday. The last day that I used was September 21, 2022, I nearly lost my life. Luckily, there happened to be someone nearby that had Narcan and knew how to use it. I never found out who this person was; some random stranger that God put near me that morning, but I like to imagine that it was someone who was once in a situation like mine and had found a better way to live and made it a point to be ready to help the next struggling person if that need presented itself.

When I left the hospital, I decided that I was done. Not just the half-hearted lipservice "done" that I had always told myself before but done in a way that no matter how hard, no matter what obstacles lay before me, I was going to do ANYTHING and EVERYTHING that I had to do to make it through this time.

I checked into a detox center and from there a treatment center. This was the first time I had ever been to rehab, and for the next 2 months I worked hard to kick my physical habits and put myself in a good position to be ready for the real work that lay ahead. While in treatment, there were some fellas in there who insisted that when I got out that I start attending NA meetings, get a sponsor and start doing stepwork. "The freedom is in the steps", they told me. And I took that advice. Just a few hours out of treatment. I found myself attending my very first meeting. It was an all men's meeting, and would go on to become my home group and also where I would find my kick-ass sponsor....someone that I am blessed to call my friend today. I started working steps, and things started to turn around in my life. Something that I hadn't expected was going on. A spiritual awakening. It wasn't just a slogan in a book; it was real, and I was amazed! I had to keep going, I needed more!

At the time, I was living off the grid on some property that I own up in the mountains – totally isolated and cut off from everything. As an introvert, this was the kind of living that suited me for so long. But it was also very dangerous to my spiritual well-being and to my recovery. I knew it, and so did my sponsor. He recommended that I find a better living arrangement that kept me closer to the world, especially those in my support group that I would need close by if I were struggling with anything. One of my homegroup members was living in Oxford, there was an open bed available, and he suggested that I interview with the house.

I interviewed and was accepted, and this began another chapter in my recovery, my Oxford journey. Joining Oxford was a big adjustment for me. I hadn't had roommates since I was in my early 20s, I had a lot of social anxiety, and had a lot of self-doubt about my ability to thrive in a recovery environment with 6 other men that I didn't really know. My isolated lifestyle had conditioned me to fear this kind of living situation. But I had made a promise to myself, ANYTHING and EVERYTHING. I was going to put my head down and dive in.

And again, what I found was amazing! The house was centered on recovery and accountability. Even though I was brand new, my voice counted as much as the guy who had been there for years. And after just a couple of weeks, they asked me to take the responsibility as house president. At first, I thought that meant, I just had to go to the chapter meetings once a month and delegate the house meetings. But, as I read into and meditated on this role and my responsibilities to the house, I began to understand it to be so much more. I discovered that, aside from my responsibilities to report our house standings with chapter, that I also had a much bigger role to the house itself: to provide a sense of leadership to our house members. Not in a way of having control over anyone or anything but a role of guidance and leading by examples of principles. If there are problems between house members, I can act as a mediator to find solutions. I make sure that every member, old and new, understand the rules and structures of Oxford, and that they understand WHY these are important to the health of the entire house. I make sure that every member is aware of chapter meetings, Oxford events, and encourage members to be a part of them for their own benefit. To encourage social interaction, and to congratulate members on achievements and accomplishments and celebrate them together as a family. I also try to talk individually to each member often and try to figure out any problems if

I think someone is off or not acting how they normally would. I encourage meetings and sponsorship, and even offer rides to anyone that needs them.

I have seen behavioral problems and relapse along the way, and people struggling with things and not letting anyone reach them to help, and these things have been hard to deal with personally. But my service to the house and the people in it, to Oxford and to the recovery community as a whole, has allowed me to continue to see amazing growth in my own life and recovery, and I look forward to seeing all the miracles continue to unfold in my life and those around me! Thank you, Oxford! You have been a huge blessing in my life and I am so grateful!

## **WISCONSIN**

### **TJ Skaife - Resident**

The Oxford Havey House in Madison, Wisconsin has really taught me how to stay sober and how to go about my recovery. The accountability in these houses is great and I also love everyone who has been in my house over these 8 months that I have been there. If I had gone out on my own after going to inpatient treatment, I don't think I would still be clean. Oxford House has taught me how to do outreach at treatment centers in Madison. I am the outreach person for the Madison Oxford chapter and I do a lot of the presidents' duties at my house because the president works a lot. I set up the interviews for my house and help out with whatever I can. I am also the secretary at my house; it has taught me a lot of responsibility. When I was using, I was not responsible. I will always look back at Oxford Houses even when I do go back to my own apartment again. It really has taught me a lot.

**We hope you enjoyed these stories. If you are interested in having your story considered for next year's convention, email it to [info@oxfordhouse.org](mailto:info@oxfordhouse.org), and in the subject line, write:**

**Story 2024 World Convention**

**Plan to attend the  
2024 ANNUAL OXFORD HOUSE  
WORLD CONVENTION  
in Orlando, Fl  
at the Rosen Shingle Creek  
October 3 - 6, 2024**

**Have a safe trip home!**

**&**

**Remember to share what you have learned with House members and alumni who weren't able to attend this year's convention.**

# **Oxford House Traditions**

- 1. Oxford House has as its primary goal the provision of housing for the alcoholic and drug addict who wants to stay clean and sober.**
- 2. All Oxford Houses are run on a democratic basis. Our officers serve continuous periods of no longer than six months.**
- 3. No Member of an Oxford House is ever asked to leave without cause - drinking, drug use, or disruptive behavior.**
- 4. Oxford House members realize that active participation in AA and/or NA offers assurance of continued sobriety.**
- 5. Each Oxford House should be autonomous except in matters affecting other houses or Oxford House, Inc. as a whole.**
- 6. Each Oxford House should be financially self-supporting.**
- 7. Oxford House should remain forever non-professional.**
- 8. Propagation of the Oxford House, Inc. concept should always be conceived as public education.**
- 9. Members who leave an Oxford House in good standing should become associate members.**