



Living the Life You've Dreamed

By Barbara Rose Gaynor, ACC

I'm happy to write and connect with the wonderful alumni today! As a Life Coach in the Progressions Program at Sierra Tucson, I help people create their new lives in recovery. It is so gratifying to be with those who are facing up to their issues and conditions and taking that leap of faith that says, "Doing the difficult parts of recovery will lead me where I want to go."

Where Dreams Come From

For our life to be fulfilling, we must tap into our dreams, our longings, even our fantasies. These are available to us through our strengths, talents, personality, life experiences, and deepest knowing. Deepak Chopra, in *SynchroDestiny*, says that one of the most important goals of any human is to see what they are to do with this one precious life that has been given. That idea is replicated in many traditional teachings. "Know thyself" includes the pull of the heart, even if that means to go live in a different country or to take up horseback riding or to collect butterflies. It is a gift from the universe but handed out in a particular way and is received uniquely through each person's abilities and interests. Some people interpret this to mean what we do for a living and, occasionally, it is. But sometimes it is represented in passions, hobbies, and volunteering, separate from our livelihood. If we have been shamed in the past for being who we are, we might turn away from pursuing an interest when really that sense of curiosity is divinely in tune. Listen to those inner nudges; take them seriously. In the much bigger picture that we can't see, we are very much needed to do our special part, however humble.

What's Really Important

While the world has recently become very accessible and we can learn and travel in many directions, it is reasonable to think that we will only excel and be able to apply ourselves in a handful of ways at any one time. But how do I discern what these few things are that will be the touchstones of my life? One way is to do this exercise: Bring to mind a time period or even a single incident when you were just being yourself and everything was great. All was well in what you were doing but, even better, you felt you were on target, living well, and happy. Once you have your memory in hand, write down what was happening, who you were with, where you were, how old, what actions you took, what you were aware of at the time. Write as much as you can think of about the time. Then, looking at all those aspects, ask yourself: What kind of a person has that kind of experience? For instance, if it was in high school and you kept winning debate medals all junior year, you might realize that this person probably was disciplined to do the research, outgoing or fearless in front of others, willing to try on different sides of an argument, intelligent, and liked to win. Such personality traits or strengths are great clues to the four to five core values that describe what is most important to you as you navigate life. Another way to identify core values is to ask yourself what aspects of life are as natural as breathing for you. Having integrity... family... giving to others? With your core values in hand and listening to the call of your heart, you are on your way!

Changing Behavior

At this point, I can hear some folks saying a huge "but..." Even knowing what I want deep down and knowing what is important to me doesn't mean that those things are showing up in my life. In his book, *The Heart of Change*, John Kotter reminds us that the essence

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S.T.A.R. 24 highlights

"Carrying the Message"



*Save the Date
for
S.T.A.R. 25 . . . October 25-28, 2012*



Alumni Build Bikes for Kids

By Sierra Tucson and Westward Look Resort

Retreat project provides bikes, message of hope for children dealing with grief and loss.

Over 150 Sierra Tucson Alumni from the '80s through 2011 gathered November 3-6, 2011, for S.T.A.R. 24. This weekend passed on a message of hope from one group of survivors to another.

On Friday of the Retreat, 25 stations stocked with bicycle parts and tools lined the lawn at Westward Look Resort. Alumni teamed up and worked together to assemble the bikes, with assistance from a "Bicycle Inspection Team," as needed. As the bicycles were almost ready, a large group of children from Tu Nidito Children and Family Services finished their resort lunch and surprised the alumni by eagerly gathering on the field to receive the new bikes and helmets as a gift from the group.



Alumni Coordinators Tim McLeod and Patty Reyna had coordinated this Retreat project that encouraged everyone to think about how we carry a message of hope and love to the world. While planning the event with Sonia Hammrich, Sales Manager for Westward Look Resort, she suggested this group of children who are perfectly deserving of this gift.



