



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Family & Community Medicine

January 30, 2020

Integrated Healthcare  
**Recovery Support  
Specialist Institute**

Tucson, AZ

## GRADUATES



*Back row left to right:* Eddie Smith, Nathan Anderson, Lindsey Monroe, Gary Owens, Scott Rivera

*Middle row left to right:* Ivonne Macias, Christine Mazzarella, Alicia Deuel, Stephanie Fanning

*Sitting left to right:* Chandler Savage, Sudaphan Washburn, Kevan Perry

# Hope is the Aurora Borealis

Christine Mazzarella, CRSS



Hope feels like warm sunshine beaming down on me. It feels like the perfect summer day, walking through a meadow with wildflowers blowing in the gentle breeze and showing the world their brilliant colors. Hope is the Aurora Borealis, a shooting star, fireflies on a humid summer night, s'mores at a campfire, hummingbirds glistening in the sun, double rainbows, and baby animals being birthed. Hope is full of energy, happiness, clarity, and optimism about the future.

My personal experience with hope began on September 23, 2017. The year prior to this date, I had been seriously considering taking my first step on the lifelong journey of attaining and maintaining sobriety. My depression and anxiety were spinning out of control. In fact, my whole life had become unmanageable, and the more I drank, the worse it got. I was no longer employed, most of my friends

had moved on, and I had pulled away from my spirituality and the support system associated with it. I was so sick and tired of being sick and tired. I researched medical detox programs in Tucson, and luckily found the perfect match for me. A longtime family friend took me there and stayed with me for the week following detox. At this point, I knew there would be too many triggers at home and I needed someone to be accountable to. This was a huge benefit for me to get a solid foundation for my recovery process. During that week, I got acquainted with 12-step recovery programs, SMART Recovery, and an intensive outpatient program (IOP). I met a lot of people just like me, and it gave me renewed hope knowing that there were other people who suffered from the same substance use and mental health challenges that I had been living with for years.

Committing myself to detox was the turning point for me and one of the best choices I made for myself. This is where I was formally diagnosed with anxiety/panic disorder, depression, and substance use disorder. I am so grateful to finally understand my substance use and mental health challenges, and have the opportunity for ongoing recovery. I now have 2 years, 4 months, and 5 days of continuous sobriety, have several support systems (including my family), have my anxiety and depression "in check", and feel much better physically and emotionally than I did a couple of years ago.



## Forever Grateful

Chandler Savage, CRSS

In the spring of 2014, I lost my girlfriend of six years, my job, my apartment, and eventually, hope. After a suicide attempt and hospitalization, I was given an SMI designation. I would spend the next four years in and out of very chaotic, unhealthy living situations, while my mental health continued to decline. Eventually I realized that I had to change my environment, so I packed my bags and moved to Tucson on New Year's Eve 2018, with only enough money to stay at a hotel for a few days.

I found hope in January 2019 while staying at the Primavera Men's Shelter, where I

met with Tammy Byrnes, a compassionate and caring social worker who "got me." She had been through similar challenges in her life and modeled the power of owning our story and having the courage to be vulnerable. She allowed me to feel connected, seen, and understood, which lifted the heavy burden of shame I had been carrying for so many years.

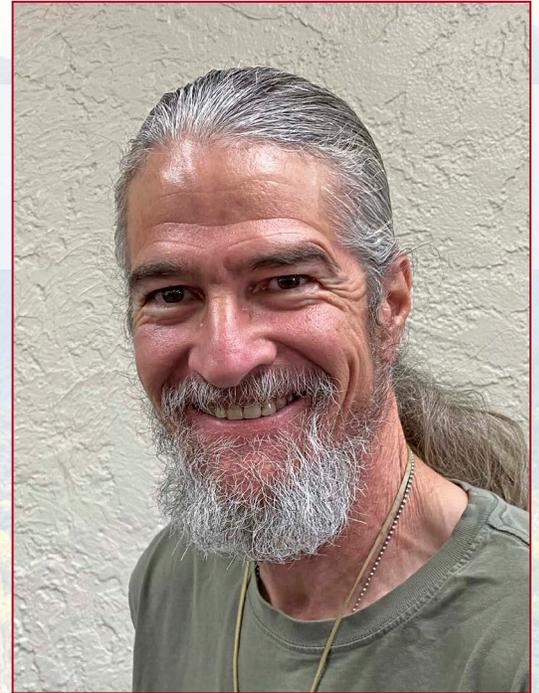
My hope was rekindled when I was introduced to my recovery coach, Genny Shafer, at Community Partners Integrated Health. She showed me that not only was recovery possible, but that I could use my lived experience to help others

and finally find meaningful work. She had graduated from the Integrated Healthcare Recovery Support Specialist training and gave high praises for it being a holistic approach to recovery, which is exactly what I was looking for.

