



## From The Desk of Peggy

I have tremendous gratitude for all the people who support A Ray of Hope. I get to continue to be part of A Ray of Hope from the mountain retreat at Helmville, and with modern technology, I see and hear daily of your guests being set free from broken hearts and bondages.

Sure, over the years my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break, when you see people destroy their lives with poor choices? But, broken hearts are what gives us strength, understanding, and compassion. A heart never broken is pristine, and sterile, and will never know the joy of being imperfect.

For years our newsletter has given you a little glimpse of what your donations and time have done in the hearts of many of our guests. They find God's purpose for them, are walking in a new life, and then give back to others in a hand up to being set free.

### The Depths of My Addictions

In August of 2016, a friend of mine drove a delusional, paranoid, psychotic person to the St. Patrick Hospital emergency room. That person was me. How did a 38 year old woman who graduated from nursing school with a 3.75 lose her job of 15 years, a home she owned, her children and become a homeless junkie and drug dealer? Here is my story.

It was evident my 2 ½ year bend on any drug I could get in my body had finally caught up with me. Trying to admit me to the hospital and get me to comply with the help I needed wasn't easy. I had refused to sign anything they asked me to, yelled mean things at my friend making her leave me there alone. I finally decided this was all a mistake and I was going to leave. My mission to leave was prevented by 2 security guards who literally had to restrain me and stand guard outside my room. I called my mom crying and gave her medical consent over me as long as she promised under no circumstances could they perform a lobotomy on me. The next thing I knew I woke up in the psych ward with multiple diagnoses but primarily a drug induced psychosis. During this 10 day stay, I detoxed from drugs and was put on a heavy dose of antipsychotics. I had damaged my brain chemistry and I now thought I had my own reality show with camera crew and I constantly heard people whispering about me in a secret language. I also thought I had a bomb inside my body and that they were going to use me in the war on ISIS. Sleeping on a pressurized air mattress didn't help to alleviate my fears at all and every time they took my blood pressure, checked my oxygen saturation and put a thermometer in my mouth, I knew that they were secretly testing my circuitry. I had to call my mom every day to ensure I was still actually alive and not stuck in purgatory and have her confirm that my children were ok and no harm had come to them.

During a moment of clarity, I replayed a statement in my mind that I had heard frequently. "You know Rachelle, the outcome of this lifestyle is jail, institutions or death. I had

flippantly disregarded such pessimistic thoughts, I knew I had an amazing, full life ahead of me and yet this had now become my reality. It wasn't until later that I learned this was a line taken



from AA's How it Works. I also began to reflect on my life and question why I allowed it to get so out of hand. I was miserable, alone, and I didn't trust anyone I had been associating with. I had witnessed 8 overdoses, lived through 2 of my own, and 5 people I knew were dead. I had almost lost my foot from an accident which took 2 surgeries, \$100k, 2 plates and 16 pins to rebuild my ankle. Time didn't exist for me—I was completely void of emotions and no longer cared if I lived or died. My family had finally cut me off. If I even managed to stop for visits with my children, the judge filed a motion that they were to be supervised for the protection of my children from me. I walked all over anyone who tried to help me, and if they didn't prove useful in helping me stay high, I simply disposed of them until they

were. My kids were growing up without a mother, and to anyone around me it was apparent that they may never have their mother back.

Once I was stabilized on multiple medications, my thoughts were more lucid. I was told it would take time for my brain to return to normal but I had permanently altered my brain chemistry. After a few days I was no longer experiencing hallucinations but I was still plagued with paranoid thoughts that people were trying to harm my children and I regularly heard voices in my head of people talking about me. I had to have a plan before the psych ward was willing to release me, and in an unheard of 2 days, my mom secured a spot for me at Rimrock in Billings.

