

*The History of Friends of Recovery – New York (FOR-NY)*

Until quite recently, Recovery from addiction had been considered nothing more than continued abstinence from alcohol and/or other drugs. With the growing acceptance of addiction as a chronic disorder, efforts to integrate recovery management and promote sustained recovery for individuals, families, and communities required a major shift in how to think about and support recovery.

 The New York State Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) responded in May 2007, with the creation of a Bureau of Recovery Services to develop supports for people in Recovery. One of the Bureau’s first initiatives was to assemble a Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) comprised of individuals in Recovery, family members, county representatives, prevention and treatment providers, OASAS staff, and representatives of the criminal justice, child welfare and mental health systems. The team, which included future FOR-NY Board members Bill Bowman, Richard Buckman, Betty Currier, Charles Devlin, and Matthew Mathai was charged with leading various initiatives that would help to inform the types of recovery supports needed throughout the state. They were to focus on four key areas: Recovery Centers, a Statewide Recovery Conference, focus groups, and integrating prevention & recovery.

In addition to the RIT’s formal tasks, several of its members began discussing the need for a statewide Recovery organization that would connect local recovery groups throughout the state and create a unified voice to advocate for the Recovery community. A steering committee was formed and specific guiding principles were established:

* A statewide RCO must be a key participating partner
* A statewide RCO must be a separate, but equal entity that can represent the views of the recovery community in planning and implementation
* Our voice is a critical component in all discussions
* All pathways to recovery must be embraced and included
* Issues of stigma and discrimination related to specific recovery issues must be addressed

On Saturday morning, April 4, 2008 approximately 50 recovery community leaders from throughout the state gathered at the William K. Sanford Library in Colonie, New York to discuss the formation of *Friends of Recovery – New York*. The enthusiastic, dedicated and diverse group of men and women represented many pathways to recovery, as well as a variety of ethnicities, ages, and regions of the state.

With steadfast commitment and a pocketful of passion, *Friends of Recovery – New York* was born. The Long Island Recovery Association donated $1,000 to cover incorporation fees and wrote and submitted the necessary IRS applications. Several dozen of the original attendees reconvened at the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS) headquarters in Albany for a second meeting in June. It was at that meeting that FOR-NY’s founding Board of Directors was created.

Founding Board of Directors

* Bill Bowman, Watertown
* Richard Buckman, Dix Hills
* Matt Canuteson, Albany
* Betty Currier, Cooperstown
* Paul A. Dunn, Clinton
* Deirdre Drohan-Forbes, Hastings-on-Hudson
* Laura Elliott-Engel, Cuba
* Matthew (Chacku) Mattai, Rochester
* David Ramsey, Unadilla
* Ronnie Uss, Livingston Manor

With the encouragement of OASAS Commissioner, Karen Carpenter-Palumbo, Friends of Recovery – New York was formally announced during a “Meet & Greet” reception held at the first statewide Recovery conference held on September 14-15, 2009. Almost immediately, the group began meeting with lawmakers, policy makers, and various government representatives including OASAS to raise awareness, inspire action, and effect positive change for the Recovery community. Following are highlights of the organization’s efforts since that time.

2009:

February: FOR-NY hosts first Recovery Advocacy Day. Held each year in February, the day provides an opportunity for Recovery advocates from throughout the state to meet with members of the Assembly and the Senate, as well as other government officers to bring the needs of the Recovery community to the attention of lawmakers.

September: FOR-NY joins 10,000 Recovery allies in a walk across the Brooklyn Bridge as part of the national Recovery Rally.

October: FOR-NY named *New York State Recovery Community Organizer*; receives $60,000 grant from OASAS recognizing FOR-NY as the premier grassroots organization in New York State speaking and advocating on behalf of the Recovery community.

2010:

Under the leadership of Board president, Laura Elliott-Engel, FOR-NY expands its Board to 13 members representing 15 counties across the state.

February: 2nd Annual Recovery Advocacy Day is held on February 9th.

OASAS awards FOR-NY another $60,000 grant to help coordinate statewide Recovery community efforts.

Hires Michelle Cleary as Field Coordinator to handle day to day operations.

September: FOR-NY joins with NCADD, ASAP, and OASAS to host the first statewide recovery rally. (Randall’s Island)

2011:

FOR-NY begins conducting the CCAR Recovery Coach Academy throughout the state and actively engages in discussions regarding future training plans, building a framework for supervision and certification of recovery coaches, and taking over responsibility and authority for Recovery coach trainings in New York State. (As of 2011, FOR-NY had trained more than 300 coaches.)

