The Phoenix Spirit

Recovery, Renewal and Growth

WHAT’S INSIDE
Letter From the Editor / 3
Spotlight on Mental Health: Reclaiming Relaxation in Recovery / 4
Books / 5
Retreat Directory / 8-9
Ask the Expert: Bhakti Brain Health Clinic / 10-11
Calendar / 13
Support Groups / 15
Retreat Time / 16

The Mistake of Choosing a Person Who Doesn’t Have a Conscience

Some of us are not aware of people who lack a conscience—those who lack empathy for others and cannot tolerate differences between themselves and others. Our lack of awareness is sometimes prompted by a misguided fear of being judgmental of others and an over willingness to give others the benefit of the doubt. The fact is that some people simply lack the capacity to be compassionate to others, just like some people cannot see what their vision does not allow them to see. Some people are morally blind to others and their incapacity can cause major problems in a relationship. There are big differences between rattlesnakes and garter snakes. Neither creature deserves to be hated but we would be well advised to know the differences between these two reptiles. So, it is OK to be judgmental if we are trying to protect ourselves from major injuries and it is wise to know how to handle different creatures in God’s creation.

We all need to learn the differences between rattlesnakes and garter snakes and Easter Bunnies.

You may wonder how people without a conscience can be compared to rattlesnakes. Actually, the brain of a reptile is significantly different from that of a mammal. Snakes can be cold blooded and typically lack the capacity to have nurturing relationships with others. They don’t nurture their young and typical look at other creatures as either prey or predator. As mammals, we do have close relationships simply based on emotional affiliation with others. When we look at the world like a rattlesnake we simply lack compassion for others. We are still part of God’s plan but lack compassion in terms of hurting others. This

Hiking Her Way to Healing
by Mary Berg / Photos by Tracy Walsh

T he entry point into our best selves, as addicts, starts with sobriety, but it doesn’t end there. The Phoenix Spirit interviewed Kara Frahm, Director of Business Development at Horowitz Health, to capture her story of how the Superior Hiking Trail healed her. In her words, “Hiking has given me back so much of myself. I’ve figured out who I am, what I stand for, and what I’m capable of doing. Whether you find deep healing in the woods, with a therapist, or your spirit says, ‘I have to start my own band,’ go do that, because there’s a life that’s more than just being sober.” (The interview has been edited for brevity.)

TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR RECOVERY JOURNEY
I got sober a little later in life than many women—at 45. My drinking had escalated to cope with what was, I now know, a very abusive marriage. Afraid for our one-year-olds’ safety, I got divorced. With support from family and friends, I raised the twins on my own, too busy to think about the pain I carried from that trauma.

So fast forward a bit, I met and married someone without doing any work on myself. I wasn’t sober but wasn’t yet in dire trouble. When the marriage didn’t fix that pain for me, which of course it couldn’t, I upped my alcohol intake until the scales flipped. I became a daily drinker. Instead of addressing the abuse, I went deeper and darker into that pain.

I agreed to go to treatment at Hazelden—my family’s choice—for 30 days. I felt relief at having a break from feeling suffocated by all the things of life. At Hazelden, doctors diagnosed me with severe depressive disorder, but I didn’t.

HIKING HER WAY TO HEALING

NEW MENTAL HEALTH COLUMNIST
Spotlight on Mental Health

In recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, The Phoenix Spirit is pleased to welcome new columnist Seth Perry. Perry will be writing about mental health issues. He is also a pastor, blogger and mental health recovery educator.

Read Perry’s article on page 4
WE CURRENTLY HAVE IMMEDIATE BED AVAILABILITY FOR BOTH MEN & WOMEN
Now Open - New Inpatient Treatment Center in Big Lake, MN
Gender Specific and LGBTQ+ beds available

TREATMENT FOR:

**SUBSTANCE USE**
- ASAM Levels of Care: 0.5, 1.0, 2.1
- Adolescent Programming
- Medication Assisted Treatment: Suboxone & Vivitrol
- 47+ Clinic Locations
- Day & Evening Programming
- Driving With Care (State-wide)

**MENTAL HEALTH**
- Psychiatry & Medication Services
- Counseling & Psychotherapy Services
- Psychological Evaluations
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
- Adult Day Treatment (ADT)
- Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS)
- Adult In-Home Therapy
- Nutrition Counseling

NOW HIRING LICENSED ALCOHOL & DRUG COUNSELORS
In-patient and out-patient treatment providers
We offer competitive pay and a comprehensive benefits package!

www.NystromTreatment.com
There’s No Place Like Home

by Louise Elowen

“Oh, but anyway, Toto, we’re home. Home! And this is my room, and you’re all here. And I’m not gonna leave here ever, ever again, because I love you all, and - oh, Auntie Em - there’s no place like home!”

— DOROTHY IN THE WIZARD OF OZ (1939)

When I was younger, I loved to travel. So many different places and so many different experiences. Life got in the way and my travels had slowed in recent years – a lot – when I decided to take a trip last fall that was part work/part leisure. I drove a round trip of 1200 miles, through two states, and enjoyed once again the freedom of travel and all the experiences that came with it.

When I got home, I found it hard to settle. Was it perhaps time for a major move in my life? Like moving house? I decided to investigate. I spent the next couple of months searching and ultimately finding what I thought was the “perfect” house move. I was confident that this was the new start I was looking for. I spent the next month or two retracing inside myself, as I tried to escape the black cloud that had uneasily settled over me. My realtor’s actions reflected all that was wrong with the world. We need to scrape clean all the dead leaves as they are messy. Umm, they protect the plants through winter and are home to vital pollinators sleeping through the colder months. We have to rip up the irrigation as it looks ugly, and all people see is hard work. Umm, how do they water the plants? Is this a weed? Well, actually, it’s an herb…too late, he’s ripped it up. We need clean, no clutter. Like no personality?

After I emerged from my cocoon of darkness in the warming spring months, I resolved to rebuild my garden, and my home. Not only that, but to educate the world on the importance of nature, plants, the environment, you know, the basic things that we need in order to survive on this planet. I had been through trauma, but I was ready to educate those who didn’t know better, or who did know better, but needed reminders.

Those winter months were a retreat inside of myself, going inward, retreating from the world. It wasn’t easy. It wasn’t pretty. But I emerged realizing that really there is no place like home – and sometimes you’re already there without realizing it. “And I’m not gonna leave here ever, ever again…”

If this was what buyers wanted, I wanted no part of it. I wouldn’t, couldn’t, let my home (and the environment) be destroyed like this through ignorance of the natural world, or greed for a “better price.”

Needless to say, I fired my realtor (although probably not as strongly as I should have done. I spent the next month or two retracing inside myself, as I tried to escape the black cloud that had uneasily settled over me. My realtor’s actions reflected all that was wrong with the world. We need to scrape clean all the dead leaves as they are messy. Umm, they protect the plants through winter and are home to vital pollinators sleeping through the colder months. We have to rip up the irrigation as it looks ugly, and all people see is hard work. Umm, how do they water the plants? Is this a weed? Well, actually, it’s an herb…too late, he’s ripped it up. We need clean, no clutter. Like no personality?