Now I can say with full confidence that recovery is 100% possible, but it wouldn't have been possible if not for the hope for a better life and the support of peers who understood the challenges of living with mental illness. I finally have purpose and meaning in my life, and that is something for which I am forever grateful.

# “Who Knows What the Tide Could Bring?”

Kevan Perry, CRSS



I am asked to share my personal story of hope. I have had countless days that I could not write such a story. Over 30 years ago, while serving in the United States Army, I was in a serious military training accident. I was in a troop transport rollover and trapped under several injured men. As a result, I have PTSD, which took me those decades to be diagnosed. The truth is, I never really came home from that wreck. I have spent these years suffering for reasons I could not understand. I didn't know why I was going through this or what happened to me that made me this way. I have had days I wish I had died in that accident. Then I wouldn't have had to go through what I've been through since that accident.

I was a first responder after the army and have seen some of the worst things that can happen to the human body.

But I have long wondered what there was for those of us who have suffered some of the worst things that can happen to the human mind. I wish I had a hundred dollars for every intake form I have filled out.

I have seen the abyss and stood on the precipice of it. I have searched desperately for meaning to this pain and suffering. I have thought myself broken and damaged beyond hope. Days that I have refused to look into my own eyes in the mirror for fear of the hopelessness I might see there. Nights afraid to go to sleep for fear of the nightmares, which are worse when I am alone.

As a psychologist once told me, “Yet, you survived.” Yes. Yet I have survived. I keep holding on to something Tom Hanks character Chuck Noland said in the movie Cast Away. And that is, “Who knows what the tide could bring?” Because the tide

had brought him something to make a sail so he could sail a raft off the island he was trapped on. And I cry every time I see that scene because this is the way I understand hope. Who knows what the tide could bring me in the depths of my despair and pain? Maybe it will bring me love. Maybe I will have a home with that person. Maybe I will simply see a sunset in Flagstaff again.

I don't wear these dog tags because I'm proud of being a veteran. I wear them because they remind me that I will survive. I will get through this. But more than that--who knows what the tide could bring?



# I Never Had This Taste in The Past

Gary Owens, CRSS

**W**hen I first started this journey to recovery, I didn't think I would be where I am today. When I first had trauma in my life, I didn't know how to handle it. When I got older I turned to mind altering substances so I didn't have to think about what I had gone through. I just wanted to feel numb. I thought to myself, this is what my life was going to be like, and I will never be able to go back to the life I once knew. These thoughts took me to a dark place mentally and physically. I was dying. I just gave up on the thought of something else.

My experimentation with drugs and alcohol quickly turned into highly functioning addiction. I had destroyed my life and was chronically homeless and hopeless. Every time I took a step forward, I would take several back. One day I was just done. I was done living that lifestyle. I was done depending on substances that had taken over my life. I didn't know what I needed to do to make it stop, to end this life I was living.

After completing a 28 day stint in detox, I went on a two week bender that led me to a blackout every night, and passing out in less than safe places. I mustered up all of my courage and decided to finally take advice from others and try something new....rehab. I went to rehab and completed

it successfully. While I was in there, I learned so much. I absorbed everything that I needed to in order to do what I want with my life. While I was in that rehab, I learned that I could become a Peer Support. I had always wanted to help people; I had hope again.

I was shown that even with what happened in my past, I can still move forward. I am a person with a dual diagnosis, meaning that I am a person with bipolar disorder and a substance use disorder, and I'm a person in recovery. I am moving forward with my life in a positive way. Now I have hope for so many people, people with any type of disorder. Hope that they will recover, because this person today with a dual diagnosis and co-occurring disorders is going to recover.

# Grateful for Being Alive

Ivonne Macias, CRSS

In the last couple of years, my life had become a series of problems and failures, one after another. At my lowest point, when I was majorly depressed and thinking everyone would be better off without me, I began to pray. I would pray for God to do for me what I could no longer do for myself; soon after that, help followed. I was allowed to move back home and encouraged to seek medical help. It took some time to get

back on my feet, but once I did, I slowly began to think of recovery as something that would be possible. Going to therapy, taking medication, and working on my physical health became a daily routine. All of a sudden, my life was more manageable and less convoluted. Even more than that, I began to feel grateful for being alive, an emotion I had not felt in years. I cannot pinpoint the exact moment I



began to feel hope, but I know I have God and my family to thank for it. Hope is what motivates me to continue moving forward in my recovery, and to help others do the same.



## Journey to Hope

Scott Rivera, CRSS

Recovery came to me in increments of hope and understanding. It has been a long journey through a dark tunnel of despair. It is not a straight shot to wellness. My trek has been topsy-turvy. I held on with hope for more than a decade. I did not ask to be a mental health patient and

resented being called one. I felt stigmatized. I seemed to go to Mental Health Professionals that did not understand me or my story. I was my diagnoses. Until one day I met a group of professionals that gave me validation; then I could validate myself. I learned about resources and skills to improve my life. There was and is HOPE!



