

**Ivette Torres:** Hello, I am Ivette Torres, and welcome to *The Road to Recovery 2013: A Showcase of Events*.

The **Recovery Month** observance held each September celebrates people in recovery, raises our awareness and understanding of mental and substance use disorders, and recognizes those who work in the field of behavioral health. The 2013 theme, “Join the Voices for Recovery: Together on Pathways to Wellness” highlighted the fact that there are many unique ways people can prevent behavioral health issues, seek treatment, and sustain recovery.

The theme also highlights the importance of mental, physical, and emotional well-being, as well as the value of family, friends, and community members throughout the recovery journey.

The journey of recovery is a shared experience. Those struggling with mental and substance use disorders share their stories with each other and give each other encouragement.

Families, friends, and whole communities share in the recovery experience by creating systems of support that are critical to the progress of persons in recovery.

Mental and substance use disorders are significant public health concerns that affect millions of Americans each year. However, many people are not aware of these simple facts: prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can—and do—recover from these conditions.

For well over 20 years, **National Recovery Month** has served to educate Americans that mental health services, addiction treatment, and recovery support services can enable people who have a mental disorder, a substance use disorder, or both to live healthy and rewarding lives.

We know that nearly 1 in 10 Americans struggles with a substance use disorder and that about 1 in 5 Americans has a mental health problem.

As we hear their stories, we learn that while the journey of recovery follows many different pathways, progress on every one of those pathways depends on relationships marked by care, support, and respect.

**Dr. H. Westley Clark:** Good morning. I’m Dr. H. Westley Clark, the director of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment at SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

On behalf of SAMHSA and our parent organization, the Department of Health and Human Services, welcome. And thank you for joining us for the unveiling of the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health results. We’re also celebrating the 24th annual **National Recovery Month**. By pairing these two events, it gives us an opportunity to celebrate those who are in recovery while also remembering that there are many more who have yet found that path.

The theme of the 24th annual **National Recovery Month** observance is “Join the Voices for Recovery: Together on Pathways to Wellness.” It emphasizes that while each person finds his or her own unique path to recovery, our common goal is wellness. Through recovery, the people we celebrate during September have overcome mental and substance use challenges and in so doing have improved their overall health as well as the health and well-being of their families, friends, and communities.

**Pamela S. Hyde:** This press conference always provides us the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the millions of Americans in recovery from mental illness and addiction. It’s also time to applaud the families, the loved ones, and friends who support them and the behavioral health providers who help them regain their health.

It’s also an opportunity to share the podium with others who support the important work of recovery and wellness. People like our partners at The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, especially Dr. Gil Kerlikowske. We’re gonna hear from...I think I just called you a doctor...[laughter]...we’ll hear from Director Kerlikowske in just a few minutes and we’ll just, we’ll also hear from those at the head table who know a lot about recovery and about achieving wellness.

**Gil Kerlikowske:** As we recognize in September **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month**, it’s worth noting that not so long ago the word “recovery” was kind of absent from the drug policy discussion. **Recovery Month** reminds us that our ultimate goal is not the successful implementation of a prevention program or a successful treatment discharge but rather safer, healthier, more resilient, and more prosperous individuals, families, and communities. And reaching the goal requires creating avenues for individuals to achieve and sustain recovery. It requires us to create opportunities for individuals to fully enjoy and contribute to the community.

**Jenna Bertino:** My name is Jenna and I am a person in long-term recovery. For me, that means I haven’t used a drink or a drug since I was 24. Recovery has given me an awareness that I’ve never had before. The ability to live in the moment and really appreciate my surroundings. Everything from watching the way the sunlight illuminates the leaves on the trees to feeling a warm breeze on my face. I don’t take life for granted anymore. I’m actually participating in my life, and I’m no longer just existing.