Tu Nidito is a nonprofit organization that provides support for children and families whose lives have been impacted by a serious medical condition or death. Tu Nidito helped Sonia's 9-year-old daughter, Serenity, cope after the death of her best friend, Christina Taylor Green, the youngest victim of the January 8, 2011, shooting in Tucson. Tu Nidito, which means "your little nest," provides children and families with emotional, social, and educational tools to cope with grief and loss and move forward with strength and hope.



Reflecting on the day, Tim McLeod affirmed, "It didn't matter if you were young or old, lives were touched. Everyone gained something from this. One alumnus was able to teach a child to ride his bike. Two children are happy to be able to participate in the Junior El Tour de Tucson because they received



bikes. One child and alumnus found mutual encouragement when they discovered a shared loss of losing of a family member to cancer.

"When we step aside and work together with other people, taking the time to give back and connect, we can make a difference and help others who are hurting," continued Tim. "That does more for us spiritually and emotionally than anything money can buy. Everyone walked away full of gratitude to be a part of this event." ★



Spotlight on Alumni - Rae T.

Recovery is a Celebration



Hi, my name is Rae, and I am an alcoholic.

My surrender came January 23, 2006. I woke up after drinking all day, every day since December 31, 2005, and I just couldn't do it anymore. I was so tired of waking up each day with nothing to look forward to except that almighty bottle of vodka. That bottle defined my mood for the day. If it was half empty, then I was depressed because I would have to somehow get myself together enough to go out and buy some more. If it was full, which was rare indeed, then I was good—until sometime around 5 p.m. and I realized I had to pull myself together and venture out to get another one without getting pulled over. I'd had a DWI once before and I was not prepared to go that route again. But on this Monday morning, I just didn't have the energy to get it together one more time. Drinking that much and hiding it from everyone really took a lot of energy. So I gave up—and I let God take over.

Ten days later, on February 3, 2006, I arrived at the doors of Sierra Tucson. For the first time in years, I felt safe; safe from myself, that is. It was a Friday evening, and I remember thinking I never wanted to leave this safe haven. There were lots of paperwork and tests to complete. I remember not being able to sleep those first few nights, but I could sit and watch the fish in the aquarium in MAS for hours on end. I ended up staying in MAS until the following Thursday, not because of medical issues, but the two lodges were full. There was literally no room at the inn. My new home was room 42B in Crescent Moon, which I shared with Laura B.

The previous Monday I had joined my primary group with Trish Seek as my primary counselor. It was an all-women's group, the only one at ST at that time. I felt very safe. It was there that I started collecting my set of spiritual tools that I continue to use today. One of the first and best tools I was given was "Hang with the Winners." Another great tool I was given early on was to "keep an open mind." When I first got to ST, I was asked if I was willing to try new things. I figured, why not? The old things weren't working anymore.

On March 5, 2006, I came home. My discharge instructions were to attend 90 in 90, find a sponsor, and work the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous with that sponsor. It was also suggested to find a new place to live and get a job. By doing these suggestions, I began to learn how to live life on life's terms and stay sober, one day at a time. You see, I just couldn't go back to the way I was before recovery, so I HAD to do what was suggested.

Over the past 5½ years I have placed myself right in the middle of AA. I heard that I should come all the way into the rooms and sit all the way down. I have served my home group in various areas and have also been of service on the local and district levels. But the most important part of service is working with other alcoholics. Helping other alcoholics achieve sobriety helps keep me sober.

I still have a lot to learn, but as I continue to practice the principals of AA on a daily basis, God is helping me become the person I am meant to be. I'm so blessed to have AA in my life today. It is teaching me how to get along in a world that I am a part of now, not apart from. I have learned that alcohol wasn't my problem at all. My thinking was the problem. Sierra Tucson showed me the way to AA, and I will always be grateful for that. The desert and mountains surrounding Sierra Tucson are Holy and Healing grounds for me. Coming back every year is such a blessing and re-awakening. It's like a huge booster shot of sobriety. Recovery is a celebration of Happy, Joyous, and Free, and I learned this first at Sierra Tucson. If you are new to recovery, I hope you will take the tools and suggestions to heart. They can and will change your life.

