

NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE-NEW JERSEY
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Recovery historian/author to speak April 19 at The Peddie School

William White, the historian-author who writes about the history of treatment for recovery from alcohol and drug diseases, will speak at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 19, in the William Mount-Burke Theater at The Peddie School in Hightstown. The program, which will include a slide show, is free and open to the public, especially to people in recovery, their families, students and addiction treatment professionals.

White will speak about treatment and its implications for recovery and advocacy today. His talk is sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey and Friends of Recovery-New Jersey, a new group of recovery advocates, their family and friends.

His presentation will tell the story of the rise and evolution of alcoholic mutual aid societies and treatments for addiction to alcohol and other drugs over the past 200 years. The discussion of the history of treatment will cover the 19th century inebriate homes and asylums to the rise of the modern treatment system.

"Recovery is an immense blessing that comes with a difficult-to-repay debt of gratitude and obligation," White says. "Many of us have carried a message of hope on a one-to-one basis; this new recovery movement calls upon us to carry that message of hope to whole communities and the whole culture. We will shape the future of recovery in America with a detached silence of with a passionate voice."

White, who has been sober 32 years, is the author of "Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America." Twenty copies of his book will be given out free at his program.

"The stakes are very high right now," White says, explaining that there's considerable evidence that alcoholism and other addictions are being de-medicalized, re-criminalized and re-stigmatized. However, the resurgence of recovery groups nationwide can reverse this trend.

"Otherwise, we can expect less focus and emphasis on recovery and treatment, more families suffering, and more people dying from alcohol and drug diseases," he says.

White is a senior research consultant with Lighthouse Institute, an addiction research facility in Bloomington, Ill. He notes that there is a whole spectrum of recovery organizations across the country, ranging from affiliates of the National Council for Alcoholism and Drug Dependence and American Indian communities to faith-based African American communities and groups formed by parents who lost a child to an alcohol or drug diseases.

“The diversity is amazing,” White says, adding that the common focus of the groups is community and professional education, and advocating for enhanced treatment opportunities and quality. He describes the recovery movement as “dynamic and exciting,” one that is drawing in not only people in recovery, but also family members and friends.

In some ways, the emergence of recovery groups nationwide can be viewed as a backlash to the extreme shifts that occurred in the 1990s – the reduction of health care benefits to treat alcohol and drug diseases, the loss of a large number of treatment facilities, and moving addiction care into the criminal justice system. Positive images of recovery of earlier years have been replaced by images of the relapsing celebrity or an addicted person in handcuffs.

If the tide of stigma and criminalization is not checked, there will be a drastic reduction of treatment facilities, with an accompanying growth in the number of prison beds and a return to draconian laws and sentences of the 1950s.

“Part of what this recovery movement brings is an unrelenting message of hope and the reality of long-term recovery,” White says.

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