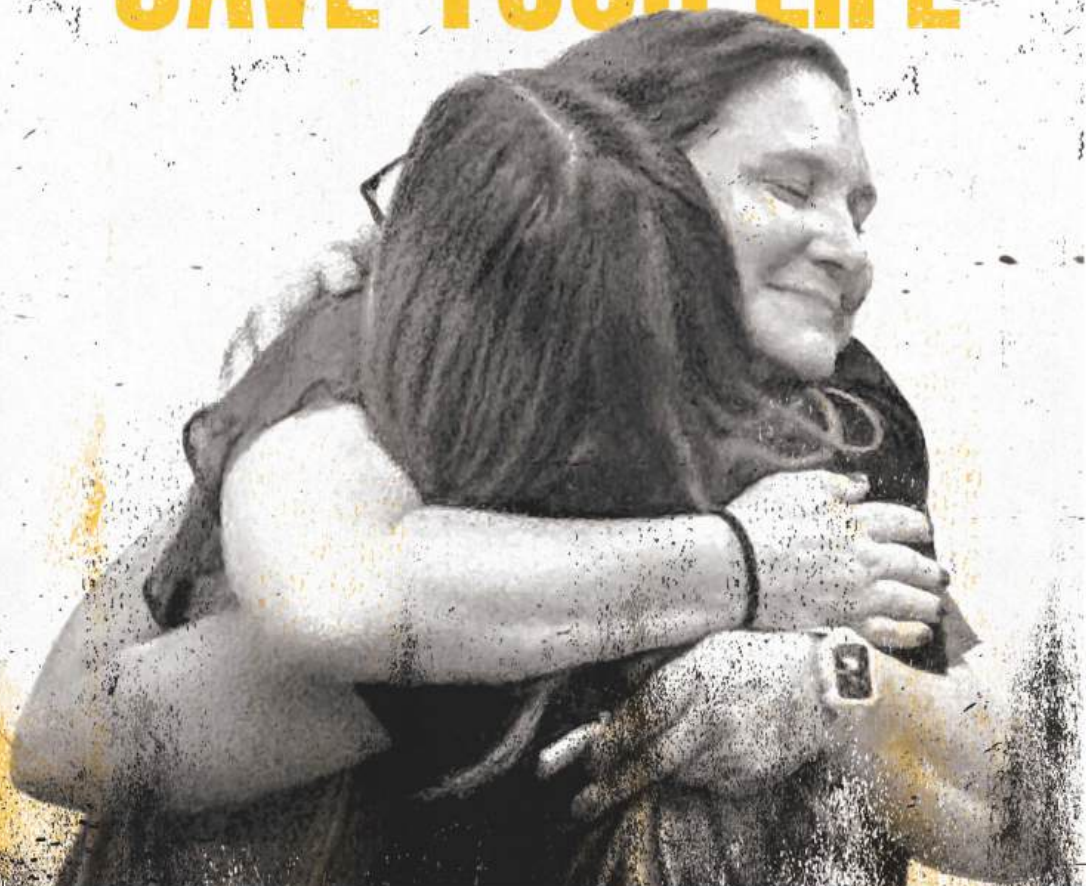


The LIGHT POST

Guiding Light Newsletter | Issue 21

**“THIS PROGRAM CAN
SAVE YOUR LIFE”**



INVESTING IN A NEW LIFE

DEAR FRIENDS, ,

I had a lunch guest in May who I need to tell you about. Pat came through the recovery program here in 2018. A kid who was not a kid, naïve about life but chronically addicted to heroin and out of options.

In his second week of being in our program, we did our focus point presentations at City Life church. During a break, I noticed Pat going into the Dollar General right next door and so I waited outside until he came out. I asked him what he had in his bag, and he showed me a good \$6 worth of treats. I remember asking him, “Who’s paying for those snacks?” and he didn’t have much of a reply.

“You don’t make any money and you’re here in a free program. How is this moving you forward? What would it look like to practice responsibility and self-control now in this moment?” I asked him. He wasn’t defensive but more astonished, like it had never crossed his mind. And I think that day woke him up. He started finding things he liked outside of getting high. He finished our program, moved to Iron House, decided to learn French, went back to school, and started a path to create a completely different story for his life.