The opinions and facts presented in this publication are intended to be diverse and represent those of the writers and/or contributors, and are not necessarily those of The Phoenix Spirit. We seek writers and interview subjects who are willing to gift you with their honestly held convictions and insights. We seek to attract advertisers who offer products and services of integrity. But we urge our readers to research, and trust their instincts.

PURCHASE A SUBSCRIPTION

$16 for one year / $30 for two!

NAME ____________________________

ADDRESS ____________________________

CITY, STATE, ZIP ____________________________

GIFT SUBSCRIPTION TO ____________________________

EMAIL ADDRESS ____________________________

PLEASE ADDRESS CHECK TO THE PHOENIX SPIRIT AND SEND TO (OR ONLINE):

4190 Vinewood Ln. N., Suite 111 PMB 403, Plymouth, MN 55442. Thank you!
The Skill of Vacation: Reclaiming Relaxation in Recovery

by Seth Perry

Taking a vacation should be easy. Many Americans struggle to truly get time away. A 2023 study by Qualtrics uncovered that nearly half of Americans polled still worked one hour a day while on vacation. That doesn’t sound like a real holiday. In fact, some Americans seem to avoid taking vacation in fear of falling behind at the office. According to a 2023 Pew research study, 46% of Americans do not take all of their allotted vacation time each year. Many careers demand constant connection and attention from their employees. This practice is detrimental to our collective mental health.

Vacation is a skill. Some people are really good at setting aside time to relax and create a space free of career and personal responsibilities. I wish I could say that I was one of those people. Respite, retreat, and downtime typically come as an afterthought for me. Like any skill, I have had to develop vacation habits, practices, and methods over a long period of time to ensure that I am maintaining good mental health.

My life is a balancing act between my vocation and my complex mental health needs. I am a Pastor, I live well with bipolar disorder, and I have been clean and sober for fourteen years. For a decade and a half, I struggled with addiction and mental health. Between the ages of fourteen and twenty-nine, I was living with an untreated mental health condition and was in active addiction. During that time, I was never truly capable of giving myself any time off. In my experience, if my using and mania were active, I would be unable to truly take a break from life. I realize now that vacation is not only beneficial to my mental health but is vital for my recovery.

Over the past fourteen years, I’ve gradually discovered and learned three essential practices that shape my ability to take vacations effectively. While I don’t employ these three vacation skills on every single holiday, and I’m far from being an expert, I do acknowledge that I have had moderate success. The following vacation skills are incredibly life-giving and restorative when I carefully follow them.

ADVOCATE FOR YOUR VACATION NEEDS

I encourage everyone to patiently and confidently normalize taking time off. Workplaces can be chaotic, confusing, traumatic, and full of power differentials. Navigating employment in recovery has been something I have done with the assistance of a support network: Friends, recovery peers, co-workers, human resources, and even management have all become people to whom I have communicated my needs and been supported by. With the encouragement of others, I slowly gained enough confidence to ask for the time off that I need to recuperate and refresh my body, mind, and spirit.

PLAN AHEAD: CARVE OUT TIME

Careers have a peculiar ability to make time go by incredibly slowly on a daily basis yet surprisingly rapidly on a monthly basis. For this reason, I sit down with a calendar and map out vacation time months in advance. There are two benefits to this practice. First, when I submit my vacation time and get approval, I can confidently plan all of the details that lead up to a vacation. Specifics like accommodations, rental cars, and even my workload in the week leading up to vacation all need to be considered. Preparing for vacation is labor and I have discovered how that needs to be part of the equation. Second, as soon as the date is set and the travel details are arranged, I can enjoy the benefit of anticipating time off. The psychological relief in looking forward to vacation can transform how you view the day-to-day drudgery of vocational life. Instead of wandering aimlessly through your work week, you can look forward to rest and relaxation.

CHECK YOURSELF OUT OF THE OFFICE

Leaving the office on your last day of vacation should be a formal process with your employer and a mental process for yourself. Make sure your vacation responder is set for your emails and you have silenced all email notifications. If you need to send out an email to your co-workers and management updating them on the status of your work, give yourself time to do that on the morning of your last day before vacation. Spend some time intentionally saying goodbye to people that you work with regularly as you prepare for vacation to remind them of your pending absence. The moment you are ready to leave, update your voice-mail with your out-of-office message. Take a deep breath and acknowledge that you are now officially on vacation. Use your “do not disturb” setting on your phone and leave it in a drawer or suitcase as much as possible. Checking out of work in this manner is responsible professional behavior, good communication, and excellent self-care.

Never forget, skills take time to be honed. I have been developing my vacation skills for fourteen years. Sometimes I leave the office and embrace peace, rest, and serenity. Other times I fumble my way through my time off by checking my email, answering my phone, and ruminating about my first day back in the office. My support network, mentors, and peers have always encouraged me to go easy on myself when learning how to recover. If vacation doesn’t go as planned, give yourself a break, hit the reset button and try again.

Seth Perry (he/him/his), an ELCA Pastor, devotional blogger, and mental health recovery educator, embraces his journey of living well with Bipolar Type 1. He works to reduce stigma where faith, mental health, and personal growth interweave. Pastor Seth currently serves Elm Lutheran Church in Scandia, MN. His website is: www.ourstigma.com
Many of the book descriptions are taken from the publishers or promotional releases. If you have a book you’d like featured or have an old favorite you’d like to share with others, please contact us at phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com and we may include it in an upcoming issue.
I hiked popular sections first, like Gooseberry and Tettegouche State Parks. I hiked 22 miles with 100 to go. I’m proud of myself because it’s easy to hike 8 to 10 miles alone on the trail. I’ve done it 100% on my own! It’s not horrible consequences if I wasn’t sober. I chose Fairview Lodging Plus for my stay, but I had some bad luck there. I was in choir, debate club, and a cheer leader. At that time, the message was still “girls will be girls and boys will be boys.” Physical Ed classes were horrific; if you weren’t a winner, you got bashed. One day, six years ago, recently divorced, when the twins were off doing whatever high school seniors do, I said, “I’m going to drive to Mankato state park, see the waterfall, and hike.” A half-hour into the trip, crawling out of my skin and in tears, afraid of being by myself, I called my sisters. They said, “You’re going to do this. You don’t have to walk. Look at the waterfall, get in your car, go home, or stop for ice cream.” I drove down there. I didn’t hike, but I saw the waterfall. It shouldn’t be a big thing to go look at a waterfall, but that moment was big, because I did it by myself.

I fell in love with hiking! I went on a mission to chase every state park waterfall. Later, I got bored with the little parks and little hikes. I had this burning desire to find a bigger challenge, to get into the guts of the woods, something with more elevation. I’ve always loved the North Shore, which is probably how my brain found the Superior Hiking Trail, or maybe it was on Facebook or Google.