Treatment was helpful for me and gave me insight on myself. I learned about my defeating beliefs, triggers and self-awareness. I began to actually feel all the things I had been numbing virtually my whole life. But every day I still wanted to use in spite of all I had to lose. Due to this, I was medically

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extended for an additional 2 weeks of treatment. My family was still leery, so we agreed that I would remain in Billings and transition from treatment to sober living as well as daily outpatient treatment. Predictably this only lasted 2 weeks, as I was kicked out for having a bad attitude, and in defiance I quit attending my outpatient treatment as well.

Conveniently; I met someone on "Plenty of Fish", an online dating website, who essentially saved me and allowed me to stay with him. He was more than eager to enable my drug use as well as use me as his personal punching bag. I was lying to my family and couldn't bring myself to return to Missoula as I was in worse shape than when they brought me to treatment. One day I looked at myself and didn't even recognize who I had become. The girl I used to be, ready to conquer the world and make it a better place was gone, along with my spark for life. All that was left of me was an empty shell fueled by substances.

From October to February, I literally found myself on the streets of Billings in the coldest winter we had seen in quite a while. I reconnected with friends I had met in treatment as almost all them had relapsed as well and knew where to get what I needed. I was no longer taking my meds and had begun to guilt my mom out of money once again. I was no longer a person of strong moral conviction and became shameful of the things I was doing to simply survive. Physically I had nerve damage from frost bite in the extreme temperatures. I had lost 2 teeth after years of expensive orthodontics. I had a broken nose, broken tailbone, was full of shame and had zero sense of self-worth. Once again I called my mom and she begged me to check myself back into Rimrock. I consented, consumed the last of my drugs and checked in the next morning. My arrival was the polar opposite of my initial stay. I had no coat or identification. I was soaking wet, in need of a shower, and my only belongings consisted of my purse, the clothes on my body and the slippers on my feet. Justifiably I received looks of horror and pity from the staff. I was suicidal and once again I was paranoid that people were going to harm me and my children., this time due to actual threats made if I ever tried to escape from the people I was associating with. During my 5 days detoxing, I was restarted on my meds but couldn't shake the overwhelming hopelessness I felt. I needed more support than Rimrock thought they could assist me with and I found myself again in the psych ward. This left my mom once again to figure out what exactly to do with me after my stay in the psych ward and she called me saying she had a friend named Peggy who was the director of a facility in Kalispell.

I had no idea what this place was about but it got me out of Billings and I had nothing left to lose anyway. I showed up at A Ray of Hope with a mixture of emotions and of course my bad attitude. I knew I recognized every current guest in the house and thought they were plants by the Federal government in the conspiracy to take me down. I was less than thrilled when I was told that since coming from treatment I would be placed on a 30 day lock and literally would spend my days working at the house or the thrift store across the street. But I had no choice, I had to make this work even if it killed me.

Slowly I began to feel welcomed and more comfortable at

A Ray of Hope. I began reading my bible and rebuilding my relationship with God. I was being of service to others, getting along with my peers rather than the daily conflict I was used to, digging deep to work on me. Most importantly I was staying sober. Pushing limits and having things take longer for me to get than most people was something I was used to, and I wasn't shocked when I was told that my 30 day lock down was going to be extended for another 30 days. This time I accepted it rather than fighting it.

Since arriving at A Ray of Hope, my mom has received facebook messages of threats to kill me. An answer to prayer, this person was found, oddly enough in Missoula and incarcerated on a probation violation. Since I used it to network drug deals I no longer get on facebook or allow it to make me feel inferior about myself compared to others. Outside the window of A Ray of Hope is a giant sign with the 10 commandments posted on it, and I was humbled when I realized I had broken every single one of them. Recently a person from my past showed up here at A Ray of Hope, and in spite of his persistence for me to leave with him and get high, I was strong enough to turn him down.