It wasn’t always like that though. There was a time when I didn’t want to take part in life—I wanted to run away from it. When I was 13, there was a knock on my door 2 days after Christmas. The police were standing there, and they told me that there had been an accident and that I needed to call my mom. What I soon found out was that my dad had committed suicide. In that moment, the world as I knew it changed. Everything stopped. And I just

wanted to run. I didn't want to face that reality. I didn't know how to cope with those feelings, and I just wanted to escape, and for me that escape came in the form of drugs and alcohol.

Fortunately, somebody was looking out for me. Because one day, my mom drugged me to court and that judge said three words that would change my life yet again: "Incarceration without bail."

I had the opportunity to plead into a program called Drug Court. And Drug Court afforded me the ability to go to a 90-day in-patient rehabilitation program. And it was there that I gained so much insight about myself, and I really learned how to live life on life's terms and not have to put a substance in my body to numb me.

In 2010, I graduated from that Drug Court program, and that day I realized if I can do this I can do anything I put my mind to. So I made the decision to go back to school. And as Dr. Clark said, in 2012, I graduated with my bachelor's degree. Since then, I've decided to continue my education. And this fall is my first semester as a graduate student working on my master's. It's amazing that I have a purpose. I'm able to give back to my community what was given to me.

**Daniel LaPointe:** To say the least, my childhood was less than horrific. My family and I enjoyed a middle class suburban existence. I excelled academically and participated in several extracurricular activities. My emotional development, however, was I would say severely compromised. I suffered from an extremely poor body image as I was classified as overweight. And my self-esteem and self-worth were nonexistent.

In May of 1997, at the age of 12, I won a D.A.R.E. essay contest hosted by my local municipality. The topic of that contest was why I won't try drugs. And then in June of 1997, 1 month later, I started smoking marijuana. The next 15 years of my life, I struggled in the grasp of addiction characterized by an increasingly typical progression from prescription opiate usage to an intravenously delivered heroin dependency. And you know, I believe that many Americans still think that such usage as predominately an urban problem, but that is not the case. I was not raised in a broken, impoverished, abusive household but rather a loving middle class suburban environment. And despite my malady, I became a student athlete able to graduate from a parochial high school with a 4.4 GPA and to earn a full academic scholarship to one of the top 10 business schools in the nation.

My addiction brought me to institutions to run-ins with the law to near death experiences and to the funerals of five good friends—all of those people under the age of 33 years old. Needless to say, I am fortunate to be standing here before you all today. On April 25th, 2012, in a moment of abject despair, I made a decision to change my life. I checked myself into a detox facility in New Jersey the following day. After an 8-day detox, I checked into a rehab facility in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Today, I'm accountable. In recovery, I've been able to acquire a New Jersey general contractor's license and to form an LLC as a sole proprietor. Today, I am a small business owner of a growing company. I am a productive member of society, and today I am once again a contributing citizen of the United States of America.

**Juan Vélez Court:** I'm a mental health advocate in Puerto Rico. I am the director of Fundación NuestraMente, which is a nonprofit organization I established in the year 2011 to share not just my story but stories of people that are too afraid to really reveal their own stories. I am a certified peer specialist, and just recently I actually became the community coordinator for a Puerto Rican government program aimed at helping children and adolescents with severe emotional disturbances in underserved communities. I am a person with multiple mental diagnosis, and it's been a really difficult process. I was diagnosed at a time where it was not only not cool it was also unheard of to talk about mental health in your communities without being stigmatized, without being made fun of.

My mother and I had to seek treatment in the States. My mother lost her job of 28 years trying to help me, and my family completely stranded away, did not support us, and made her cry every single day because of the fact that they could not understand what I was going through. I battled through obesity, weighing in at almost 300 pounds because I was sick of society. Everyone to me was the enemy, so the only person I could count on was myself. I tried multiple suicidal attempts, including throwing myself out the car while my mom was driving. I did self-mutilation. Why? Not because I wanted to commit suicide but because I was so tired of my anxiety attacks, I was so tired of not knowing what to do that the only way was punishing myself until the physical pain overcame the emotional pain.