# Know and Feel Happiness and Love

Alicia Deuel, CRSS

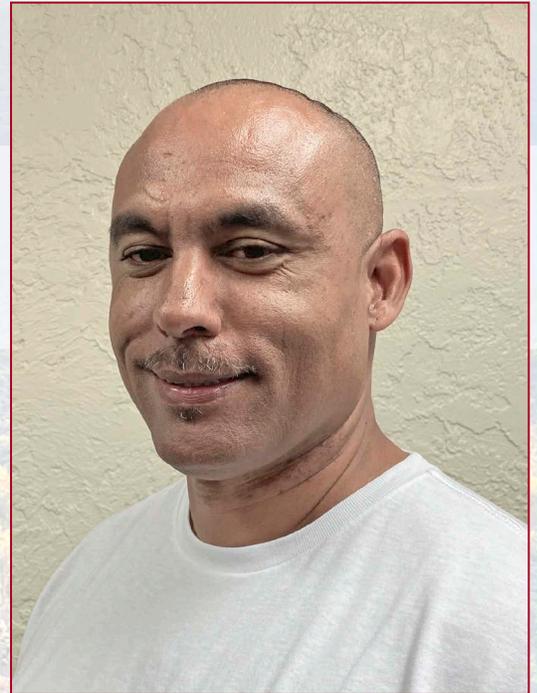
**M**y name is Alicia Deuel. About two years ago, I was interested in learning more about what an RSS actually did, having some mental health and substance use issues. I have a passion for helping others before I help myself, but it seemed I was always helping the wrong people. They would steal from me; yet I found another one to help and had the same issues. About a year and a half ago, I befriended two homeless girls. They are now living in

apartments and working on their mental health issues. Last May I had an appointment with my case worker and told her I was interested in RSS training. My whole life I've felt like an outcast, never had a lot of friends, and seem to sabotage anything good in my life. I want to know and feel happiness and love one day before I die. I decided to search for training, and this time I found this class and downloaded the application and got it all filled out. I was

hoping to get in the June class but it was full. I was able to get into this class, and now I have more tools to help me help myself. I'm the only person that I am helping these days. I've learned so many different things about myself and that I have a long way to go, but I am determined not to live the rest of my life like I have lived the first half. My hope is that I will get into other classes and continue on my recovery path and feeling whole.

# Having Hope is a Wonderful Thing

Eddie Smith, CRSS



**W**hen I think of hope, the thing that crosses my mind is having something you can believe in that inspires you to keep going, and never giving up on what means the most to you. After being diagnosed with a mental illness while I was homeless, I had hope. However, I also fell into helplessness - as I now understand what that means through this course. I started to find myself in the exact situations that learned helplessness defines; a condition where a denial of choices leads a person to become helpless, hopeless and worthless. I truly can identify!

I lost my identification card, social security card, and birth certificate, which made trying to obtain services such as AHCCCS, housing, and income very difficult. At first I did my best to stay patient, and remind myself of the things that inspired me. Things such as getting a good paying job while I traveled, providing for my children, experiencing new places, and investing in a home with property for when I got older. These things gave me HOPE!

As time continued to pass, I was drinking and using substances while homeless. I went through the typical

route. Hospitals, Crisis Response Centers, and Mental Hospitals. I was forced to take medications, and denied having a mental illness at all. As a child I had severe emotional disorders. I went from one temporary home to another, and because I was a runaway it was difficult getting me the treatment that I needed. I am still impacted by these matters today. I was in denial about having schizophrenia and fully recovering, but HOPE has allowed me to manage my recovery and regain my confidence at getting well and staying well. Having Hope is a wonderful thing!



## Anchored

Stephanie Fanning, CRSS

**A** symbol I have long associated with hope is an anchor. Anchors represent not only hope, but security, stability, and being grounded. When a ship is anchored at port, there is an aspect of protection from the elements of the ocean's rhythm from low tide to high, and then back again. When the anchor is lifted from the water at port, it allows the ship to move freely, forward and onto the next new adventure the sailor decides upon.

For my entire life, I have been a ship without a port to call home. I have been a ship without an anchor on board and I have lived a life lost at sea. Habitually, a lost ship takes direction from the natural world. I frequently let the high winds and hasty waves whisk me away into the eye of many storms.

I raised the rusty, hand-me-down anchor I was given, not by choice, but by circumstance, when I departed

from my hometown of Boston, Massachusetts. When I decided on my next adventure in life, I set sail with a purpose. I found hope when Tucson, Arizona became my port in the storm. The Atlantic Ocean turned into mountains and I grounded myself by becoming my own anchor to the here and now.