While healing myself at A Ray of Hope, my sense of humor has returned and I laugh as much as possible. I once again enjoy cooking for others, and I believe in myself more every day. For the first time in a long time, I am forming **healthy** relationships and letting go of the guilt and shame of my past. Daily I have trouble focusing, processing information, remembering things, and I frequently struggle pronouncing certain words and accurately saying what I mean. Only time will tell, but most likely I will live with the permanent damage to my brain and require medications. I still shed tears every now and again, but daily I am getting stronger. I now write and call my sons and mom multiple times a week and remember what we talk about. Instead of thinking of myself more than others I think of others more than myself. I am a work in progress and still tend to have a bad attitude at times but for today I am sober. I am grateful for everything I have and don't have and my mom says she can finally sleep at night knowing I am ok.

## Letters

Let me just begin by saying how very thankful I am to Ray of Hope, which is Peggy and Bob Christiansen. In 2006, Peggy opened Ray of Hope to my daughter and I. The door was open and it remained that way for however long it was that we needed it. Peggy kept the house safe for my daughter and that was very important for me. We stayed for 4 months. This allowed me to get a job and save for getting into a rental and back on my feet. Without Ray of Hope at that time life would have been very difficult. Again, Thank you Peggy.

In late April 2017, I needed to dismantle a dwelling that I had built for the last 5 years. I thought maybe Peggy's new house, her dream across from Ray of Hope might be able to use some materials. But my materials were used and repurposed. Peggy's Women's and Kids house is going to be a NEW house. I am so excited for Peggy. I was able to talk to Joe and explain my situation. He listened as I told him that I needed to move from my place in Marion. That I needed brute force to take off used tin from a pole building and the plywood that I had enclosed a 29 travel trailer in.

About a week later, Joe called me and said that he brought up the need to the community. He had some people that committed to helping. I was so very relieved. So on May 5 a vehicle with Joe, Christina, Wayne, Cody, Rachel and Jackie pulled into the yard. It took Joe and Cody (Jackie spent some time on the roof also) maybe two hours to get all of the tin loose from the screws. Then the guys started to



let gravity have it and the girls loaded the tin on a trailer. This trailer of tin and wood went to Almost a Ranch, an animal rescue. Wayne worked on the sides and removed slabs of wood, windows, insulation and whatever else I had found to make a home. Within 5 hours, the tin from the roof was off, stacked neatly on the trailer along with foam board insulation and wood. Then the

rain and cold began. The crew had worked hard and got the job DONE. I was worried about Christina, I did not want her to get cold or a chill. When crew was gone, I felt empty. Such wonderful people and very giving and happy.

The next day was Sunday and it rained. I had to get up on the trailer to put plastic up a bit to have dry spots. Funny weather this year. I wasn't sure if the plan was to come out on Sunday. But the weather was rainy and cold. People went to Church. It worked out so well anyway. Cody called and said that he and Ian could come out and pick up the washer, dryer and fridge. I was happy again. Not only did they take those items, they took many items to the dump.

I appreciate the crew, Ray of Hope, Peggy and Bob. The crew taught me that people still do care and respect one another. Because Joe, Christina, Cody, Wayne, Rachel and Jackie were the best and did respect one another and Ray of Hope. What a gift Peggy that you have given. Thank you for the hand up, again.

Diane Jelinek

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### Christina Thurber

I have never experienced the kindness that I did today. I have never had so many strangers show me they care even though they have no idea who I am or where I come from. It was beautiful and so peaceful and so heartwarming that Joe and I both cried many times. Dave and Holly are some of the most amazing people and I am so glad that we were sent here to this organization. I feel blessed beyond words and Joe and I both have so much appreciation. Thank you for opening up this world to us Peggy. Neither of us worry about this baby because of this life you have provided for not just us but so many people past and present and future. I really hope that one day I can do the same for others!

A Ray of Hope  
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#### MISSION STATEMENT

A Ray of Hope shall provide a safe harbor for those in the community with nowhere else to turn. It will provide those who seek help not only with food, clothing and shelter, but also with knowledge and a avenue to develop competency in meeting life's financial, emotional, family, and legal rehabilitation challenges.



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