Next, I ventured out on other trails. My family said, “We’re really worried about you, being up there alone.” So, I got great tools. I use both the Avenza Superior App and AllTrails, a live, interactive app that tracks your location. Avenza lets you buy the whole Superior Hiking Trail map. It keeps me on course. Plus, my daughter follows my location all day, every day. At times, the hair sticks up on the back of my neck when I hear a sound or get in my head. I carry bear spray; not that I think I’ll ever see a bear, but having it helps my brain to settle. I bought good boots. I bring plenty of water, the right amount of protein and snacks. I learned that the hard way, by making mistakes, as we do in life. I got dehydrated hiking Ely’s Peak, a big climb. I’d already done 10 miles that day, it was hot, and I finished with the peak, a big mistake. I ran out of water. I was lucky. Someone at the peak gave me water. I finished, but never again. Now I always take double water and electrolyte packets.

**DOES SOMEONE BRING YOU SUPPLIES OR MEET YOU AT CERTAIN POINTS?**

I don’t camp on the trail. I car camp at state parks where there’ll be other people. My average hike is 10-13 miles. I drive up early in the morning, do a Saturday and Sunday hike and come home, but I’ve done one-day and four-day trips. Plus, I’ve made friends with the shuttle drivers. They pick you up at your camping location, take you to your beginning spot, and you hike back to your car. They’re angels because they always say, “If something happens, if you get stuck out there, text me, or call me, and I’ll get help to you.”

Have you had any physical impacts: good or bad?

A bad car accident two years ago damaged my neck and back. It’s still healing. Because of the nerve damage from that accident, I hurt my knee. Last year, six miles was the most I could tolerate. I kept hiking, listened to my body, slowed down, took deep breaths, and kept going. If my knees aren’t feeling well, I do shorter hikes. I use hiking poles now, too, which I swore I wouldn’t, until I realized that these knees are not twenty anymore. Hiking poles distribute the weight. You can get over boulders, logs, and up vines without worrying about falling and breaking your arm, wrist, or hand.

**THE PHOENIX SPIRIT • MAY | JUNE 2024**
and my spirit. I never had confidence in myself. Hiking built my confidence as a mom, sister, daughter, and an employee. I’ve conquered fears. I’ve gained self-esteem, a positive internal feeling that I can do anything, because I’m proving it by putting one foot in front of the other. Hiking helps my recovery because for me it wasn’t just about the drinking. It was about pain, low self-worth, not being content, the depression and darkness. Hiking is the opposite of that. I go hiking to remind myself, “I’m powerful. I have a Higher Power. That’s my church.”

My Higher Power cared enough about me to push me to go hiking. He or She knew that’s what I needed to find peace. I felt led there. In the woods, I rely on two things: myself and my Higher Power. When I get anxious, I let go of control, and rely on God. I can rest easy in the fact that even though I’m alone, I’m never alone. We don’t know where our journey is supposed to end. I don’t have control over that, even in my house. So, I might as well go out and enjoy life. Staying home, isolated, and drinking killed me a lot more than hiking ever will.

On the ride up, I use a quiet playlist – soft ballads and spiritual music. Then the first mile is always strange. I’m settling in; getting used to being on the trail. There’s weird fears, like “What’s that noise?” As soon I get to the second mile, it’s almost meditative, I’m in the moment. At the last mile, I’m a little weary, tired of the walk: “Oh my God, I’m never going to make it!” But yeah, I’m going to make it. I’m going to finish strong. I’m going to check off one more chapter of this trail. There’s something so rewarding about the end point – taking off the sweaty boots, getting some ice cream, and celebrating the achievement. On the way home, I roll the windows down, turn the music up in the car to loud 70s and 80s rock, and that’s when it’s just good living!

The highest peak in Minnesota is Eagle Mountain. Have you been there yet? No. I’m saving it for last. I can’t wait for that moment! I try not to put myself too far ahead, but the thought of that last section and it being the highest point is exciting. I’m going to invite family, if they’d like to join me, so that I finish with my loved ones.


Those who struggle with mental illness are at an increased risk for gambling addiction.

Receive no-cost treatment in Minnesota if you or someone you know is struggling with a gambling problem.

Telehealth services available. Seeing someone for problem gambling treatment is now easier than ever - from the comfort of your own home.

For a list of providers call 1-800-333-4673(HOPE) or visit mnapg.org/help

*Treatment is available free of charge for qualifying individuals throughout Minnesota.
The following is just a partial list of the many retreat centers throughout Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. We recommend doing your own research to find the get-away that fits your needs.

### ARTS RETREATS

**Anderson Center**
Red Wing, MN
651-388-2009
www.andersoncenter.org/visit/rentals
Rooms available from November-April in historic house on 330 acres in the bluff-land region of the upper Mississippi.

**The Grand Marais Art Colony**
Grand Marais, MN
218-387-2737
www.grandmaraisartcolony.org
Began in 1947 as a summer refuge for artists seeking study in the wilderness. Workshops in print-making, book arts, sculpture, drawing, and watercolor, acrylic, oil, and sumi-e painting.

**Tofte Lake Center**
Ely, MN
218-365-7769
www.toftelake.com
A creative retreat center for artists, scholars and thinkers of all disciplines located on the shores of Tofte Lake, a beautifully secluded lake near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. From June through September, TLC offers creative residencies for individuals, artistic groups, and organizations.

### FAMILIES COPING WITH AN ILL CHILD OR LOSS

**Faith's Lodge**
Danbury, WI
612-825-2073
www.faithslodge.org
A unique retreat center for families who have a seriously ill child or have suffered the loss of a child. Located on 80 acres, about two hours from the Twin Cities.

### NATURE RETREATS

**Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center**
Sandstone, MN
320-245-2648
ospreywilds.org
In January 2020, the Audubon Center of the North Woods formally changed its name to Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center. Osprey Wilds is a private, non-profit 501(c) (3) residential environmental learning center and conference & retreat center nestled on the shores of Grindstone Lake in east-central Minnesota.

**Boundary Waters Canoe Area**
Northern MN
218-626-4300
www.fs.usda.gov
The BWCA is a 1,098,000-acre wilderness area in northern Minnesota.

### SPIRITUAL / RECOVERY

**ARC Retreat Community**
Stanchfield, MN
763-689-3540
www.arcretreat.org
Nestled in 90 acres of pine forest and wetlands, ARC is an interspiritual retreat community. ARC's mission is to serve individuals and groups seeking time apart for rest and spiritual renewal. ARC is nurtured on sacred land, promoting environmental sustainability, and exemplifying a just and inclusive world where every voice is valued and respected. ARC is a powerful place to do your healing work. Labyrinth, fire circle, library, chapel, meeting rooms.