Thank you for letting me share, and I hope to see you at an upcoming Retreat.

Rae T.
March 2006 ★

Spotlight on Alumni - Liz P.

My Story of Hope



“I have a problem with alcohol, and I need your help.” Without really knowing it, on that fateful August 2003 day I was taking my First Step of AA. Looking back, I must commend myself for admitting this shameful truth with courage buried under years of loss and pain. I had waged a long, lonely battle with alcohol and drugs, beginning in about 8th grade. The struggle with myself had begun much earlier. At 6 years old when my parents divorced, my brother and I lived with my mom and spent two to three days weekly with my dad and his new family. As the oldest, I internalized early my responsibility for keeping everyone happy. What others thought of me was more important than my feelings or thoughts. Anger was unsafe and scary. Perfectionism was my poison. I was not enough, and I would spend years seeking male attention.

Arriving safely at a Texas rehab program on August 25, 2003, I began my journey. My first 27 days in treatment stopped me from drinking, but I was unable to connect what I was learning with how to change the way I was living my life. I was still impulsive, angry, scared, and impatient. It wasn't until after I was nearly kicked out of the program for inappropriate behavior that I could sense I had much more work to do. From what I heard, Sierra Tucson was the place to do it.

Sierra Tucson gave me the foundation I needed to begin to heal myself. Insights came when I could share my worst fears and memories and work through them in my psychodrama. I studied my family of origin, did grief work, studied forgiveness, and deepened my spirituality. The gym and activities helped me focus on my body in a healthy way. After Family Week, my inspiring, painful, challenging 30 days were winding down. It was time to apply to my life what I had learned in that magical place.

My aftercare program included 90 in 90 at AA and couple's therapy with an Imago therapist. I wanted to work with someone who would continue to guide me in the direction I began at Sierra Tucson. In early 2005, I attended a Radix weekend that was equally amazing

and powerful. I knew I needed more of this type of therapy: body work, psychodrama, meditation, family-of-origin work. A new coed therapy group was soon forming, but it was not my time... yet.

Wanting to stay in touch with alumni and staff, I excitedly attended the 17th and 18th Sierra Tucson Alumni Reunions (S.T.A.R.). Gratefully, the Dallas alumni held local monthly meetings I could also attend. However, I spent my first four sober years in my best codependent way, focusing mostly on my relationship with my husband Bruno, the children, and less on myself. I busied myself with the responsibilities of the children and home, leaving little energy/time for myself. Where is my enjoyment? Who am I? What is my purpose?

At the lowest point in my sober life, I attended the 21st Sierra Tucson Alumni Reunion in August 2008. Throughout the reunion, I began to notice other alumni living amazingly full, joyful lives. They had what I wanted, and I set out to get it!

At my first opportunity, I joined a coed integrated personal growth group with our therapist. In our bi-weekly meetings and bi-monthly weekend workshops, I continued to explore my earliest trauma, character defects, personality strategies, and compensations. I've deepened my connections with loved ones and humankind. Now close to the end of my third consecutive group, I am so excited about what lies ahead for me! I attend more AA meetings than ever and work with my sponsor, volunteer at two recovery programs, and fully embrace my roles as mother, wife, and recovering woman. Healing, I have the ability to be gentle with myself, recognizing that this is a process, not perfection. Not all days are perfect, but I have hope and I know I am ok.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share my story with you and sincerely hope to see you at an upcoming Alumni Retreat!