The day he came to lunch this May, he brought his fiancé. After some hugs, Pat introduced me to his fiancé by saying, **“This is the man who saved my life.”**



Those are some intense words to hear for me. I share them with you because most of you reading this saved MY life years ago. Your investment changed me, and in doing so, I had the opportunity and privilege to be part of Pat's life. Those words he said to me? I was hearing them on behalf of YOU.

This is what you are participating in: new life. For Pat, we're not simply seeing new life in a good job or being engaged or even his gratitude to Guiding Light. After he reached those first two years of sobriety and left Iron House, he said he wanted to stay connected and offered to chair a support group meeting for the men currently in programming. Lots of people say they want to get involved and that's the last we hear of them.

Pat showed up every. single. week. for another *two years* to lead the noon 12 & 12 (an AA meeting). He arranged his work schedule to faithfully keep that commitment of investing in others. He kept showing up, giving back, and being part of community. The children he and his fiancé might have? They won't know their father as anything but healthy. His parents? They sleep at night knowing their son is well. His employer? It's assumed he'll be at work because he's responsible and dependable.

Your willingness to invest deeply in an individual's life pays dividends. Tonya's life, Nate's life, Quinn's life: stories you will read about in this newsletter are just a few examples of the impact you have.

Thank you!

BRIAN



I KNOW GOD HAS A PLAN FOR ME

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES.

Tonya arrived at Guiding Light's Women's Recovery Program in a mental state she described as **"no hope, joy, or purpose."** A little more than 12 months later, she sat at the front of a room full of people, a smile on her face as she waited for her turn to describe her path to sobriety and a new life.

She was introduced by Tori, our Women's Recovery Program Manager, who served as Tonya's life coach:

"Tonya came into this program feeling isolated and alone. She so badly wanted to be loved and understood by everyone that she was actually pushing them away. For so long, it was so easy to play the victim, but not anymore. Slowly, Tonya started to take responsibility, and that choice began her transformation. ... She went from being a victim to taking control of her life today. She went from being alone to being in relationship."

Tori described Tonya — who now, by the way, serves as house manager for the Women’s Recovery Program at Kendra’s House — as a reliable resource for her and all the women in the program. And **she wrapped up her introduction with a joke about Tonya’s emphasis on being grateful:**

“I never thought I would be so sick of hearing about gratitude. But that is only because I always hear Tonya talk about how grateful she is. I’m pretty sure she pours it in her coffee in the morning. Not a sprinkle, but a good solid pour. Tonya, I am grateful to be here tonight to celebrate you. I’m so very proud of you and your one year of sobriety.”

True to form, Tonya began her remarks with gratitude:

“I want to start by expressing how grateful I am that you could all be here tonight. Thank you to the staff, donors, and the participants who have made it possible for me to stand before you today.”

Tonya went on to describe how she learned to regulate her emotions, forgive herself and accept that she deserves happiness. After finding work and moving into Guiding Light’s sober living community for women, she hopes to inspire other women seeking recovery:

“This program can save your life. My advice is to stay the course and embrace the discomfort. I didn’t give up when things were hard. I pushed through, and that is why I can stand here today.

“I have learned that I do not need to turn to substances or let my emotions control my life. I found peace and purpose, and I know God has a plan for me. Today, I surround myself with people who genuinely care for my well-being. I have a positive outlook on life and find joy in the everyday. I show up for my community, my friends, and my family, while living in alignment with my values. Most importantly, I am my authentic self, and I love who have I have become.

“Thank you for being a part of my life, my recovery, and my happiness.”

LUNCH: IT'S NOT JUST FOOD

**Jesus answered,
"It is written:
'Man shall not live
on bread alone, but
on every word that
comes from the
mouth of God.'"**

– Matthew 4:4

Lunch is an important part of the day here at Guiding Light. It doesn't last long, maybe 30 minutes. But like everything we do here, it is intentional. It is physical nourishment seasoned with prayer, conversation, and fellowship. Most of the men and women who come to Guiding Light are either overweight or underweight and "vegetable" is a foreign word. Three meals a day, fresh fruit and vegetables, protein, nutrient-dense: this is a building block in a new way to live.

