ASCENSION COUNSELING CENTER

Ascension Counseling Center

Editor: Dawnyelle Bennett *Parish President: Tommy Martinez*

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SET GOALS FOR THE NEW YEAR

January rolls in like a breath of fresh air. The calendar is reset, and in many regards, it is a chance to begin anew and an opportunity to do things "better" moving forward. The New Year is also an ideal occasion for parents and children to come together to set fresh goals as both a family unit and as individuals. As you consider potential objectives for 2014, we challenge you, as a family, to come up with ways to make this a more meaningful, more impactful year. Start by gathering your household members and briefly reflect on how all of you functioned as a family the past 12 months. Ask each person to share some positives, things that you'll want to continue to do in 2014, as well as things that did not go over so well, and will need to be improved upon. Even if your family proves to be in good shape, there's always room for improvement. Some ideas just about every family can incorporate include:

Argue Less, Talk More (and practice Active Listening): Open (or strengthen) the lines of communication between you and your loved ones. Be sure to regularly cover the big stuff (like the dangers of underage drinking, smoking and other drug use), but don't forget the everyday chats (to know what's happening in your family's daily lives).

Eat Dinner Together as a Family Often (at least four nights a week - when possible): It doesn't need to be anything fancy or expensive; it is the sitting down together and connecting that matters. Research shows that kids who eat dinner with their families not only get better grades, but are less likely to engage in teen smoking, drinking or other drug use.

Create a 2014 Family Bucket List: Ensure more time for family fun by creating a list of activities you want to do as a family. Get active together, plan a road trip, take on a new family hobby. It doesn't have to be over-the-top, super time-consuming or expensive to be fun. The idea is to spend time together and enjoy each other.

Strive for Balance on the Calendar: Staying active is essential, but try not to over-commit yourself or your family. Over-committing equals worn out, stressed-out kids and adults, which does no one any good.

Families are made up of individuals, and it is also important for each family member to set personal goals for the New Year. The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages adolescence to focus their personal goals on helping others through community service, taking more responsibility for their actions, taking better care of their bodies, dealing with conflict and stress in more healthy, positive ways, and resisting alcohol and other drugs.As you talk through your family and individual goals for 2014, be sure to ***write it down***, ***hang it up and refer to it often*** (that way it won't be forgotten when the novelty of the New Year wears off).

Sources: Brown, Laura Lewis: Making New Year's Resolutions with Your Child, PBS. Ellis, Kori: Simple Resolutions for Families, She Knows Parenting. American Academy of Pediatrics.

THE QUOTE THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

So having been asked to write for this month's ACC newsletter I thought I'd go big or go home…you know, write about something that has had a profound impact on my life. Thus the topic: The Quote that Changed my Life (Sound grand enough? Check!). I know you are all rapt with anticipation waiting for the quote that has had such a huge impact on my life, but before I divulge that little phrase I would like to tell you about something that happened the other day.

First the back story: I often play music in my office while working on paperwork, I listen to all kinds: jazz, rock, blues, rap, country, country-rap (it exists, really)… and what I choose usually all depends on my mood in the moment. Really it doesn't matter what it is, I can usually find something to like about it. For those of you who don't know, in my previous life, my pre-Counselor days, I was a classical musician raised by two parents who used rock concerts as bonding experiences. I have obtained two degrees in vocal performance, but I always believed my best music education came from working in a trendy record store named Earwax in Brooklyn. So those of you who have stopped by ACC lately may have noticed that the clinic has been undergoing a paint facelift, which is where my story begins. "Do you like music?" These were the words that jolted me from my work. Before even turning to look at the man painting my office's door frame my mind began to roll through the generic response rolodex. Responses like "sure", "uhhh-hmmm", even pretending not to hear in order to finish my work was an option, but instead I decided to turn and greet the bodiless voice. Before me was an unassuming looking man wearing a Ascension Parish work shirt and painting my door. I had seen him a few times around the office, maybe had even waved the obligatory "how's it going?" when passing in the halls, but I hadn't ever really spoken to him before, you know, he was one of those millions of people we pass on a daily basis that we barely even notice because we are busy doing our own thing. A conversation was struck, his name was Larry, and a mutual interest had been found. He continued, "Yeah, I used to play all over the world with my brother, but I quit a few years after my son was born to be with my family." My interest was definitely piqued at that point, "Who's your brother?" "Kenny Neal" . Cue the sound of the needle scratching across the record…For those of you who don't know, the Neal family is one of our area's royal Blues families. Everyone in this family is talented, it's like talent oozes from their pores. Don't believe me? Go here: www.bluesaccess.com/No_30/neals.html, or here: http://www.kennyneal.net/familymore.html. Yeah, pretty exciting stuff for a music lover! A week later I was watching the guy who was previously painting my door play harmonica at a Rockin' Dopsie concert at the Atrium of the Belle of Baton Rouge. What a small world we live in! Since then I have been entertained with stories about Larry's experience growing up in the Neal Family. Learning from his father Raful Neal, dinners with Muddy Waters, playing harmonica for B.B. King…Larry experienced the musicians' dream and gave some of it up to be with his family. Giving up some of your dream for the joy of family is part of my own story as well. I just shutter to think what I would have missed out on if I hadn't responded to that one phrase: "Do you like music?" So I guess it's about time I begin to wrap this up and get to my point.