Liz P. ★

Living the Life You've Dreamed (Continued from page 1)

of change is found in the emotions. "The flow of see-feel-change is more powerful than that of analysis-think-change." By separating a bit from our logical, left-brain thinking and accessing what we know intuitively and adding in particular strengths and talents that we have, we can begin to understand at a soul level that we make a huge difference to those around us when we act out of our highest knowing. What we want is to notice that feeling we have when things are good, not so much to hold on to it (because it will pass), but because it is at the feeling level that we create the next thing.

In 12-Step circles, this is modeled wonderfully by practicing the Steps, by realizing I can have help from unseen forces (yes!) and be supported by sponsors and group members instead of doing everything myself. (What a relief! Can you feel that relief?) Step One is the reminder that "What is, is," as Byron Katie says, "and I don't get a vote." So I notice "what's so," determining what I have the power to do today and what really is out of my hands. This might require tuning into my beliefs and choosing to believe something more helpful if my first beliefs are self-defeating. If I believe "I haven't been able to get the book published, so it never will be published," I won't get far. Better would be, "People publish books every day, and there are even more ways to publish now than ever." Changing negative thinking habits is one of the most powerful behavior changes around! Because this does not usually occur overnight, it must be practiced again and again. My formula is "awareness + practice = competence." We want to be competent at having a life we love and living it powerfully.



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Ongoing Practices

A core tenet of coaching is self-responsibility (read "growing up" or "self-mastery"), and it includes taking care of ourselves extremely well. This means in all areas of our life having the courage and discipline to do what works for us and stop doing what doesn't work. Getting too little sleep routinely doesn't make life flow well. Ever. Sleep deprivation is actually used to torture people. What does it take for you to have restful sleep? Do you know how many hours your body requires? What needs to change in your habits, or do you need to get professional help? When our bodies are under- or over-fed or not properly cared for, it is very hard to be happy, and when we are not happy we have little energy to move forward. Also, are you checking in regularly with your feelings? The simple practice of checking in on the hour with "What am I feeling (mad, sad, glad, afraid), and what do I need?" keeps us in the moment and avoids having things pile up on us. This might lead to asking others for help or going against familiar patterns. Remind yourself you are worth it to have your dreams fulfilled.

And finally, we need to celebrate our successes and accomplishments, even the little ones. The Al-Anon slogan of "progress not perfection" reminds me that all those individual positive decisions I make add up to something good, whole, and true in my life. Touching into gratitude when the next step toward my dream is revealed or accomplished is one way, and another is to be clear enough to recognize milestones and anniversaries as they come along. Celebrate with the people who have contributed to your life. After all, we can't do it alone.





From the Editor By Tim McLeod, Senior Alumni Coordinator

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Hello, my Friend,

All of us here at Sierra Tucson hope you are doing well and 2012 brings with it many gifts from working a program of recovery.

I noticed the other day a mother holding a small child at a family gathering, and everyone wanted to hold the child. This child was going to have nothing of it. Every time someone came up to take him out of his mother's arms, he kicked, screamed, and held on to his mother's neck like there was no tomorrow. As I watched this all taking place, I wondered why we don't do the same in recovery. When the long dark arms of depression, substance abuse, bingeing, or acting out are attempting to pull you from your recovery, why not put up a fight? Why not get angry and yell, "NO!" Immediately call your support network and rat out what is trying to remove you from the path of recovery, what is trying to take you away from your Higher Power's arms, what is trying to rob you of your serenity, what is trying to manipulate you into turning back to old behaviors. No one at school liked hanging out with a tattletale. The behaviors you've struggled with are the same way. If you continue telling on them, they will go somewhere else. So the next time you see a child clinging to a parent, stop and ask yourself, "Am I holding on to my recovery just as strong?"

Last November many alumni experienced the annual Alumni Retreat, as seen by the photos in the previous pages. If you have never experienced this four-day event, you're missing out. I emailed an anonymous survey asking for feedback about the Retreat, and below are two responses to this question: "What was something that stood out for you or something that you learned that you could apply to your own recovery from this year's Retreat?"