If you've never joined us, here is an overview of what we do with that half hour at lunch.

The first thing to know is that lunch starts at 11 a.m. That might sound early, but not to the men and women in the recovery program. By 6 a.m. they have already made their beds and started full days of programming.

On any given day, the recovery program participants — men and women — will be joined at lunch by staff, donors, volunteers and community members. There's plenty of conversation as everyone makes their way to kitchen window to get their food. Seating is assigned — but randomly, with separate sections for men and women participants.

'The last shall be first and the first shall be last' takes on immediate meaning at lunch: no one starts eating until the last person joins the table, and that person always leads the prayer. Because these



lunches are about more than food, every table also has a printout of a question connected to that week's focus point.

Guiding Light's seven focus points — **willingness, honesty, vulnerability, self-awareness, self-compassion, responsibility, and spiritual formation** — are the foundation of our programming. Each week the men and women focus on one of them in twice-weekly cognitive behavioral therapy classes. The lunch question is an opportunity to continue exploring these concepts, and over the course of the four-month program, we'll have noodled through over 80 different questions!

For example, in a week when the focus point is spiritual formation, one of the lunch questions is, *"What do your daily habits say about what you value?"* In a week when the focus point is honesty, one of the questions is, *"What was the last lie you told yourself?"* When the focus point is responsibility, one of the questions is, *"What do you think the difference between responsibility and accountability is?"*

Meaningful conversations flow across the room as people take their meal together, nourished in many ways. **If you would like to join us for a weekday lunch**, give us a call or scan the QR code to set up a time to come in! It's a great, no-pressure way to gain a better understanding of Guiding Light.



QUINN

IT STILL BLOWS MY MIND

Out of all Quinn's overdoses — and there have been many — the last one probably saved his life.

Almost dying on a September day 2022 began a fateful sequence of events: He got released from the hospital. Somehow, he found himself at Guiding Light, mistakenly thinking he'd found a homeless shelter. Then he suffered a seizure in the lobby. Guiding Light staff got him to a detoxification clinic. When he woke up, Quinn asked the nurse what day it was.

"They said it was Halloween," he said. "I didn't know where I was and I thought it was still September. So I lost a whole month."

Lost a month but gained a new life. Last Halloween marked the third anniversary of Quinn's sobriety. He is healthy, active in community, moving up in his career, and excited about the future. All because he found his way back to Guiding Light.

But he wasn't excited about the future back then. He couldn't stay out of co-dependent relationships, abusive situations, trouble, or drugs. He knew a lot of facts about addiction and all that had provided him were years of relapse and despair.

**"As they were laying out the program to me, I remember really quickly coming to the realization that it wasn't a shelter, it was actually a rehabilitation facility.
But it also was something entirely different."**

— Quinn



“And it still blows me away that there’s a place like that. I’ve been in so many facilities and I’ve never been in a place that will take you in for free and teach you how to be different. They show you the path to a job, get you a job, and just completely help you with every single thing you need to be successful coming out of homelessness and drug addiction.”

HE SPEAKS FROM EXPERIENCE.

“I’ve OD’d over 10 different times. I’ve been in a bunch of different inpatient 30-day facilities. I’ve been in detox, like five-day detox stays, probably 20 different times,” he said. “I’ve tried a lot of things and nothing ever changed. **I needed a new way to think, not another treatment plan. Guiding Light offered me a new way to live.**”

The other places helped him get sober for a moment but never helped him change his life. That’s what Guiding Light helped him figure out.

“It’s not really about just getting off the drugs. It’s about getting off the drugs AND trying to change who you are as a human being,” Quinn said. “It was a long battle of figuring out that I needed to change some things about myself, not just stop using drugs.”

Another difference he noticed was that other shorter programs focus on keeping the participant comfortable for as long as the insurance keeps paying.

“At Guiding Light, it’s not like they’re just trying to keep you comfortable,” he said. “It’s actually not very comfortable at all, so that really helps. It’s a good environment to be able to change.”