I didn't see any future in myself. But that was until I started to learn about wellness. I learned that throughout the entire process, everyone was so focused on my mental health they weren't worried about me being obese. They weren't worried about me exercising. Other things that I eventually had to learn by myself, and once I did it came to a point where I forgot I had a mental illness. I forgot that I had anxiety attacks. I had all these intrusive thoughts and in that process I realized—it's like a magical solution. Turns out you just have to exercise. You have to do all these great things. A holistic approach.

I've been able to be off medication for 5 years for five different anxiety, for three different anxiety disorders, and it is because of that simply because I focus so much on the good things that the bad, I don't just overcome them I break through them because that is exactly what everyone in this room and around the nation has to do. Because honestly, if you told me 4 years ago that I was going to be talking at a press conference about my recovery story, I'd be laughing at you right now.

We have to not just empower the consumers we have to empower everybody, and it is through ***National Recovery Month***, National Wellness Week, that we do that.

**Lacy Kendrick Burk:** I am a person in recovery with mental health issues. I went into foster care at age 15 and aged out, and consequently self-medicated and abused alcohol for many years as a way to deal with those unmet mental health needs, including depression and PTSD.

Since then, and I have learned about recovery and other ways to manage, I have dedicated my work and my life to improving outcomes for young people, including the areas of foster care, youth engagement and leadership, adoption, mental health, and trauma as the executive director of Youth M.O.V.E. National, our youth motivating others through voices of experience. We work to improve services in systems for youth and young adults who have lived experience in these systems. We support 68 chapters across 33 different states. Of young people who seek to engage in systems change. And to help promote positive outcomes for their peers as well.

It's also important that we partner together and the mental health and substance abuse field work together and model that connection because they are both essential for us to all be well. And I want to say thank you to SAMHSA for leading this way. It is very crucial that we do unite and we do bring supports to each other across substance abuse and mental health because they don't operate independently within ourselves, why would they operate independently elsewhere. And so to unite those and SAMHSA is really bringing those two together and supporting that connection and that support for our youth and young adults in this country. Thank you.

[Applause]

**Skylar Jackson:** Good afternoon, everyone and welcome to the ***National Recovery Month*** planning partners luncheon. Today's discussion—Recognition and Celebration of Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery—is hosted by the National Association for Children of Alcoholics and the Entertainment Industries Council. To begin today's event, please join me in welcoming a pioneer of "edutainment" and depiction of health and social issues. He is the founder, president, and CEO of the Entertainment Industries Council and the award-winning executive producer and creator of the PRISM Awards. This is the world's only nationally televised show honoring the accurate depictions of substance use and mental health. And our first speaker today is none other than Mr. Brian Dyak. Please join me in welcoming him to the stage.

[Applause]

**Brian Dyak:** Thank you. Thank you very much. Welcome. The voice from beyond that you are hearing is Skylar Jackson, our external communication and program director and the producer

and host of our new Internet television network EIC TV. The network is launching live as I speak. For the first time, members of the organizations represented and recovery supporters across the country will be able to participate in the luncheon awards ceremony virtually and interact through the eicnetwork.tv website, which is integrated with Facebook and Twitter. Those at home will also be able to watch exclusive video clips, some of which were created by those in this room that are here with us today. So thank you to our media partners at 21st Century Fox for supporting this unique webcast and thank you to SAMHSA and all the organizations who have been putting the word out across the country to invite others to this webcast.