**Benedictine Center of St. Paul's Monastery**
St. Paul, MN
651-777-7251
www.benedictinecenter.org
For over thirty years the Benedictine Center has been helping guests find their way to quiet, prayer, and renewal. Contemporary monastic environment of Benedictine Sisters.

**Center for Spirituality and Enrichment**
Duluth, MN
218-724-5266
www.mnhum.org/eventcenter
The Center for Spirituality and Enrichment provides opportunities for holistic spiritual and personal growth grounded in the Catholic Benedictine tradition of St. Scholastica Monastery.

**The Christine Center**
Willard, WI
715-267-7507
www.christinecenter.org
For over 40 years the Christine Center has provided a spiritual home to visitors of all spiritual paths. A woodland sanctuary with a beautiful circular meditation hall, chapel, library and bookstore. Programs offer healing and personal development. Private hermitages and group housing, always open Art Studio, great home cooking, hiking trails and sauna.

### SPIRITUAL / RECOVERY

**Demontreville Jesuit Retreat House**
Lake Elmo, MN
651-777-1311
www.demontrevilleretreat.com
Demontreville Jesuit Retreat House welcomes men of all Christian faiths and denominations.

**Jesuit Retreat House on Lake Winnebago**
Oshkosh, WI
920-231-9960
www.jesuitretreathouse.org
The Jesuit Retreat House is located on 20 acres of beautiful lakeside property offers six 12-Step retreats among its 30 weekend retreats each year. Weekend retreats start Thursday evening with dinner and end with lunch on Sunday. 5-day and 8-day directed retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola are available in the summer. Retreats include daily Mass, private reflection time, devotions, spiritual direction, reconciliation, and a healing service. All guests stay in private bedrooms with their own bathroom. A small 6-bedroom farmhouse can be reserved by individuals or small groups making their own retreat.

**Lakeplace Retreat Center**
Bovey, MN
218-245-1395
www.lakeplacecenter.com
Northern Minnesota location provides a serene environment where participants learn to live a chemical free life influenced by a strong sense of fellowship, along with freedom, trust, and dignity to make responsible choices.

**Minnesota Humanities Event Center**
St. Paul, MN
651-772-4242
www.mnhum.org/eventcenter
Surrounded by parkland yet minutes from the downtown St. Paul. With private overnight lodging, flexible meeting spaces, and onsite catering staff preparing every meal, consider the center for your next retreat.
Looking for a Retreat?

Surrounded by parkland yet minutes from the downtown St. Paul, you’ll feel like you’ve escaped the city without ever having left. With private overnight lodging, flexible meeting spaces, and onsite catering staff preparing every meal, consider our historic venue for your next retreat.

*Give your event the attention it deserves.*

---

**MINNESOTA HIKES**

**Superior Hiking Trail**

North Shore (MN) 218-834-2700 superiorhiking.org

The Superior Hiking Trail is a tour of the unique features of Lake Superior’s North Shore. The trail is characterized by ascents to rock outcroppings and cliffs where sweeping vistas of Lake Superior, the Sawtooth Mountains and inland woodlands can be enjoyed. The trail also features stunning descents along rivers, streams, lakes and ponds where thousands of years of rushing water has cut into layers of ancient volcanic rock. In total, the SHT is over 300 miles of main trail and 16 miles of spur trail.

**William O’Brien State Park**

Marine on St. Croix, WI 651-539-4980 shorturl.at/uvKXY

This area has drawn people for centuries, including: Dakota and Ojibwe tribes utilizing local resources; European trappers drawn by the fur-trade industry; and lumberjacks seeking to harvest the “endless stands” of white pine. The era of timber harvesting began in 1839 and flourished until lumber companies had cleared the St. Croix River valley of pines. The park now protects 1,880 acres of prairie, oak savanna, river floodplain and hardwood forest. Trails range from easy to difficult, and pass through wooded areas, wetlands, and restored oak savanna areas. Mostly flat, with some higher moved gravel. Riverside Trail is 1.6 miles, winds by St. Croix River.

---

**MINNESOTA HIKES**

**Superior Hiking Trail**

North Shore (MN) 218-834-2700 superiorhiking.org

The Superior Hiking Trail is a tour of the unique features of Lake Superior’s North Shore. The trail is characterized by ascents to rock outcroppings and cliffs where sweeping vistas of Lake Superior, the Sawtooth Mountains and inland woodlands can be enjoyed. The trail also features stunning descents along rivers, streams, lakes and ponds where thousands of years of rushing water has cut into layers of ancient volcanic rock. In total, the SHT is over 300 miles of main trail and 16 miles of spur trail.

**William O’Brien State Park**

Marine on St. Croix, WI 651-539-4980 shorturl.at/uvKXY

This area has drawn people for centuries, including: Dakota and Ojibwe tribes utilizing local resources; European trappers drawn by the fur-trade industry; and lumberjacks seeking to harvest the “endless stands” of white pine. The era of timber harvesting began in 1839 and flourished until lumber companies had cleared the St. Croix River valley of pines. The park now protects 1,880 acres of prairie, oak savanna, river floodplain and hardwood forest. Trails range from easy to difficult, and pass through wooded areas, wetlands, and restored oak savanna areas. Mostly flat, with some higher moved gravel. Riverside Trail is 1.6 miles, winds by St. Croix River.

---

**MINNESOTA HIKES**

**Superior Hiking Trail**

North Shore (MN) 218-834-2700 superiorhiking.org

The Superior Hiking Trail is a tour of the unique features of Lake Superior’s North Shore. The trail is characterized by ascents to rock outcroppings and cliffs where sweeping vistas of Lake Superior, the Sawtooth Mountains and inland woodlands can be enjoyed. The trail also features stunning descents along rivers, streams, lakes and ponds where thousands of years of rushing water has cut into layers of ancient volcanic rock. In total, the SHT is over 300 miles of main trail and 16 miles of spur trail.

**William O’Brien State Park**

Marine on St. Croix, WI 651-539-4980 shorturl.at/uvKXY

This area has drawn people for centuries, including: Dakota and Ojibwe tribes utilizing local resources; European trappers drawn by the fur-trade industry; and lumberjacks seeking to harvest the “endless stands” of white pine. The era of timber harvesting began in 1839 and flourished until lumber companies had cleared the St. Croix River valley of pines. The park now protects 1,880 acres of prairie, oak savanna, river floodplain and hardwood forest. Trails range from easy to difficult, and pass through wooded areas, wetlands, and restored oak savanna areas. Mostly flat, with some higher moved gravel. Riverside Trail is 1.6 miles, winds by St. Croix River.

---

**MINNESOTA HIKES**

**Superior Hiking Trail**

North Shore (MN) 218-834-2700 superiorhiking.org

The Superior Hiking Trail is a tour of the unique features of Lake Superior’s North Shore. The trail is characterized by ascents to rock outcroppings and cliffs where sweeping vistas of Lake Superior, the Sawtooth Mountains and inland woodlands can be enjoyed. The trail also features stunning descents along rivers, streams, lakes and ponds where thousands of years of rushing water has cut into layers of ancient volcanic rock. In total, the SHT is over 300 miles of main trail and 16 miles of spur trail.