September: FOR-NY partners with OASAS, ASAP, and NCADD to host another statewide Recovery rally and celebration; this time in Albany.

2012:

February: 3rd Recovery Advocacy Day is held on February 7th. Special guests including Father Peter Young, State Senators Neil Breslin and Tom Duane expressed their support of Recovery to the several hundred advocates in attendance.

FOR-NY partners with LIRA and the Seafield Center to present Faces & Voices of Recovery’s Science of Addiction & Recovery training.

FOR-NY joins the Statewide Behavioral Healthcare Organization work group tasked with informing policymakers in the interest of the Recovery community and helping to align New York with full implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

2013:

4th Recovery Advocacy Day is held on February 5th

September: FOR-NY once again partners with ASAP, NCADD and OASAS on a Recovery Rally in Albany

Begins hosting screenings of “The Anonymous People” at various venues throughout the state.

2014:

5th Recovery Advocacy Day held in Albany on February 4, 2014. An estimated 350 advocates from across the state gather in support of ending discrimination and expanding recovery opportunities. FOR-NY board members share tips on advocacy and “telling your story.” State law makers including Senator Phil Boyle from Long Island Chair of the Alcohol & Drug Committee, Assemblymen Steven Cybrowitz Assembly Chair of Alcohol & Drug Committee and Jeff Aubrion of Queens Felix Ortiz of Brooklyn, Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan and District Attorney, David Soares attend and address the spirited crowd. After the morning rally, the group marches to the Capitol, meets with representatives, and presses for passage of Senate Bill S4623/Assembly A7003 – enacting access to treatment legislation; authorizing addiction treatment professionals to certify the need for addiction treatment, the treatment modality and the duration of treatment.

October – Richard Buckman and Laura Elliott Engel meet with OASAS officials in Albany to seek increased financial support for FOR-NY and are asked to submit a proposal.

2015:

6th Advocacy Day held on February 10th. Recovery advocates from throughout the state met with key legislators to call for increased funding for OASAS to support recovery peer services including recovery community organizations and recovery community centers. As a result, OASAS receives an additional $5 million in funding and $10.5 million is earmarked for 6 new RCCs and $250,000 for 6 youth clubhouses throughout the state.

OASAS renews and increases funding for FOR-NY in a new 5-year contract allowing for the addition of considerable resources including adding a professional staff.

August – Professional staff comes on board and begins hosting Recovery Talks: Community Listening Forums, Our Voices Have Power trainings, Anonymous People Screenings and more in communities across the state.

September – FOR-NY hosts Family Forum in Albany, NY

October – FOR-NY hosts Pre-Conference Institute including “Humanize, Organize, Mobilize” panel discussion at NYS ASAP conference in Saratoga.

November – FOR-NY co-founder, long-time President and dedicated Recovery advocate passes away. Board Vice President Charles Devlin ascends to President of the Board of Directors.

2016:

February – 7th Recovery Advocacy Day is held on February 2, 2016. Several hundred Recovery advocates from around the state travel to Albany to press for greater Recovery supports. FOR-NY CEO, Robert Lindsey and Board members, Richard Buckman & Charlie Devlin address the audience and are joined by Senators George Amedore, Robert G. Ortt, and Terrence Murphy; Councilwoman Linda Rosenthal, Pastor Paul Mead, OASAS Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez, Albany County Sheriff Craig D. Apple, Sr., as well as several hundred individuals and family members in Recovery. FOR-NY premieres its video – “The Power of Community. The Power of Recovery.” Attendees then marched to the State Capital to meet with their legislators.

FOR-NY partners with ASAP to present the NYS Recovery Conference & Celebration held in Troy, New York on August 31st and September 1st.

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*Current and Former FOR-NY Board Members*

* Peter Bacel
* Rob Baum
* Bill Bowman
* Izetta Briggs-Bolling
* Richard Buckman
* Matt Canuteson
* John Cavalatchi
* Betty Currier
* Brenda Davis
* Charlie Devlin
* Paul A. Dunn
* Laura Elliott-Engel
* Pastor Grayling Ferrand
* Deidre Drohan-Forbes
* Orlando Hernandez
* Laurie Lieberman
* Susan LaPorte
* Cortney Lovell
* Sandra Marnell
* Chaku Mathai
* Cindy O’Grady
* Dave Ramsey
* Debra Rhoades
* Keith Stack
* John Tavolacci
* Jeanette Tolson
* Joe Turner
* Ronnie Uss