

Update on Treatment

By Jim Cusack and Francis Lovell

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) has announced in a past newsletter that a study had been done that indicates Twelve Step Programs are consistent with the science of alcoholism and addiction. Over the years, when looking at all the alternative treatment modalities that have been developed, Alcoholics Anonymous was getting lost in the shuffle.

Jim Cusack has believed deeply in the 12 step philosophy since 1952. Jim was overwhelmed when he saw this article by the NCADD. Jim has held hard to the philosophy and incorporated it into the treatment philosophy of Veritas Villa. As many other treatment programs seemed to be changing their approach towards treatment and seem to be adapting the use of more medication, Jim stood by the philosophy of the 12 steps and finally feels the scientific community is acknowledging this as the right approach.

Jim Cusack often talks about the tough time he had with his first 5 years of recovery. This appears to be the primary reason he started working in the field. Jim also was a member of AHHAP (The Association of Halfway House Alcoholism Programs of North America, Inc.) which published information pertaining to a persons personal recovery timetable through the first 5 years sober.

In the brochure published by AHHAP, it states, "One must observe and give credit to Alcoholics Anonymous for being among the first to respond to the person in crisis periods with a positive modality of treatment." In their knowing wisdom they have practiced a form of supportive therapy by recognizing milestones achieved in recovery. Alcoholics Anonymous acknowledges the person's efforts at three months of recovery, six months, nine, twelve and eighteen months, and every year thereafter. These times basically coincide with the crisis periods described by Dr. Simpson. When the person is experiencing the most difficult of times, AA supports him or her for just "hanging in there."

Jim believes people can fight the obsession but not the compulsion to use. Once a person "picks up," it's about what they did not do in their lives that caused them to pick up. This is consistent with the phrase, "half measures availed us nothing," in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous page 59. "It works, if you work it."

Carl B. stated in a recent letter, "whatever you're doing there, it works because all the other rehabs I went to kept me on steps 1-3 and never addressed the action steps to make me take a good look at myself like you did there." Carl has just celebrated 5 years clean.

Happy Holiday



Women in Recovery Poems

Serenity by Anonymous

Autumn colors on the ground
Weeping willows dangling down
The pale blue sky with clouds so high
And little birds all flying by.
The air so fresh and grass so green.
The most beautiful sight that you've ever seen,
A gentle breeze across your face
A happy heart full of God's grace
If I looked up the word—This I would see—
My definition of "Serenity".



Willingness by Anonymous

Have you ever wished for something
With all your heart and soul?
Something to fill the void inside
To complete and make you whole?
Have you felt your life was incomplete?
So many things left undone
The promise of another day
Comes with each rising sun
All you have to do is have
The "willingness" to try
Give yourself a fighting chance
Don't let life pass you by.

July 2007 Veritas Villa receives a three year accreditation from CARF

CARF is an international, not-for-profit organization that accredits human services providers. Founded in 1966 as the Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities, the accrediting body is now known as CARF. The Villa staff worked together to receive this 3 year accreditation.



Chris Mensche and Kathy Smithem maintain a booth at a Conference.

Kingston Hospital Annual Recovery Conference

On September 21, 2007 Sue and Jim Cusack spoke at a conference at the Quality Inn in Kingston, NY. Jim spoke on the Back to Basics model for treatment and Sue spoke on Women and Relapse. New York State Assemblyman Kevin Cahill presented a New York State Assembly Certificate of Merit to Jim and Sue Cusack in recognition of their many years of outstanding service to the community and to those suffering from addictions.

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Veritas Villa supports the 42nd Annual Ellenville Regional Hospital Auxiliary Luncheon.

On September 10, 2007 members of the Villa attended the 42nd Auxiliary Luncheon at the Eagle's Nest in Bloomingburg, New York. Debbie Briggs, Director of Human Resources and Volunteer Services, received a Volunteer Award and Maggi Heath received Auxilian of the Year Award. The event was well attended.