# Believe in Hope

Nathan Anderson, CRSS



Webster's dictionary defines hope as, "to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment." Everyone has desires, whether they be big or small, everyone wants something. For some this looks like financial stability or obtaining riches, while for others it may be as simple as keeping a job and someone to come home to. For those of us dealt the hand of mental illness, hope sometimes seems to fade away and it appears as if there is no solution to our suffering. That is where I was in life when I was given the diagnosis of schizophrenia. I was 19, just dropped out of college, and I couldn't support

myself. I couldn't function and handle everyday life. I had thoughts of suicide every day for over a year. I attempted suicide multiple times, and ended up in hospitals with no real treatment. It wasn't until I was assigned a new psychiatrist that started me on a new anti-psychotic that things started to look up. After over a year of hearing voices so loud that I couldn't distinguish them from people shouting, they began to soften. I began to question my delusions and feel less depressed. It was after this medication change that I began to believe there was something greater on the other side of suffering.

"Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all." - Dale Carnegie. Today as I am writing this my voices are quiet, and come and go quickly. I have regained my reasoning and critical thinking skills and have great anticipation of obtaining a job. I have high expectations for myself and now I have hope that I can accomplish my goals. Hope does not leave us, we cease to believe in it. I have a desire and reasonable expectation that I will obtain it - I have hope.



# Journey of Hope

Lindsey Monroe, CRSS

**M**y personal journey of hope hit me like a lightning bolt some 19 years ago. It was born in the office of my Licensed Clinical Social Worker named Malcolm Dixon. I was sitting there in his office in tears; crying because I was confused, over medicated, about to be homeless, and at a loss as to what my next step might be. Malcolm halted my tears with three simple words, "I've been there." He then stated that he had a diagnosis, had been homeless and was a recovering addict. I was astonished! He shared his journey with me. One of going to rehab, getting clean, getting help with temporary housing and returning to school, all after

the age of 49. I was 40 years old and saw myself in Malcolm. He saw himself in me. That day I went back to my Rehab and started to game plan what my life would look like when I got out. My following week appointment with Malcolm, I asked him to help me get on SSDI and to find housing. I also asked him to help me get a new prescription regimen. He expressed that he thought that I was capable of more than life on disability. I agreed, but shared with him my vision of needing at least a year of clean time, and time to analyze how to deal with having bipolar disorder. He agreed with my plan and helped me in every way he could. It was the first

time I had a mentor to identify with since being diagnosed. It was the first time I felt listened to and the first time I felt in charge of my life again

I saw in Malcolm, hope and a drive to be everything he could be. I wanted that for myself. I have tried to be Malcolm while still being me. Now I don't need to be Malcolm, because I no longer live on his hope, but have garnered some of my own. I have stumbled through life this last 20 years trying to find my purpose. I think I have finally found it in this RSS program. I think I can be an instrument of hope for others to grasp onto until they find it in themselves.

# My Journey to Recovery

Sudaphan Washburn, CRSS



Hope for me is the same as a goal...or not! Since I grew up, I always have set goals for myself. The first goal was that I wanted to have higher education. The second goal was to go the USA someday. I had struggled with mental illness since I was in high-school, and I had to stop school for a year, until I was treated for it. I learned to deal with my illness and finished school. I have finished trade school in accounting. After that, I worked in the Siam Credit Company in the legal department as a clerk. While I worked there, I decided to go back to college as well. I have finished college with a BA in Law and I worked as a lawyer for a little bit. I got a Visa to come to USA. My goal was to stay in US, so I transferred all my work cases to another

lawyer. I planned to stay in the US until I reached another goal: to have blue-eyed, blond children.

I still struggle with mental illness. I got married and had a brown-eyed, dark haired boy. I worked at UMC in the accounts payable and payroll department for 7 years. Work, family, and a misdiagnosis of major depression for 20 years took a toll on me. I could no longer live my normal life. I was admitted to a psychiatric hospital with a nervous breakdown. I was treated for bipolar disorder and everything got better. Eventually, I got out and resumed my normal life. I went back to work, in and out of the hospital, until they told me to stop working and take care of my illness first.

I got a divorce when my son

was 9 years old, and stayed in assisted living for a while. Then I went to live in Tucson House for 3 years. I lived on my own and worked as a server in a restaurant. I have managed well, until I got my own home. I still struggle with bipolar illness. I think after receiving that new diagnosis, being treated with different medications, and gaining knowledge in bipolar groups, it played into my journey of recovery. The RSS class is a turning point in my belief in my ability to be able to expand my role in this lifetime beyond that of a person with a mental illness. I can become a RSS or Peer Support to others that have the same condition as I have, and be transformed to be successful in recovery.

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UA Workforce Development Program promotes recovery and expanded opportunities for people with mental illness, substance use, and dual diagnosis by employing a collaborative approach to advocacy, service, education, and research.

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