What Quinn was describing is a value at Guiding Light, where we encourage participants to **Embrace the Discomfort**, that there is discomfort inherent in growth and sanctification, and that God gifts us some pain so we are able to experience the joy.

“I came to that understanding just through working with the spiritual director I had at the time,” Quinn said. “I think a lot of human beings are trying to eliminate uncomfortable emotions when it should be something that you’re trying to learn how to cope with. I don’t think I ever developed any real coping skills because I was constantly getting high.”

When Quinn first started looking for work, he was determined to work at IHOP and staff told him, "NO." Quinn was furious. But after his life coach walked him through Guiding Light's reasons of why they thought any kind of restaurant work for Quinn was dangerous to his recovery, he started to listen. The other men in programming who were becoming Quinn's closest friends encouraged him to trust the process.

Three years ago, Quinn moved to Iron House, Guiding Light's sober living community for men. Today? He is basically running the company he works for and now has a career in horticulture.

“Up until this point in my life, I had never gotten more than five or six months sober. So I never really developed any true friendships with anybody,” he said. “And then you go into Guiding Light and you’re in there with all these guys for up to eight months downtown and they become your brothers. These are the people I want to be with. It becomes your family.”

Looking back at the ups and downs of his life, the close calls, his body ravaged by drugs, Quinn is full of gratitude that he ended up at Guiding Light — even if he was mistaken at first why he was there.

“So every time I think about that, if I would’ve gone anywhere else, I probably would not have made it or would still be using on the streets,” he said. “It still blows my mind that I’m in the spot that I’m at now.”



NATE

“ I HAVE A HOME AGAIN ”

Nate suffered through the worst parts of his life alone. Sometimes that was by loss, other times by choice.

He had no brothers or sisters, and his mom died when he was young. When his father died in 2022, Nate responded as he usually did when life got hard: by trying to numb the pain. Spiraling deeper into his addiction to alcohol and drugs, he grew more isolated.

“I owned a few houses. I lost those. I lost my jobs,” he said. “I got to the point where my life was completely and utterly unmanageable. I alienated anybody who was still close with me and still had my back. And it got to the point where I just couldn’t do it anymore.”

Determined to change his life, Nate checked in at a detoxification clinic. He was still in a fog when he completed detox, but he knew he needed more. He tried another treatment program in town but there was a complication with his insurance. Then he called Guiding Light — where insurance is never a problem because treatment is always free — and they told him to come in that afternoon.

“I was scared for certain. Petrified, really. But I was also in such a haze still,” he said. “I’d only been sober for a few weeks at that point, just white-knuckling sobriety, and I didn’t know what to expect.”

WHAT HE FOUND WAS A COMMUNITY THAT WELCOMED HIM.

“One thing that really stuck out and kind of blew my mind at Guiding Light was that the opposite of addiction is connection. I was not expecting to find the community that I did. It’s really something special that they do there.”

– Nate

He was not saying that it was easy to trust the process and stick with the program.

“I had to learn to just trust that they know what’s best for you and that I needed to follow this recipe, so to speak, in order to fully let go and start the healing process,” Nate said. **“I had to realize that I’ve tried doing things my way for so long and that’s what got me here. It was time that I try something different.”**

Nate had a chance to testify about that difference recently at a celebration for him and six other men and women who reached a full year of sobriety. Before he went to nail his name plaque to the wall of honor, he told the crowd that Guiding Light is about more than getting sober.

“When I got here, they told me they were going to teach me how to live a different way in this world. I was skeptical to say the very least. The program wasn’t easy. Learning how to live and cope with life sober was uncomfortable and challenging in ways I wasn’t prepared for,” he said.

“Change didn’t happen overnight. It came gradually. But after a couple of months, I started to notice the shift to my perspective. I began to find joy in life again.”

During the ceremony, his life coach, Nick, told the audience that Nate's determination — what Nick called his grit — helped him get the most out of the program. He persisted through several injuries, including a pinched nerve in his hip, a broken wrist, a tooth abscess, a torn calf muscle and a hurt back.