"My life is so much better now than it was when I was inpatient a year ago, and I attended thinking I'd get some shoring up for the occasional down times that come along. Instead, what I got was a good look inside myself that there is still so much hurt and anger there, and though the external is looking better, I still have a whole lot of work to do internally. I am grateful for this, as I have never wanted to live behind false fronts. Discovering this in a supportive community of people who readily admit their own faults makes it SO much easier."

"Staff did an excellent job threading the conference theme throughout the weekend events. Having planned conferences myself, I know that this can be a challenge! I learned many things that will be helpful. Connecting with others who had been in my

'graduating class' was more meaningful than I realized it would be. I was struck by how open everyone was in terms of sharing their experiences, both in one-on-one conversations and in the sessions. That made me all the more comfortable sharing mine."

The 2012 Alumni Retreat will be held on October 25-28, 2012. Updated information on the Retreat can be found at www.SierraTucson.com. We hope you will plan to attend.

I want to thank Barbara Rose Gaynor for her writing. So true, we all can live the life we've dreamed, and having individuals like a life coach on your team will only enhance the process. I also want to thank Liz and Rae for sharing their stories full of experience, strength, and hope.

Patty's list of alumni contacts from around the world continues to grow. If you want to be a part of this list, are searching for a contact in your area, or wonder how to start an Alumni Support Group, please contact Patty at PREyna@SierraTucson.com. If you're an alum and you want to be connected to our University of Sierra Tucson private Facebook page, search Facebook for "PREyna@SierraTucson.com." Then "Friend" her and let her know you want to be a part of this group.


We have made available two additional benches for purchase that will be placed by the labyrinth, and we have plenty of space for many more pavestones. If you are looking to give your loved one or alumni friend something to celebrate his/her recovery, this might be the perfect gift. All information can be found at www.SierraTucsonBricks.com.

Evening/Weekend Therapist Wayne Zespy would love to hear from you if you would like to come to Sierra Tucson on a Saturday evening and share your experience, strength, and hope with the patient community. You can reach Wayne at LZespy@SierraTucson.com.

Sierra Tucson continues efforts to support the environment by using less paper. If you are receiving the Alumni eNews "Beyond the Miracle" and would like to be removed from our postal mailings, please contact me. To sign up for the bi-weekly alumni email, visit www.SierraTucson.com, "Alumni" tab, then "Newsletters."

In closing, Patty and I look forward to connecting with you at an Alumni Support Group, workshop, or the amazing Alumni Retreat. Most of all, remember you're never alone, you are loved, and we support you!

Huge blessings,


Tim McLeod

■ *"Our mission is simple: encourage the struggling, celebrate the miracles, and always bring the love."* ■



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Recipe by Chef Miciah Beard

"You can enjoy this moist, flavorful Pumpkin Bread any time of day and any time of year, but it seems especially comforting and delicious during the colder months."

~Chef Miciah



Pumpkin Bread

Ingredients:

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 3 cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup butter, really soft, half melted really
- 3 large eggs
- 1 16-oz can of pure pumpkin
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Yields 2 loaves, 10 servings per loaf.

One serving = 1 Starch, 1 Fat

Procedure:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and spray two medium loaf pans with nonstick cooking spray.
2. In a medium bowl, mix the flour, spices, salt, baking soda, and baking powder and set aside.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer with the wire whisk attached, dump in the sugar. Put the butter in a microwave for about 30 seconds, so it is half melted. Dump it into the sugar. Add the eggs. Cream these three ingredients together on medium speed for about 2 minutes or until fluffy. Add the pumpkin and combine well.
4. In three batches, add the dry ingredients and mix gently until each batch is just incorporated. Scrape the sides between each batch.
5. Pour half of the batter into one of the prepared pans. Fold the pecans into the remaining batter and then pour into the other prepared pan (if you wish to add nuts to one loaf). Bake side-by-side for about one hour or until an inserted knife comes out clean and the top is golden.