**William O’Brien State Park**

Marine on St. Croix, WI 651-539-4980 shorturl.at/uvKXY

This area has drawn people for centuries, including: Dakota and Ojibwe tribes utilizing local resources; European trappers drawn by the fur-trade industry; and lumberjacks seeking to harvest the “endless stands” of white pine. The era of timber harvesting began in 1839 and flourished until lumber companies had cleared the St. Croix River valley of pines. The park now protects 1,880 acres of prairie, oak savanna, river floodplain and hardwood forest. Trails range from easy to difficult, and pass through wooded areas, wetlands, and restored oak savanna areas. Mostly flat, with some higher moved gravel. Riverside Trail is 1.6 miles, winds by St. Croix River.
Q: What are the potential benefits of incorporating neurofeedback into a comprehensive treatment plan for substance use disorders and mental health recovery?

Think of it this way. If a person has a broken ankle and they want to develop endurance skills so they can run a marathon, you wouldn’t recommend they just start running. You would advise them to heal the broken ankle so that they could optimize their training. The same concept applies to neurofeedback. This type of training clears up dysregulated brainwave activity, resulting in optimized brain functioning — for example, better focus, more cognitive flexibility, improved emotion regulation or better sleep quality. Improvements in these areas will facilitate a person’s ability to engage in other therapeutic interventions.

Q: Can you explain the process of conducting a Quantitative Electroencephalogram (QEEG) assessment and how the results are used to inform neurofeedback treatment plans for individuals in recovery?

In our clinic we use both QEEG (quantitative electroencephalogram) and ERP (evoked response potential) to obtain a comprehensive assessment of a client’s underlying brain mechanisms. These assessments allow us to identify brainwave dysregulation that may be causing a particular set of symptoms or functional impairments.

A quantitative EEG is a brain map. It provides valuable insights into resting-state brain activity. This is an electrical measurement, analysis, and quantification of the brainwaves, which control the brain’s tasking mechanism. We first gather the raw EEG data, and then we process it through a normative database, which is a database of healthy individuals’ brainwaves. This gives us a comparison of the client’s brain relative to neurotypical brains.

An Evoked Response Potential measures electrical activity in the brain in response to stimulation of sight or sound. This allows us to measure how quickly the neurons in your brain respond to a particular stimulus. ERP complements the QEEG by revealing real-time cognitive processes and brain responses to specific stimuli.

Once we’ve collected the data, we conduct an extensive analysis that will be used to inform us about what interventions we will recommend.

The QEEG and ERP (brain mapping) are just one component of our comprehensive assessment process. We also include a neurocognitive assessment, a mental health diagnostic assessment, and genetic testing. This allows us to get a well-rounded understanding of what factors might be contributing to your current level of functioning.

Q: What specific brainwave patterns or abnormalities are typically identified through QEEG assessments?

QEEG assessments give us information about cortical electrical activity in your brain, which can help us identify irregularities in brain functioning. For example, it can show us if brain wave activity is too high or too low in a particular area of your brain, and it can reveal how your brain cells are communicating with each other. Our brain mapping process can reveal brain wave patterns that are associated with functional impairments such as cognitive inflexibility, impulsivity, anxiety, focus and attention issues, as well as many other symptoms.

Q: Which areas of the brain are typically targeted during neurofeedback sessions?

The targeted brain areas in neurofeedback are determined specifically by the analysis of your QEEG assessment. So, neurofeedback sessions are unique to the individual. In our clinic we have equipment that allows us to train full brain networks. For example, the QEEG analysis may show that your reward network is not working efficiently. So, we might target that network with neurofeedback training. In addition to neurofeedback, we also do neurostimulation (transcranial electrical and magnetic stimulation). We also have neuromodulation devices, such as audio-visual entrainment and photobiomodulation (red/infrared light), that you might use at home to supplement your in-clinic training.

Q: What are some common misconceptions about neurofeedback?

Several come to mind. The first is that neurofeedback will change a person’s personality. That is a myth — we are focused on regulating the brain, not changing the qualities that form your distinctive character.

Another misconception is that neurofeedback, as an alternative therapy, can’t be used if someone is taking psychiatric medication. Again, this is not true. As neurofeedback begins to regulate the brain, it’s possible you might be able to reduce dosage, titrate medication use. But it can also complement the mechanisms of medication.

The other misconception is that neurofeedback doesn’t have scientific research to back its efficacy. This is simply not true. A recent search for research on neurofeedback and substance use disorder in Google Scholar produced over 10,000 results. That number points to the prolific nature of the research. A 2023 meta-analysis, including articles selected from a total of 58 databases, provided strong evidence for the efficacy of neurofeedback in treating substance use disorders (SUD).

Q: Can neurofeedback therapy be integrated with other treatment modalities, such as medication-assisted treatment or cognitive-behavioral therapy, to enhance overall outcomes in substance use disorder recovery?

Definitely. In fact, neurofeedback can regulate brain functioning, facilitating other types of therapy. When brain functioning is optimized through neurofeedback training, it’s much more able to do the tasks we might ask of it in cognitive-behavioral therapy or another ther-
Can neurofeedback therapy lead to lasting changes in brain function and behavior, even after sessions have concluded?

Yes. The research in this area is exciting! Research is showing that changes that occur in the brain during neurofeedback training have long-lasting effects. This makes sense when you consider we are tapping into the brain’s neuroplasticity.

Q: Are there any potential risks or limitations associated with neurofeedback therapy that individuals in recovery should be aware of?

The potential risks of neurofeedback training are minimal. Some people may experience mild, temporary side effects such as mental fatigue (brain training is a workout for the brain!). Another possible side effect is a headache during a training session. We find that when our clients stay well-hydrated during training, headaches aren’t an issue. It’s similar to hydrating while you work out at the gym.

Results with neurofeedback, like any other intervention, can vary from person to person. I don’t necessarily see that as a limitation, but rather a realistic perspective on expectations.

Q: What are some good resources and organizations that people can access to learn more about neurofeedback?

There are two organizations that are engaged in research and oversight of the field of neurofeedback training and neurotherapy. The Internation Society for Neuroregulation and Research (isnr.org) is a membership organization. Members come from many countries and various professional disciplines. They all are working on neurotherapy, neurofeedback training and neurofeedback research. The organization supports education and excellence in the field of neurofeedback training and neurotherapy.

Biofeedback Certification International Alliance (bcia.org) is an organization, established in 1981, that certifies neurofeedback practitioners. And, if you want to read some of the research on neurofeedback, just use the search feature in Google Scholar. It will keep you busy learning for months!

In the Heart of the Recovery Community Since 1966

NUWAY Alliance treatment programs and housing support have helped thousands of Minnesotans find recovery, support, and fellowship for over 58 years. A nonprofit mission that launched one of America’s first halfway houses is now a multifaceted organization offering high-quality treatment and housing support accessible to adults statewide.

RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT

• NUWAY I
• NUWAY II
• NUWAY III
• Cochran Recovery Services
• The Gables

OUTPATIENT TREATMENT

• St. Paul NUWAY Counseling Center

TELEHEALTH

• Available to all qualifying adults statewide

HOUSING SUPPORT WITH SUPPLEMENTAL SERVICES

• Arrigoni East
• Arrigoni West

NUWAY Alliance is an excellent and supportive working environment offering exceptional compensation and benefits. We’re Hiring! Visit nuway.org to learn more about our services or make a referral.
Just like it is always wise to lock your door before leaving your home, it is equally prudent to know when others have a conscience and when they couldn’t care less.

**DANGER OF PEOPtE WITHOUT A CONSCIENCE**

When we are close to another person, we rely on that person to keep us safe. We don’t want our heart broken by our partner through infidelity, financial manipulation, or broken promises. We depend on our partner to know when they’re hurting us through our partner having a conscience and doing the right thing even when we when not watching him or her. This ethical rule is what builds trust and safety. Unfortunately, when a person lacks a conscience, they lack healthy guilt and are willing to do bad things to us as long as nobody is watching. They trick and lie to us to maintain the illusion of faultlessness and trust. When caught red-handed they may feign denial through denial, intimidation, and anger. This phenomenon is known as gas-lighting. Unfortunately, because we ourselves don’t want to know the real truth of our faulty relationship for fear of losing our partner, we go along, sometimes for years, living with a rattlesnake and believing our partner is merely a garter snake and is being misunderstood. Unfortunately, hiding from the truth does not make life safe for us. There is an enormous difference between a garter snake and a rattlesnake. Being a kind person in itself is no protection from users and abusers. Just like it is always wise to lock your door before leaving your home, it is equally prudent to know when others have a conscience and when they couldn’t care less. Indeed, people who are cold to others often have compensatory skills that scam people, trick others into unwisely having favorable impressions of them, and being imposters in their relationships overall. They are masters at charming others and looking good, frequently a lot better than any one of us. Don’t be fooled by impressions. Get to know the real person behind the façade. Each of us are responsible for our own safety and taking off our own rose-colored glasses. Sadly, some of us are so desperate to have a friend that we keep deceiving ourselves and we keep wearing those glasses.

**HOW DO YOU TELL WHEN A PERSON IS A RATTLESNAKE?**

Pay attention to how things are going between you and another person. If you idealize your friend who primarily only talks about himself and almost never asks how you are doing, if your friend continuously wants to impress you and is disinterested in what you’re up to, if it’s assumed that you will be paying for lunch due to your friend’s lack of funds, and if your friend has almost no memory of or is indifferent to close people in your life, then you likely are in trouble as you are in the presence of an uncaring person who will be willing to take advantage of you in a heartbeat. This is especially true if your friend gives you the feeling that you are lucky to be in the presence of such a special person and that you are lucky to be up to his or her standards. Somehow you may feel that you really don’t exist or matter around such a person and you wonder why you even got together with such a person. You also may tire of his petty party and how you should feel sorry for him for all the bad things that happen to him so unfairly. You may be inclined to offer your help to such a friend, but your assistance will regularly be declined by your friend. Overall, you may wonder why you ever got together with your so-called friend.

**WHY AM I WRITING ABOUT PEOPLE WHO LACK A CONSCIENCE?**

I am aware from my practice that helping people with their marital problems becomes almost an impossibility
when one or both partners lack the capacity to put themselves in each other’s shoes. Heartfelt listening and compassion are the hallmarks of careful marital repair. When couples lack these qualities, they almost have to first learn how to have compassion for each other and for everyone else first. Learning to have compassion is an arduous task best learned in the first three years of life. Trying to do that later in life is like trying to help an illiterate person to read for the first time in adult life. It can be done but not very likely to happen, especially when neither partner has any assurance that it can ever be done successfully. Most marital counseling with partners who lack compassion for each other is a patchwork of incomplete healing and the gains in the work are at best temporary and disappointing. This is exactly why it’s best to choose a partner who already has good character in the first place. People of good character who have chronic conflict can much more easily resolve what is broken in their marriage. Selecting a potential President should be done as carefully as picking a life mate. If your candidate lacks compassion, can never be wrong, and uses the office primarily for self-gain, he will make a very poor candidate. Chances are that person only cares about himself and would easily feel you are expendable. Such a choice is totally different from the person with a history of public service. It’s not how a candidate looks on the outside but who he is on the inside that counts the most. Character is way more important than image. In fact, if you select a self-centered candidate chances are good that our whole country will be turned into a dictatorship of people who don’t matter. Choose wisely as the lives of your children and grandchildren will be determined by this coming election.

“Then sings my soul, My Saviour God to Thee, How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee, How great Thou art, how great Thou art!”
STUART K. HINE

John H. Driggs, LICSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice in St. Paul and co-author of Intimacy Between Men.

We honor ourselves when we speak out for recovery. We show the world that recovery matters because it brings hope and peace into the lives of individuals and their loved ones

BETH WILSON

Photo illustration by Vadim Bogulov / Unsplash

MAY IS
MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

MINNESOTA RECOVERY CONNECTION

is the opposite of ADDICTION

MRC connects you with:
Recovery navigation | Peer support | Volunteer opportunities
Training and education | Sober social fun | And more!

Let’s connect! www.minnesotarecovery.org
800 Transfer Rd., Suite 31 | Saint Paul, MN 55114 | 612-584-4158

Driggs from page 12

30TH ANNUAL SERENITY BREAKFAST

When: Sunday, May 19 / Breakfast at 8:00am to 10:25am / Speaker at 10:30am to noon.
Where: Minnetonka Community Center, Minnetonka
Cost: $18 advance / $20 at door

This event will include a breakfast and then speaker at 10:30am. Speaker: Christina G. from Brecksville, OH. Speaker will be ASL interpreted, building is handicapped accessible

GOPHER STATE ROUNDUP

When: May 24, 25, 26
Where: Double Tree, Bloomington
Cost: $30
Info: gopherstateroundup.org

This year’s theme is “Road to Recovery”. Meetings, speakers, fellowship. Scholarships available on-site. Guaranteed special room rates are available. Register early for best rates. Mention Gopher State for a special rate.

MEN AT WORK GOLF TOURNAMENT

When: Monday, June 17 at noon.
Where: Bent Creek Golf Course, Eden Prairie
Info: Contact Richard M. at 612-670-3898

Men at Work presents this golf tournament to benefit the General Service Office. Shotgun starts at noon, dinner to follow. First 120 golfers. Cost is $175/player.