THE QUOTE THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Consider how many times we pass people on a daily basis and we are so caught up in our business we don't even notice. We go to Wal-Mart and see a mass of people pass by and they probably feel the same way. We go to the coffee shop, and we don't know the name of the person who fixes our drink every morning, even though he's been doing it for almost two years (his name is Jacob). We go to the gas station and don't even notice the person pumping gas next to us. Where are we? What stories or relationships are we potentially missing out on?

"My religion is Kindness" –The Dalai Lama

Think of the power of these words. Since becoming a Counselor I have learned my biggest job is to practice kindness. Life can be really difficult sometimes. People come into my office from all walks of life, struggling with the all sorts of issues. It's easy to categorize people. The guy who was referred for substance abuse treatment for DUI: Irresponsible. The guy who cut me off in traffic: a jerk. That lady who finds herself in a string of bad relationships: she needs to get it together! As I begin to practice these simple words I realize everyone has a story, has had experiences, has at one time has known the feeling of being on top of the world and at other times has probably felt the depths of despair. Everyone has hopes and dreams. That person at the gas station? Well maybe he doesn't have a back story like Larry Neal, but he does have a back story. He's more than a passing face in a crowd. Here's an experiment. Spend the day smiling at others intentionally. You may feel crazy at first, and you may be met with the occasional frown, but I can guarantee most of your smiles will be met in kind. You might even make one person's day go a little easier. You'll probably feel a little bit better yourself. Smiling increases dopamine levels in the brain, creating a calming effect. Don't believe me? Look it up on Google! Small acts of kindness don't have to cost anything, but often the payback can be awesome. Who knew something so small could be so grand?

By: Ryan Schuette, NCC, CI

CARF SURVEY TEAM

A survey team from CARF International visited with Ascension Counseling Center on January 13-15th. We invited the surveyors to evaluate how well we meet international standards for quality. The survey will tell us what we are doing well and ways me might improve. As a result of the survey, we may continue our accreditation. As a part of the survey, the surveyors interviewed people who receive services, their families, our staff and others. For more information about CARF you can visit their website at www.carf.org. CARF International is an independent, not-for-profit family of organizations that provides accreditation in the field of human services.

MILESTONES

Staff Trainings

- **Ryan Schuette NCC, CI :** Ryan attended a 2 day Dialectical Behavioral Therapy Training (DBT) in New Orleans, LA on December 16-17. The training was facilitated by John Lothes, M.A., LPA, LCAS-A. DBT focuses on skill building, mindfulness, emotional regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance. DBT is one of the most promising treatments for self-destructive behavior and the symptoms of borderline personality disorder.
- **Lisa Weber-Curry, LPC** : Clinical Manager, Lisa Weber-Curry is now a LPC– Supervisor. Congratulations Lisa.

ACC Welcomes New Interns

- **Amie Jackson** attends Southern University A&M College in Baton Rouge, LA. She is on track to graduate May 6, 2014 with a Master of Arts in Mental Health Counseling. She has an Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications. Her goals while interning at Ascension Counseling Center are to enhance her counseling skills and increase her understanding of clients through counseling. Ascension Counseling Center provides her with an opportunity to learn and grow by observing sessions, sitting in with groups, and consulting with supervisors and other counselors as often as possible.
- **Cinde Johnson** attends Nicholls State University in Thibodeaux, LA. She is pursing a Master's Degree in Psychological Counseling. She has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology from Southern University A&M College in Baton Rouge, LA. While interning at Ascension Counseling Center, Cinde wants to gain more experience with a diverse group of clients. Cinde's plans to focus on Marriage & Family Counseling after completing her degree.

New Counselor at ACC

Tatiyana Curry, a familiar face at Ascension Counseling center, is our newest counselor. Tatiyana has previously served as the Intake Worker and as a Student Counselor Intern. She recently graduated from Nicholls State University in Thibodeaux, LA on December 14, 2013. She has a Master's of Art Degree in Psychological Counseling and is now a Mental Health Counselor. Congratulations Tatiyana.