On October 27, 2007 Ellenville Hospital Honored Sue and Jim Cusack

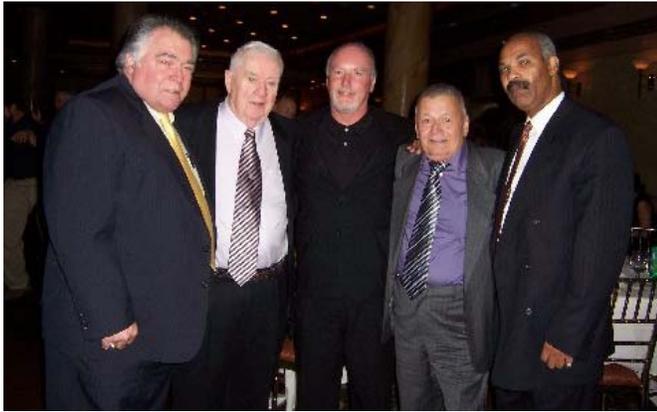
At the Ellenville Hospital Annual Dinner Dance, Jim and Sue were recognized for providing leadership and commitment to the community. The Villa was also acknowledged for being the first treatment facility in the State of New York for treating alcoholics and addicts together.

2007 Fisher of Men Humanitarian Award



This award was presented to Sue Cusack at The 18th Annual Peter Sweisgood Breakfast at the Melville Marriott in New York on November 18, 2007. At this event Sue was acknowledged for 35 years of service as a counselor, author, lecturer, and trainer in the field of Alcoholism and Drug addiction. Sue expressed her

gratitude when accepting the award thanking her colleagues, staff, and friends who have helped her over the years with her accomplishments.



Harry Farrell, Jim Cusack, Andy Ficarella, Edward Mitchell, & Reggie English

A Report of the 34th Villa Foundation Dinner 2007 by Jane Brown

“ It is possible to live and enjoy life without alcohol and other drugs.” This statement can be found on the cover of Veritas Villa’s journal which was given to those who attended the 34th Annual Dinner Dance. This statement proved true for 430 people that evening!

Jim and Sue Cusack brought us all together at the elegant Terrace on the Park reception hall to celebrate the gift of recovery. Jim and Sue model the importance of taking time to reflect and rejoice. I was honored to be invited to rejoice with them.

Upon our arrival, we marveled at the beautiful mirrored staircase and rich adornments in the lobby. After greeting “Villa Family,” we rode up the elevator to the “coketail” hour which was held in an exquisite room in the sky. The huge windows offered views of Flushing Meadow Park and the dazzling New York City skyline. The hour was delightful and delicious! There were mouthwatering choices to fit everyone’s fancy! Culinary specialties such as paella, pasta, eggplant roladini, and rings of calamari were to be found. There was saffron rice, scallops, and mussels. There was grilled zucchini, roasted peppers, mushrooms, cheeses, and fruit. There were also carvers present to slice fresh steaks and hams.

As my taste buds were tantalized, my mind was firing to recall the names of the smiling faces I reunited with. To see clients who have successfully completed treatment at the Villa made my heart dance. United high above the ground, contracts, EAP’s, alumni, staff, and family members merged to show support for those “breaking the cycle.” Spouses and loved ones mingled in a room full of gratitude. What a sublime treat! Now we were escorted to the Ballroom for dinner and dancing. Again, we found rich and elegant decor. When seated, we were each surprised with a Veritas Villa umbrella and given time to scour over our proud journal which was expertly put together by Sue Heath, Barbara Murray, and Diane Kaminski. Good wishes, memorials, and

congratulations were all included.

After everyone settled, Father Jack opened the evening with a blessing. Together we offered a prayer of Thanksgiving. Father helped us recognize our bounty. Jim warmly welcomed us all, and Kenny graciously set the stage for us to embark on an honorable evening.

Tribute was given to Tom Burns for his dedicated work and success in forming programs to spread the message of recovery. This Honoree is always there to listen and help. EAP’s were saluted for their passion and assistance. Pioneers like Jim Cusack and Tom Burns teach the healing importance of families’ involvement. They are responsible for helping thousands of those blighted by substance abuse find their Higher Power and miraculously repair their lives.

