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*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 disease, efforts to support recovery for individuals and families in communities throughout the state required a major shift in how to promote and support long-term recovery.

The New York State Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) responded in May 2007, with the creation of its Bureau of Recovery Services. 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 identify the types of recovery services and supports needed. The RIT focused on four key areas: Focus Groups, Recovery Centers, Integrating Prevention and Recovery, and a statewide Recovery conference.

Before long, several members of the team identified the need for a statewide Recovery organization that would connect the local recovery groups and create a unified voice to advocate for the Recovery community. A steering committee was soon 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 for a second meeting in June. (This time at NYAPRS headquarters in Albany.) 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
* 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 at the first statewide Recovery conference held on September 14-15, 2009. Almost immediately thereafter, 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 to provide an opportunity for Recovery advocates from throughout the state to bring the needs of the Recovery community to members of the Assembly and the Senate, as well as other government officers.

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 on Randall’s Island to host the first statewide recovery rally.

**2011**

FOR-NY begins conducting Recovery Coaching academies 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.)

February: 3rd Annual Advocacy Day held in February.

September: FOR-NY partners with OASAS, ASAP, and NCADD to host the 2nd statewide Recovery rally and celebration. This time in Albany.

**2012**

February: 4th Annual Recovery Advocacy Day is held on February 7th. Special guests Father Peter Young and State Senators Neil Breslin and Tom Duane; all of whom expressed their support of Recovery to the several hundred advocates in attendance.

FOR-NY selected as the new coordinating body for Recovery Coach training in New York State

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**

5th Annual 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

FOR-NY begins hosting screenings of the groundbreaking documentary,  “The Anonymous People,” at various venues throughout the state.

**2014**

February: 6th Annual Recovery Advocacy Day held in Albany on February 4, 2014. An estimated 350 advocates from across the state gathered in support of ending discrimination and expanding recovery opportunities. FOR-NY board members shared 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 addressed the spirited crowd. After the morning rally group marched to the Capital, met with representatives, and pressed 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.

**2015**

February: 7th Annual 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 received an additional $5 million in funding and $10.5 million was earmarked for the establishment of 6 new RCCs and $250,000 for the establishment of 6 Youth Clubhouses throughout the state.

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

March: Robert J. Lindsey joins FOR-NY in March as the organization’s first Chief Executive Officer

August: FOR-NY professional staff came on board in August and almost immediately began hosting “Recovery Talks: Community Listening Forums,” “Our Voices Have Power” trainings, “Anonymous People” screenings and more in communities across the state.

October: FOR-NY co-founder, long-time President and dedicated Recovery advocate, Laura Elliott Engel passed away in October. Charles Devlin named new President of the Board of Directors.

**2016**

February: 8th Annual Recovery Advocacy Day is held on February 2, 2016. Once again, several hundred Recovery advocates from around the state traveled to Albany to press for greater Recovery supports. FOR-NY CEO, Robert Lindsey and Board members, Richard Buckman & Charlie Devlin addressed the audience and were 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 premiered its video – “The Power of Community. The Power of Recovery.” Attendees then marched to the State Capital to meet with their legislators.

August: FOR-NY partners with NYSASAP to present the NYS Recovery Conference & Celebration — August 31-September 1 in Troy, New York.