PRACTICING THE PRINCIPLES SERENITY RETREAT

When: June 7-9
Where: St. Anthony Spirituality Center, Marathon, WI
Cost: $230
Info: sarcenter.com/event

Specific topics include: Allowing Interruptions, Venturing into Unknown Territory, Facing Reality, Focusing on the Greater Things and Standing Tall. Presented by Sr. Elise Cholewinski

We honor ourselves when we speak out for recovery. We show the world that recovery matters because it brings hope and peace into the lives of individuals and their loved ones

BETH WILSON

Photo illustration by Vadim Bogulov / Unsplash

MAY | JUNE 2024 • THE PHOENIX SPIRIT • 13
Lakeplace Guest House and Cabins for AA, NA, Alanon and Associated Couples
Courtesy of:
The Lakeplace Foundation Inc.

Imagine you and your friends from your own group being able to share your own strengths, hopes and experiences here in this highly spiritual, north-woods community.

With these three cabins and Guest House, your group can choose from several activities for fellowship, while being provided several areas for your meetings.

Please consider these many benefits:
- Advance Scheduling (for current and future openings)
- Weekend or Weekly Options
- Available for Groups of From 4 to 20 Persons (4 to 10 in the winter)
- On-Site 24/7 Staff for your convenience test
- Use of Lakeplace Amenities
- Summer or Winter Fishing
- Several Meeting and Community Areas
- Stunning “12-Step Wilderness Walk”
- Provided Without Cost (guest donations appreciated)

In the future, exclusive use of the Lakeplace Retreat Center campus may be provided by the Lakeplace Foundation for Alanon Societies and Independent AA, NA, Alanon groups and their associated couples.

To review this possible contingency, along with its video presentation, please enter the address indicated below on your search bar:

Lakeplace Foundation Website
www.lakeplacefoundation.org

We believe this offer by Lakeplace Foundation is consistent with our AA “Traditions” #6 and #7: We are an independent corporation, seek no endorsement from AA, NA, Alanon or their financial support.
**MONDAYS**

**12-Step Meetings**
- Monday, 9:45-7:30pm: 12-step, step presentation and small groups, fellowship. 1900 Nicollet Ave. Plymouth Congregational Church, 1104 33rd St. SE, 651-692-5250. Enter at parking lot.

**CHOW – Culinary Hospitality Outreach and Wellness:** Monday (also Tuesday & Wednesday) at 7pm CST. CHOW is an organization led by culinary and hospitality peers. We believe in a future where our community never loses another person to addiction and mental health concerns. We create safe and supportive opportunities for the industry to connect and discuss problems they’re facing with one another.

**Overeaters Anonymous:** 216-571-3700. For info call Reba at 651-497-6427 or DrLisa 651-319-2514.

**Recovery International Meeting:** St Philip Lutheran Church, 8100 Highway 65 5th, Fridley at 7pm. It is a proven self help method to deal with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior therapy. Ken, 763-781-5199.

**Recovery International Meeting at Bethel Lutheran Church:** 6100 Elyria Ave S, 55177 at 6pm in a pro shop with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior therapy. Beth 612-823-4779.

**Debtor Anonymous:** Offers help for people whose use of unsecured debt causes problems and suffering. See www.debtoranonymous.org or www.danorehabonline.org. Debtor Anonymous is a 12-step program in person or hybrid (both online and in person).

**Overeaters Anonymous:** 9-9 am, Falcon Heights Community Church, 1795 Holton Street, Falcon Heights. Lisa 651-428-3484.

**Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Support Group:** Saturdays from 3rd Sat of the month at 1pm -at Faith Memorial Church, 2722 E 22nd St. Minneapolis. Website: www.tinyurl.com/locodg. Call before you come. Direction: Part 1 745-478-6820.

**Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families:** Saturday at 10 am, St. Philip’s Lutheran Church, 6100 Highway 65 NE. Fri., 6:30-7:45 pm. Visit www.adaafamilies.org for info.

**Men’s & Women’s Support Groups:** Meetings every Saturday (including holidays) at 9am. Prince of Peace Church, 7217 W. Broadway, Brooklyn Park. (north entrance). Informal, safe place to share experiences of joy and concerns. We promote growth & healing. Call before you meet. Meet the challenges of our lives. 763-443-4290.


**SUNDAYS**

**Co-dependents Anonymous (CoDA):** Sundays 6-7:30pm. Located at Unity Hospital 550 Olive Rd. Fridley 55432. For more info call Joe (612-722-5834) or shannonw@cofoundation.org or www.foodaddictionsofficial.org.

**Emotions Anonymous:** A twelve-step program for emotions and learning to live with unresolved problems. The meeting is at Tom City Friends Meetinghouse, 125 Grand Ave. St. Paul at 7pm on Friday (or by phone at 240-591-0215). 9am 7222360#). Members attend for various reasons, addressing depression, addiction, relationship problems and other emotional difficulties. Like AA, Emotions Anonymous is led by volunteers, and founded on the principle of anonymity, so you can talk, contact Paul at 651-402-6774. Additional information including other Twin Cities meetings, can be found at www.emotionsanonymous.org.

**Recovering Couples Friday Night at Minnesota Methodist United Church, 3710 50th St. S. St. Paul, 651-374-8857. 6:30-8:30pm. 12-step couples group meeting in support of one another. All other meetings are in person.**

**Overeaters Anonymous Meeting:** Saturday mornings 8-9am at St. Christopher Episcopal Church, 250 N. Hamline Ave. Two meetings, 9am and 10am in room 218 Call June 651-439-4428 for more info.

**A.C.A.**

**65105. For info email ffosmn@yahoo.com or call 612-497-6436.**

**New CoDA East Metro Group:** Bassamore College, 8655 Eagle Pkwy. Circle N. Lake Elmo (exit to north on Route D 943). 6-30am 7:30pm. Joseph H 747-4022 or Lisa 651-319-2514.

**Recovery International Meeting, St Philip Lutheran Church, 6100 Highway 65 5th, Fridley at 7pm. It is a proven self help method to deal with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior therapy. Ken, 763-781-5199.**

**Recovery International Meeting at Bethel Lutheran Church:** 6100 Elyria Ave S, 55177 at 6pm in a pro shop with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior therapy. Beth 612-823-4779.

Debtor Anonymous: Offers help for people whose use of unsecured debt causes problems and suffering. See www.debtoranonymous.org or www.danorehabonline.org. Debtor Anonymous is a 12-step program in person or hybrid (both online and in person).

Overeaters Anonymous: 8-9 am, Falcon Heights Community Church, 1795 Holton Street, Falcon Heights. Lisa 651-428-3484.

**Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Support Group:** Saturdays from 3rd Sat of the month at 1pm -at Faith Memorial Church, 2722 E 22nd St. Minneapolis. Website: www.tinyurl.com/locodg. Call before you come. Direction: Part 1 745-478-6820.

Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families: Saturday at 10 am, St. Philip’s Lutheran Church, 6100 Highway 65 NE. Fri., 6:30-7:45 pm. Visit www.adaafamilies.org for info.

