

## ***Well Being Program Testimonials***

Before the Well Being Program, my marriage was in the toilet. I knew that things were not as they should be, but I had never been around alcoholism. This was new to me. My husband joined the program via DEA. They talk—you listen. During the time my husband was in treatment was extremely tough. We lost everything...practice, cars, staff and patients, to name a few. IRS knocked on my front door looking for money. DEA, IRS, PRN—at the “initial” organizations came out of the woodwork. Treatment for him was the longest four months of my life, but through the program, the last 16 years have been my best—more important, my husband’s best! I would do it all again for what we have today.

My husband started taking prescribed drugs to help with back pain about 12 years ago. Looking back it doesn’t seem like it took long for him to become addicted to the drugs that were supposed to help him cope with pain. His pain progressively worsened and the drugs became less and less helpful. He was not able to function without the pain meds. Along with the addiction to the medication he drank alcohol to help ease the pain. The affects drugs and alcohol had on both of us were beginning to take a toll on everyday life. It became more difficult to enjoy simple things like going out to dinner, vacations or family functions. My husband joined the Well-Being Program 6 years ago and has been sober since. The program has connected both of us to so many families that have gone thru similar experiences. The members of the Well-Being Program are available any time to talk on the phone or meet. There is a real commitment by everyone in the Well Being Program to help one another. I am truly thankful for the Program and more importantly, the people that make up the Program. The Well-Being Program and its members have changed our lives for the better in every way.

I am a dental hygienist as well as a recovering alcoholic and drug addict. I moved to Missouri in July 2005. At that time, I became part of the Missouri Dental Well Being Program. This program has become an integral part of my recovery. It allows me to discuss issues specific to being a dental hygienist in recovery with other healthcare professionals. We are able to share our experience, strength and hope with one another and support each other’s recovery. I would encourage any dental hygienist who has a drug or alcohol problem to contact the Missouri Dental Well Being Program.

## ***Finding Our Way***

Life sort of crashed for me the night I came home and found the organ grinder’s monkey on our front lawn. It was Valentine’s Day 2005. Wendell had been too sick to go to work, again. I called him on my way home from an appointment and asked if he wanted to do anything special for the evening. He suggested we wait and make plans when I arrived.

He met me at the door with a smile and said, “Hi babe. Was the organ-grinder’s monkey in the yard when you pulled up?”

I dropped my purse on the table and shook my head.

“Huh,” my husband gave me a goofy grin. “He was there just a while ago.” Then Wendell walked into the living room, fell down on the couch and promptly started to snore. I found the used syringe and empty vial in our bedroom when I went in to change my shoes.

For two years we had searched for an answer to Wendell’s severe health problems. When he began stumbling and falling into walls, we saw our family doctor. When he started asking the same questions over and over every five minutes and wandering the house all night unable to sleep, we saw a neurologist. We chased Alzheimer’s disease, Multiple Sclerosis, smooth-muscle disorders, and a rare-disease-yet-to-be-named. We saw a psychologist and a psychiatrist, a gastroenterologist and an urologist. Wendell endured MRI’s, CT scans, a lumbar puncture and blood tests galore.

He was rushed to the emergency room twice – once by helicopter – and he spent a night in the ICU. We drove to Rochester and spent three weeks at the Mayo Clinic seeing doctors for every body part imaginable. Yet, in all these visits, no one ever ordered a drug screen. No one ever suspected what was actually stealing his memory and confining him to bed for weeks at a time.

We had recently moved to a small, intentional community where Wendell opened a private practice. Our little town was built to help people struggling with life-controlling issues. It was one giant recovery center in the middle of a cornfield. How ironic. Even so, Wendell did not fit the normal criteria for folks coming to get a fresh start with God at Heartland. He had a medical license to consider.

With help from our pastor and close friends, we sat down the next morning and tried to make a plan. We finally called our family physician, and Wendell dared to admit the truth to a colleague for the first time. We knew the disclosure might mean the end of his career or the beginning of something even worse.

A few minutes later, our doctor called back. He said, “I’ve got the number for this guy...” I still cry when I remember those words. Jim Weiberg became our Well-Being advocate within the hour. He guided Wendell in the process of entering treatment. He offered encouragement, counsel and straight talk for our crooked lives. Later, he introduced us to Ira Davis and the after-care available through the state Well-Being program.

Unlike many of our friends in recovery circles, I was not intimately acquainted with addiction. I might as well have been plunked down in Paris, France, without a guidebook and been told to find my way home without a translator.

The Well-Being Program became my guide. Our grown children and their spouses joined me in family counseling and together we learned the language of addiction and recovery. We held onto the treasures of family ties, solid friends, and faith in God, because we soon discovered those blessings were not available in every broken life.

Our pastor talked to me about forgiveness and about my pride. One day he told me, "This addiction does not define Wendell. He is a wonderful man, a great husband and father, a tremendous doctor, and a good leader. He just happens to have a problem in this one area." I know that is a simplistic definition of something so "cunning and baffling" but it helped me put things in perspective.

After that conversation, I gave up my right to be mad. I forgave my husband for his affair with drugs. I accepted my responsibility as a codependent spouse, and I opened my heart for restoration and recovery. Wendell stayed in the treatment center in Wisconsin for 62 days. Every other week, I made the nine-hour drive to join him for Saturday morning family sessions and then we squeezed in a few hours of together time. One weekend we broke a record with 12 family members in attendance.

Strangely enough, the memories of those visits are as sweet in my mind as any family vacation we ever took. Recovery has not always been easy, but it has always been good. We have discovered amazing things about ourselves as individuals and about us as a couple. We have gained new appreciation for family and friends and new gratitude for the mercy of God.

Wendell and I once shared in our failings – as an addict and a codependent spouse – and today we share in our victories. This year we celebrated our thirty-fourth wedding anniversary, our tenth grandchild, and our third Valentine's Day without the organ grinder's monkey on our lawn.