ACC In The Community

St. Elizabeth Health Fest 2014:

The Ascension Coalition for Underage Drinking ;which includes representatives from the Ascension Counseling Center, The Ascension Parish School Board, The Ascension Parish Sheriff's Office and The District Attorney's Office (23rd Judicial District Court) , gave students a chance to get up close and personal with the realities of underage drinking . The interactive exhibit featured various hands-on stations geared at educating students on the consequences of underage drinking. Each participating student had the opportunity to partake in a "driving while intoxicated" simulation. Over 50 pledge cards were signed by kids saying they won't drink and drive. The Health Fest was held at Lamar-Dixon Expo Center on January 11th.

Tigers Against Trafficking 5k

On March 22nd Ascension Counseling's therapy dog ,Java , will be participating in the Tigers Against Trafficking 5K, being held on LSU's Parade Grounds. This will be Java's 4th 5k. Java will be participating with her counselor Kristie Boggs.

ACC FIT FITNESS FOR WELLNESS

ACC FIT FACTS

By: Jill Lemann, CFT

WEIGHT LOSS MYTHS & FACTS

Myth 1: Muscle weighs more than fat.

Muscle does not weigh more than fat. A pound is a pound! Where the misunderstanding often comes from is the fact that muscle is much more dense than fat; therefore, by volume seems to weigh more. A pound of muscle occupies less space than a pound of fat due to its volume. For example; one pound of muscle may appear to be the size of a baseball and one pound of fat will be three times the size and look like a bowl of Jell-O.

Myth 2: A women lifting heavy weights will get muscles as big as a man.

This myth never seems to die. A women's body is not built the same as a man. A woman has approximately one third of the testosterone of a man. Unless she is on anabolic steroids, growth hormone or other enhancing drugs, a woman will never achieve the muscular size of a man. However, she can get a degree of muscularity that makes her lean, toned and tight.

Myth 3: Doing ab workouts will get rid of belly fat.

You can do crunches, sit-ups and ab workouts until you pass out, and you still might not get a six-pack. If you have a high percentage of fat, your abs will be covered. Doing just ab exercises will not necessarily make you lose that belly fat. In order to get visibly toned abs, you have to first reduce your overall body fat. This can be achieved by combining good nutrition with exercise.

Metabolism Facts:

Metabolism - The process by which your body converts what you eat and drink into energy.

Fact 1: Contrary to common belief, a slow metabolism is rarely the cause of excess weight gain. Although your metabolism influences your body's basic energy needs, it's your food and drink intake and your physical activity that ultimately determine how much you weigh.

Fact 2: Metabolism is a natural process; your body generally balances it to meet your individual needs. By not eating enough calories (less than 1,200 calories), the body perceives an emergency and will accommodate by holding onto stored fat to survive. This is because your body doesn't know when it will be fed again. For example; if you try so called starvation diets, your body compensates by slowing down the bodily process and conserving calories for survival.

Fact 3: Only in rare cases do you get excessive weight gain from a slow metabolism. In those cases it is usually due to a medical problem that slows metabolism; such as Cushing's syndrome or an underactive thyroid gland (Hypothyroidism).

www.AscensionParish.Net/MH

Find us on: facebook

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Ascension Counseling Center provides comprehensive therapeutic services to individuals and families in an effort to foster healthy coping skills that will improve their quality of life.

Hours

Gonzales:

Business Hours

Mon - Thur: 8 am - 5:30 pm; Fri: 8 am - noon

Counseling Hours

Mon - Thur: 7 am - 8 pm; Fri: 8 am - noon

Psychiatrist Hours

Monday and Tuesday: 8 am - 6 pm

Donaldsonville:

Business Hours

Wednesday: 7:30 am - 5:30 pm

Monthly Events

Mondays:

- ***Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group***, 4 - 6 pm & 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group***, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales.

Tuesdays:

- ***Women's Empowerment Group,*** 10 - 11:30 am, Gonzales.
- ***Nurturing Parenting, adult & children groups***: 5 - 7:30 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Anger Management Class,*** 4 - 5 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Stop Smoking group***, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales
- ***Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group***, 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.

Wednesdays:

- ***Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group:*** 1 pm, Donaldsonville.
- ***Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group***, 3 - 4 pm, Donaldsonville.
- ***Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group:*** 4 - 6 pm & 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Living Strong Cancer Survivors group***, 3 - 4 pm, Donaldsonville. 2nd Wed of each month.
- ***Grandparents Raising Grandchildren***, 10:30 am - noon, lunch provided, Donaldsonville, 3rd Wed of each month

Thursdays:

- ***Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group:*** 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group***, 5– 7 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Anxiety Reduction group***: 4 - 5 pm, Gonzales.

At Ascension Counseling Center you are at the center of your own care. We aim to treat you the way you want to be treated, with dignity and respect. If you are not receiving the services you want in the way that you want them, please speak to your counselor or ask to speak with Lisa Weber-Curry, Clinical Manager (225/450-1172) or Suzanne Hamilton, Director (225/450-1160).