

Sept. 10, 2003

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR CONCERNING NATIONAL ALCOHOL
AND DRUG ADDICTION RECOVERY MONTH**

Dear Editor:

If we polled people in recovery, it is doubtful any ever planned to grow up to become alcoholics or drug addicts. Fireman, airline pilot, doctor or nurse – these are some of the more common childhood dreams. “Alcoholic” or “drug addict” is not a title most people would actively direct their efforts toward, yet many children who ultimately attain their goals of becoming a doctor, lawyer or airline pilot also grow up to become addicted to drugs or alcohol.

Many of these people, fortunately, find recovery. Some of the finest people I know, in fact, are those in recovery. They are demonstrating to the world that it is possible to overcome a deadly addiction and be a contributing member of society. My friends in recovery are doing everything they can to get back into the mainstream of life, giving to their fullest potential. They are responsible employees, spouses, parents, siblings and friends.

Many, in fact, are at the height of their professions.

My friends are doctors, lawyers, business leaders, truck drivers, grocery store clerks, ministers and politicians. They're my neighbors and my co-workers.

Substance abuse does not discriminate. It is no respecter of skin color, gender or status, and doesn't care what kind of car you drive. If we are susceptible to the disease of addiction and don't get help, alcohol and drugs will take away everything we have ever loved in life, whether that's our family, friends, job or life. It's only a matter of time.

People in recovery are rich and poor, tall and short, male and female, famous and infamous. Whether a recovering person is sleeping in a homeless shelter or living in the White House, one common theme runs through their lives and that is the theme of trying to better themselves and their lives.

Typically, most people who are successful in recovery rely upon some type of 12-step program to help them maintain continuous sobriety and abstinence. They are striving to live lives based upon honesty, responsibility and integrity – values most of society readily embraces.

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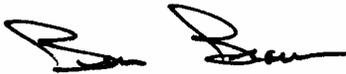
Recovery Month/2

If the truth be told, some of the guidelines for successful living that people in 12-step programs rely upon could be applied by all of us. Who wouldn't be better off living a life that includes honesty, forgiveness, acceptance, tolerance and dependence upon a higher power? Who wouldn't be better off making amends for wrongs done to others, asking God to remove defects of character and trying to help others who are struggling?

While people in recovery are not flawless, the majority are sincere in seeking better lives for themselves and the ones they love. Through their contributions to society and a renewed sense of responsibility, they are improving life for all of us.

To honor people in recovery, the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services is celebrating National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month in September. The odds are that every one of us, either directly or indirectly, knows someone who is in recovery from substance abuse addiction. For those still suffering from addiction, help is available. For more information about substance abuse treatment in your area, call the "Reach-Out" hotline at 1-800-522-9054 or your local Alcoholics Anonymous number.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Brown". The signature is stylized with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ben Brown
Deputy Commissioner for Substance Abuse Services
Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
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