Seated in luxury, dinner was enjoyed listening to music of folks like Frank Sinatra. Tuxedo-clad waiters were buzzing all around. After our meal, the tempo increased and everyone kicked up their heels. I enjoyed dancing with personal and professional friends. We all “boogie oggie oggied,” till we just couldn’t boogie no more!

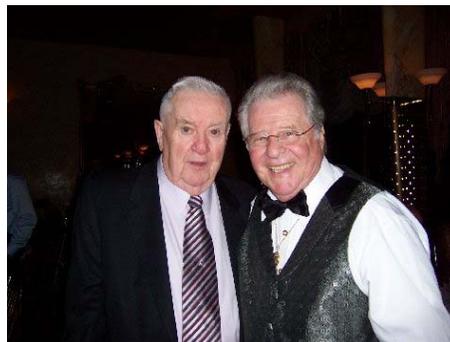


Mike and Ruth Patterson

All the movement made a little room for some mini-pastries, cakes and chocolates. My husband, Greg, and I sipped the rich coffee and the evening wound down.

A lot HAS happened since the conversations held in the back room of Jim’s candy store in Queens. So many have been prayed for, shown up, and been helped. So many have been given compassion, love, and support as they gained knowledge to overcome their addictions.

Five years ago, I did not think it was possible to live and enjoy life without alcohol and other drugs. Would I ever have any fun? This question, I am sure stymied us all. I



Jim Cusack and Tom Burns

knew that I probably would live. But I surely would never have any fun. Dance? Ha!

Well, I was wrong. I have lots and lots of fun now!

Thank you, Jim and Sue, for a lovely evening, Jane Brown

Summer Picnic 2007

The summer of 2007 found Veritas Villa continuing to provide quality services to men and women and the summer picnic is a celebration and renewing time for many staff people and alumni. An estimate of 650 people attended the picnic. Activities for family and children were provided at the event. The day was sunny with no threat of rain. It is always a pleasure seeing Alumni attend the event sharing the many joys of recovery with staff. Following is a letter from an Alumni person who attended the event:

"I'm writing to say thank you and to tell you it was great to see you and to be back up at the Villa for the picnic. What a great day! What an honor and thrill it was to speak at the AA meeting. I will remember that for the rest of my life. Thank you for asking me. The staff at the Villa have helped me so much. It was good for my soul and my spirit to see everyone and feel the Villa magic once again! It has been a long, bumpy road over the last 18 months, but I wouldn't trade my sobriety or serenity for anything! When you're ready to do your renovations, I'd love to help in anyway I can. I'm a pretty good carpenter and it would be nice to help the Villa after all, you have helped me. Veritas Villa will always have a special place in my heart. See you soon." Michael H.



Roger & Luwayna's son Rodney models a Veritas Villa hat and shirt while displaying a recent catch on a fishing expo the summer of 2007.



2007 Villa Staff Picture

Past Guest at the Villa Expresses

Gratitude and Forgiveness By Tom H.

My first week at Veritas Villa was a roller coaster ride of emotions, ranging from anger to complete sadness and confusion. I admitted alcohol had taken control over me and had made my life unmanageable. I was desperate to get a hold on anything that could help me.

I began to realize that resentments were fueling my alcoholism and drug addiction. I learned that my anger had stemmed from selfishness. I was angry because my father did not do for me what other fathers were doing for their kids. I was also angry at God because He would not fix my father and give me what I wanted.

I was told I must find forgiveness for both my father and myself before I could find sobriety. After looking at myself, and my part in this scenario, I realized that I actually loved my father.

During my sixth week at the Villa I received news that my father was in critical condition in Ireland, and was not expected to pull through. I packed my belongings and flew to Ireland, Big Book clutched in my hand. I started thinking that the world was plotting against me, (expired passport, missed flights, and no sleep). What else could go wrong? Would I make it in time?