“I’ve seen any one of these things take many men out of this program, but here he is about to put his name up on the wall,” Nick said. “This is grit, and this is difficult to teach somebody. Nate, I’m very proud of you.”

When Nate graduated from the recovery program and moved into Iron House, our sober living community for men, he took part in another Guiding Light tradition — receiving the keys to his new home along with medallion stamped with a single word to remind him of his journey.

Nate’s word was “Choice,” and he explained that was “because I could choose to show up or I could choose to be stuck in my old patterns. There were times in the program where things were touch and go for me, and it always boiled down to me making a choice whether to completely buy in or not.”

Fortunately he did completely buy in. Today he is part of a community that means everything to him. He’s no longer suffering in isolation. He is living in connection.

“Yeah, I feel like I have a home again. That’s, I think, a good way to describe it,” he said. “As somebody who’s never had siblings, I don’t know what that’s like, but I feel like I have 30 brothers who are always in my corner. And that’s a pretty special family.”

HIGHLIGHTS

CRAIN'S BUSINESS 2026 NOTABLE LEADER IN HEALTHCARE

Addiction is a community health crisis. Mental health struggles and substance use go hand-in-hand. Chronic addiction results in homelessness, regular ER visits, broken families, and high employee turnover. Offering a sustainable path out of addiction results in social solutions in all these other areas. We are proud that our leader was recognized for his tireless push to serve men and women struggling with drugs and alcohol, offering a path to physical, mental, relational, and spiritual health!



ONE YEAR SOBRIETY CELEBRATION

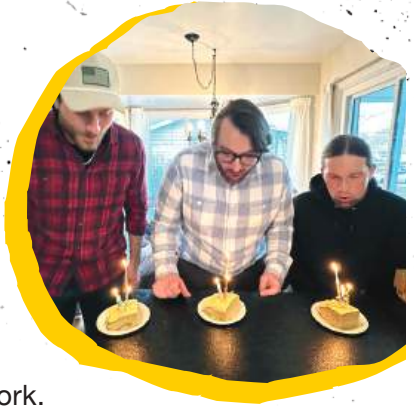
If you've seen pictures of people at Guiding Light holding hammers and wondered what on earth is going on – it's from these special nights! We don't just hear their testimonies, they physically stake their claim on a new way of life. We hand them 2 nails, a wooden plaque with their name on it, and a hammer. Their parent, sibling, friend, sponsor, or spouse is invited to hold the name plaque in place while the honoree nails the plaque to the wall. **So far, no injured fingers, just lots of rejoicing!** In April, Angela, Nate, Evan, David, Tonya, Brad, and Danny all celebrated that first, amazing anniversary. In July we will celebrate another seven men and women. **THIS IS NEW LIFE.** This is thanks to you.



3 YEAR CELEBRATION: BEN, JARED, QUINN

75+ people gathered at our executive director's home to celebrate Quinn (his story earlier in this newsletter) Ben, and Jared. We like to tease Ben that we're tired of hearing about yet another promotion at work.

He's recognized for his work, dedication, and commitment to community both at Iron House and at his job. Jared, always reserved, noted that the friendships he formed with the other men at Iron House have been significant in his new life.



IRON HOUSE SOFTBALL TEAM

Besides our very cool jerseys, we're also excited that 17 Iron House men signed up to start our very first softball team.

Because of the early rising habits we like to instill on our men, there was universal complaining when they learned the city league had scheduled the majority of their games to start after 8 PM all summer.

"That's past my bedtime!" groaned Nick, our men's program manager, not at all joking. "I really am excited about so many guys joining and being proud to wear Guiding Light on their jerseys." Why do we love this? Community, commitment, sober fun, teamwork, sportsmanship, friendship, new life!



3 WAYS TO GIVE:

DONOR ADVISED FUNDS (DAFS), IRAS, STOCKS, LEGACY, MEMORIAL, IN-KIND GIVING:

We are honored to be the recipient of these gifts and have streamlined systems. **Please contact** david@guidinglightworks.org or (616) 451-0236 option #5.

REPLY WITH ENCLOSED ENVELOPE:

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