**Rick Lane:** On behalf of 21st Century Fox and John Landgraf, who is the president of FX, who will be showcasing the PRISM Awards and chairman of the PRISM honorary committee and trustee of EIC, it is our honor to support the national recovery effort and to be the media partner today with EIC. For nearly two decades, EIC has paid tribute to the accurate, honest, authentic, and engaging depiction of important behavioral health issues through the PRISM Awards. Celebrating hundreds of writers, producers, and directors who rewrite stereotypes to become relatable, sympathetic characters that resonate with the audience is very important and that's how these awards are looked at. Now in its 17th year, the PRISM Awards submissions are well into the thousands and seen by millions within reach, from Hollywood to Capitol Hill, and believe me, there's a lot of similarities between the two. The 17th Annual Prism Awards showcase will premiere on FX and it will remain on demand through March 30th, 2014. We look forward to working with EIC to help bring the proactive productions of our industry into the limelight as service to all of you who dedicate your lives to this very important issue. We thank you for what you are doing every day, and are pleased to be part of bringing your message into the homes of our viewers.

**Sis Wenger:** He wrote probably the first and one of the best ever written books of stories—we are all talking about recovery stories—he wrote *Courage to Change* and when I developed my educational program back in Michigan, that was mandatory reading with a book report due from every single one of my volunteers because it told the real stories of real people. So, my storyteller friend also, Dennis Wholey.

**Dennis Wholey:** I used to say kiddingly when I would do a COA talk that I grew up in a family of five kids and two distant relatives, my mother and father. I've amended that a little bit to realize that while it is a good line and it does get a good laugh, that was a very, very difficult childhood—a very painful childhood. I think it's important that we realize that this word "loneliness" and this pain of childhood is essential to the message of recovery. This is **Recovery Month**—24 years for **Recovery Month**, 30 years for the National Association for Children of Alcoholics, but do not set out the difference in your minds between the recovering addict and

alcoholic—and we're very public about it, many of us are—with the, turn the clock back 20, 30, 40, 50 years, or for some of the young people that will be joining me in a minute, turning the clock back just 10 years and the lives of young children.

**Michele Lehmen:** I want to talk about a very exciting campaign that we just unveiled a little over a month ago on Capitol Hill, and it's called the OK2TALK campaign. The primary goal of this campaign is to end the stigma associated with talking about mental health issues. Our president and CEO, Senator Gordon Smith, has been a long-time mental health advocate. Sadly, later this month will be 10 years since his son took his own life after a tragic struggle with mental illness. And Senator Smith has been just phenomenal in bringing together the mental health community and broadcasters to really have us use our megaphone to make this a national discussion and to get people talking about it. And so our campaign had a very clear and focused message: It's ok to talk about mental health. There are resources and treatments available for you that are effective, and if you know someone who is struggling, please help them get the help that they need. So I really encourage you to work with your local TV and radio stations. They are very receptive to doing things to bring mental health out of the shadows and into the national dialogue.

**Beshad Sheldon:** Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Beshad Sheldon and on behalf of Braeburn Pharmaceuticals I'm honored, really honored to be here with all of you supporting **Recovery Month** and the message that you already heard, but some things are really good to say again and again, which is that prevention works, treatment is effective, and recovery does happen. People can and do recover.

**Female VO:** At times, the path to recovery from a mental and substance use disorder may be unclear. At times, the path may be rocky. At times, the path may be wandering. But laying a strong foundation with the support of others makes all the difference. For information on mental and substance use disorders, including prevention and treatment referral, call 1-800-662-HELP. Brought to you by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Female VO:** I felt broken. I needed help for my addiction and depression. And with the help of my family and recovery support community, I am rebuilding my life, piece by piece. Now, through recovery, I am whole again.

**Multiple Voices:** Join the voices for recovery. It's worth it.

**Male VO:** For information on mental and substance use disorders, including prevention and treatment referral, call 1-800-662-HELP. Brought to you by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[Music]

**Ivette Torres:** Each year, thousands of people in cities and towns across this nation help to organize **Recovery Month** events.

In recent years, we have seen **Recovery Month** become an international movement with events held in many other countries around the world.

In 2013, over 900 **Recovery Month** events were held in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and numerous countries outside of the U.S.

Here and abroad, **Recovery Month** events bring together the courageous people in recovery, the caring service providers that work tirelessly to support people in recovery, and family members and friends who are instrumental in initiating and sustaining recovery.