**Men’s & Women’s Support Groups:** Meetings every Saturday (including holidays) at 9am. Prince of Peace Church, 7217 W. Broadway, Brooklyn Park. (north entrance). Informal, safe place to share experiences of joy and concerns. We promote growth & healing. Meet the challenges of our lives. 763-443-4290.


**Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families:** Saturday at 10 am, St. Philip’s Lutheran Church, 6100 Highway 65 NE. Fri., 6:30-7:45 pm. Visit www.adaafamilies.org for info.

**Men’s & Women’s Support Groups:** Meetings every Saturday (including holidays) at 9am. Prince of Peace Church, 7217 W. Broadway, Brooklyn Park. (north entrance). Informal, safe place to share experiences of joy and concerns. We promote growth & healing. Meet the challenges of our lives. 763-443-4290.


**Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families:** Saturday at 10 am, St. Philip’s Lutheran Church, 6100 Highway 65 NE. Fri., 6:30-7:45 pm. Visit www.adaafamilies.org for info.

**Men’s & Women’s Support Groups:** Meetings every Saturday (including holidays) at 9am. Prince of Peace Church, 7217 W. Broadway, Brooklyn Park. (north entrance). Informal, safe place to share experiences of joy and concerns. We promote growth & healing. Meet the challenges of our lives. 763-443-4290.


**Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families:** Saturday at 10 am, St. Philip’s Lutheran Church, 6100 Highway 65 NE. Fri., 6:30-7:45 pm. Visit www.adaafamilies.org for info.

**Men’s & Women’s Support Groups:** Meetings every Saturday (including holidays) at 9am. Prince of Peace Church, 7217 W. Broadway, Brooklyn Park. (north entrance). Informal, safe place to share experiences of joy and concerns. We promote growth & healing. Meet the challenges of our lives. 763-443-4290.


**Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families:** Saturday at 10 am, St. Philip’s Lutheran Church, 6100 Highway 65 NE. Fri., 6:30-7:45 pm. Visit www.adaafamilies.org for info.

**Men’s & Women’s Support Groups:** Meetings every Saturday (including holidays) at 9am. Prince of Peace Church, 7217 W. Broadway, Brooklyn Park. (north entrance). Informal, safe place to share experiences of joy and concerns. We promote growth & healing. Meet the challenges of our lives. 763-443-4290.


**Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families:** Saturday at 10 am, St. Philip’s Lutheran Church, 6100 Highway 65 NE. Fri., 6:30-7:45 pm. Visit www.adaafamilies.org for info.

**Men’s & Women’s Support Groups:** Meetings every Saturday (including holidays) at 9am. Prince of Peace Church, 7217 W. Broadway, Brooklyn Park. (north entrance). Informal, safe place to share experiences of joy and concerns. We promote growth & healing. Meet the challenges of our lives. 763-443-4290.

Retreat Time
by Mary Lou Logsdon

“Life can only be understood backwards but it must be lived forwards.”
— Søren Kierkegaard

Here at The Phoenix Spirit, we take time each spring to reflect on and explore the practice of retreating. Retreats, like most rituals, come with a familiarity and a structure that can mask the magic of the experience. Whether you take a retreat regularly or try it for the first time, a retreat is an experience of surprise in simplicity.

I go on retreat to step out of the ordinary, the routine, the normal. I don’t retreat to escape; I retreat to enter. I enter the life I have been living with an eye to where I have been and where this journey is taking me.

I liken this journey to a mountain hike. It begins on level terrain, meandering among thriving trees and lush under-story. The growth is thick and full and my ability to see ahead limited. I trust the trail and venture forth. I hear a rushing stream before I see it, its sparkling water tumbling over rocks and fallen tree branches. Eventually I notice stepping stones that allow me to cross.

The trail begins to climb, challenging my citified body. I keep going. The path allows me to cross. I come to an outcropping where the vista opens, and I see where I have been. I have come quite a distance! I notice the stream I crossed and how the cascades further along would have been much more difficult to negotiate. The trail had to switch back to avoid a sheer cliff drop. I understand how this was the route I needed to take to get me where I am now.

A bit further, I find another place to look out. I catch a glimpse of where the trail leads. The trees are thinning and the path is rocky. There is a steep climb ahead. I rest a bit, pause to make sure I have the stamina to continue, fortify myself with water and a bite to eat. I move on. While I am still not sure how I will get to the end of the trail, I recognize the outline of a possible way forward.

My life is like that hike. Going on retreat is my stop at the open spaces, a pause to see where I have been, refresh my spirit, and catch a glimpse of where I am being led. It helps me unpack my story, uncover patterns, understand meanings. I see the cascades of grace that have guided me.

At my most recent retreat I drew a timeline of my life. It was my first retreat since I moved. Moving unpacks old boxes and drags up dormant memories—kids’ stuff, parents’ albums and scrapbooks, decades of photos and journals, trinkets too precious to toss and not valuable enough to pass on. My timeline was multi-leveled. One line recalled the homes I’d lived in, another, jobs I’d held, a third, time-outs I had taken. It was dotted with births and deaths, turning points, successes and failures, friendships that ebbed and flowed with changes in proximity and busyness. A lot happens in a decade, in a generation, in a lifetime.

I saw stretches of difficult stoney terrain interspersed with periods of tranquility and calm—like mountain meadows after a vigorous climb.

The respite of retreat lets me review where I have been. I notice repeating patterns of behaviors I learned as a child that I keep replicating as an adult. They are the switchbacks on the trail. Questions arise: Do I avoid conflict so as to never move to resolution? Are there bridges of forgiveness I pass by that would allow me to move onward instead of spinning in an ever-repeating cycle? Am I always looking over my shoulder for something to fear while missing the subtle changes that might lead me to new viewpoints or stunning vistas, places only present in the here and now?

I look at all of this with gentle self-compassion. I accept the griefs and sorrows that emerge. I sit with them, giving them the time they need, holding them with the tenderness I would give the stories of a good friend. I practice presence. I invite curiosity. I dwell in the love of my higher power, my God, my spirit of trust and goodness.

After this time of quiet presence and patient self-care, I attempt to peek through how I might do that, develop a strategy, form a plan that moves me in a new direction.

I take stock of my relationships. Are there people I want to bring along on this journey—friends I haven’t seen for a while and miss, a community of people with whom to explore ideas or have fun or support changes I want to make? Maybe I want a guide to help me navigate what is ahead—a therapist, a financial analyst, a sponsor. Maybe I want a companion—a best friend, a partner, a mentor. Perhaps I decide to connect with my higher power more often.

Though the path ahead might be hazy, where we have been and how we have managed the journey so far is a good indication of how the next leg of the journey will go unless I choose another way. Here I ask myself, how do I want to live my life forward?

Retreat time is a time to take stock and consider the options.

Mary Lou Logsdon is a Spiritual Director in the Twin Cities. She is on the faculty of the Sacred Ground Spiritual Direction Formation Program. She can be reached at logsdon.marylou@gmail.com.