Upon arrival, I felt an urgency to get to the hospital and make peace with my father before anything else could go wrong. I never expected the look of happiness on his face as I told him I loved him and he said he loved me. Miraculously, his condition began to improve, slowly. My sister and I spent hours with him each day, in shifts. On my last day, in Ireland, I was able to spend some time with my dad alone and watch a Gaelic Football match. This is something we had never had a chance to do before.

I realize now that God had been carrying me while I had been bogged down with self-pity for a long time. It is now my turn to stand up and do His will and not bury my head in the sand anymore. I hope my father and I can enjoy each other for years to come.

I want to thank everyone at the Villa because without their prayers and support, I don't believe I could have been able to, or want to, make that trip which turned out to be a healing journey.

Holidays at the Villa



"Our" Les M.



Roger, Luwayna & Rodney, Sue C., Sheila B., Diane B., Jane B. and Jim C.

Halloween starts the holiday at the Villa. The Staff dresses up for a party which includes all clients. The purpose of this is to show clients that it is possible to have fun in recovery.

On Thanksgiving, Matt Ryan hosted The Annual Gratitude Meeting. One of the many highlights of the meeting was the many children sharing their heartfelt gratitude for family members being in treatment. Another highlight and moving moment was when three generations of family expressed the gratitude to the Villa and Staff.

Alumni members attend the 3 day event helping in the kitchen and sharing their experience, strength and hope with the clients. The Villa feeds over 250 people on Thanksgiving.

The Villa Christmas Party will be on December 20, 4pm to 7pm. The event is always blessed by the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Claus, who distribute gifts to all.

Hazelden's New York Awards Dinner Honors the Villa on October 23, 2007

Hazelden's awards dinner presented Steve Sadove Chairman & CEO of Saks Fifth Avenue with the Distinguished Leadership Award. Sue and Jim Cusack received the Distinguished Service Award for their life work in the field of addiction. This event was hosted by Bill Moyers. Below is a picture of the staff that attended the awards dinner.



Jim and Sue's Corner

Congratulations to all Staff both past and present!!!

It has been the "Year of the Villa." On four separate and unrelated occasions this past year, "The Villa" has been recognized and awarded accolades for simply doing what has worked since the day Jim began his first drying out spot over forty years ago! While the Villa program has kept up with all the necessary requirements over the years, it has never lost sight of its legacy of giving help and hope to show that one can **LIVE AND ENJOY LIFE WITHOUT ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS!**

Is the Villa being recognized simply because it has endured the test of time and trials over the years? Is it being recognized because it strongly believes in the God given program handed down to us by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob...that miracles happen when one addicted person reaches out to another? Is it being recognized for providing a setting of love and acceptance for the addicted person and their families? Is it the fact that the Villa staff from kitchen to management goes the extra mile to offer help and hope in a 12 step abstinence model that works? Is it that the Villa has outlived and survived many fads, both program wise and drug wise, sorting the effective from the ineffective but always sticking with the basics...the tried and true recovery models? Is it that we rely on the power of prayer more than ever....?

Whatever the reason ... whatever "it" is that has brought on all this recognition, we know it is because of STAFF like you...folks who believe in the legacy and mission of our founding fathers...folks who have recovered via the 12 step abstinence program and are living proof that "IT WORKS, IF YOU WORK IT" ...SO....

CONGRATULATIONS AND let's keep on keeping on... we all have so much more work to do in today's addiction battle. Thank you for being such a great staff and loving extended family.

We will all miss Tom Lavery

Tom Lavery, Ken's dad passed on June 23, 2007. Everyone at the Villa misses Tom Lavery, who spent quality time at the Villa in the past year. Ken is a role model to everyone. Ken's niece wrote the following poem which was read at Tom Lavery's funeral: *Here is a poem just for you, with loving and caring too. Although you are gone, we will miss you. Hoping and praying that you enjoy your new life. Many of us have been crying. But we want you to know we will never forget a nice, caring, wonderful man. We love you! Love, Casey. (Casey is 8 years old.)*



**Mark your calendar
for the Veritas Villa
Annual Picnic
July 12, 2008**

**and our
35th Annual Dinner Dance
on October 24, 2008.**

**Visit our new
website at :
www.veritasvilla.com**