Community events are an effective way to deliver **Recovery Month's** key messages to a variety of audiences.

There are also many fun and creative ways to get the message out! We saw celebrations, conferences, parades, rallies, walks, sporting events, block parties, motorcycle rides, dances, and art shows.

At these events, we heard encouraging words in support of recovery and calls for action to support people in recovery throughout the year with critical support services like housing, education, and employment.

**Male voice:** We got any people in recovery out there?

[Crowd cheers.]

**Ivette Torres:** **Recovery Month** events make the faces of recovery visible in the community. We want to thank everyone who helped organize **Recovery Month** events. Your creativity and dedication is inspiring to us all.

[Music]

**Male VO:** Your path to recovery isn't like mine.

**Female VO:** You have your own struggles with mental health issues...

**Male VO:** ...your own challenges with substance use disorders.

**Female VO:** You also have your own abilities and strengths.

**Male VO:** But when you need a hand...

**Female VO:** ...reach out until you find one.

**Female VO:** For information on mental and substance use disorders, including prevention and treatment referral, call 1-800-662-HELP. Brought to you by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Female VO:** Before, addiction and depression kept me from living my life. Now, every step I take in recovery benefits everyone. There are many options that make the road to recovery more accessible. It begins with the first step. Join the voices for recovery. For information and treatment referral for you or someone you love, call 1-800-662-HELP. That's 1-800-662-4357. Brought to you by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Male Narr:** For more information on ***National Recovery Month***, to find out how to get involved, or to locate an event near you, visit the Recovery Month website at [recoverymonth.gov](http://recoverymonth.gov).

**Ivette Torres:** The stories of recovery are the stories of our family members, our friends, and the people we meet every day in our communities.

As they succeed in living self-directed lives and achieving their full potential, we see the benefits of recovery not only for the individual but for their family, friends, and community.

Just as we see people from all walks of life engaged in the recovery process, so also do we see the incredible variety of paths that people in recovery take.

We find that there are many different pathways to achieve the common goal of hope, health, and wellness.

As we take a moment to recognize the success of the 2013 ***Recovery Month*** observance, we are reminded that this is a time to turn our attention to 2014.

I hope this show inspires you to get involved and to organize a ***Recovery Month*** event for next

September.

You can begin now by going to the **Recovery Month** website at [recoverymonth.gov](http://recoverymonth.gov) for information on how to get started. As you can see from the events in 2013, the type of **Recovery Month** event you choose to organize can be whatever your imagination and creativity inspires you to do.

Thank you for everything you do to support recovery. Let's keep up this exciting work in the coming year, and I sincerely hope that your event will be highlighted in our 2014 showcase of events.

**[Music]**

**Male Narr:** *The Road to Recovery* television and radio series educates the public about the benefits of treatment for substance use and mental health problems as well as recovery programs for individuals, families, and communities. Each program engages a panel of experts in a lively discussion of recovery issues and successful initiatives from across the country. To view or listen to the *Road to Recovery* television and radio series from this season or previous seasons, visit [recoverymonth.gov](http://recoverymonth.gov) and click on the Video, Radio, Web tab.

[Music]

Male Narr: For a copy of this program or other programs in the *Road to Recovery* series, call SAMHSA at 1-800-662-HELP or order online at [recoverymonth.gov](http://recoverymonth.gov) and click on the Video, Radio, Web tab.

[Music]

Every September, **National Recovery Month** provides an opportunity for communities like yours to raise awareness of substance use and mental health problems to highlight the effectiveness of treatment and that people can and do recover. In order to help you plan events and activities in commemoration of this year's **Recovery Month** observance, the free online **Recovery Month** kit offers ideas, materials, and tools for planning, organizing, and realizing an event or outreach campaign that matches your goals and resources. To obtain an electronic copy of this year's **Recovery Month** kit and gain access to other free publications and

materials related to recovery issues, visit the ***Recovery Month*** website at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov), or call 1-800-662-HELP.

[Music]