

# RECOVERING OUT LOUD

The newsletter of Turning Point Bennington

Issue No. 7 - May 2025 - Hope Starts Here

Welcome to Recovering Out Loud.  
We bring you news and views from our recovery community in every issue. Enjoy!



## Turning Point Transforms Gage Street Property into Eight Bedroom Recovery House

At 61, the man had lived in Brattleboro for most of his life. Every morning, he'd head across the river to neighboring New Hampshire where he'd buy a pack of cigarettes and a 30-can carton of Budwiser.

"I did that for about 35 years," says Brian, who has asked us not to use his full name.

"I've spent my whole life surviving. Now I want to learn how to live, not just survive."

Brian was on the path to recovery in Brattleboro, but worried that staying in the city where he'd struggled for so long would test his sobriety in ways he couldn't handle.

"I knew that I needed to get out of Brattleboro to get straight. Turning Point understood that and helped make it happen."

Brian is now one of six men currently living at the Paradise Recovery House at 612 Gage Street in Bennington. The recovery house, which can house up to eight, provides medium-term support and resources for residents suffering from alcohol and substance use disorder. It serves as a halfway point between treatment facilities and the men living on their own.

Ralph Bennett, TPC Director of Recovery Housing and Corrections, explains that people coming out of treatment programs often are not yet ready to jump back into their old lives. "It often doesn't end well," he says, noting that Paradise House gives them a chance to readjust and gain strength in their recovery, all with guardrails

firmly in place.

Paradise House has a substance-free policy, which includes marijuana. Residents are asked to sign a contract agreeing to follow the house rules or risk expulsion. They can remain at Paradise from 3 months to a year and, during that time, are expected to hold a job. A live-in house manager is on hand to supervise. For now, Ralph has taken up that role until TPCB announces the result of its hiring process.

The two-story recovery house is split between two units. At the front is a four bedroom, two-and-a-half bathroom space with a roomy kitchen and a large comfortable living room. The back unit is similarly equipped, but also houses the manager's suite with its own private entrance and separate kitchen.

"Bringing men into the house, we look to match life experience. In the front house we are looking for people who have been sober longer, and have done well with our programs," says Tee Martin, a TPCB Recovery Coach and volunteer at Paradise House.

"So far, it's worked wonderfully," he adds, noting that building trust among residents in the house is key. "The validation that comes from that is huge."

After three arduous years getting the project approved and built, paid for in part by a \$500,000 grant from the Vermont Community Development Program, Ralph is determined to see Paradise House succeed.

"We're doing everything we can to make that happen," he says, smiling as he glances at the newly mulched garden below the front porch. "It's more than a dream now."

For Brian, part of his dream has already come true. "It's the nicest place I've ever lived in," he says, looking up from his place on a cozy oversized armchair, the afternoon sun flooding the room with light.

Actor **Danny Trejo** is celebrating 57 years of being clean and sober. *"I honestly believe that sobriety and being clean depends on your support system. You've got this system of people around you that want you to stay clean and sober... who will tell you when you have a craving, 'Hey, wait a minute. ... Let's go to a meeting.'*

-Danny Trejo



**Tough Talk in an Idyllic Setting:  
TPCB Executive Director  
Speaks at Williams**

# College



In the spring sunshine, Williams College with its lush campus dotted with centuries-old brick buildings, can feel like a protected bubble in a turbulent world. The image isn't lost on Margae Diamond, the director of Turning Point Center of Bennington (TPCB). But she knows first hand that even in the safest havens, drug and alcohol abuse are subjects that demand attention.

Margae is at Williams speaking to a class of public health students, eager to hear a her views on the vicious cycle of substance abuse, and its impact on community. She begins her lecture with a bold claim:

"Almost everything we know about addiction is wrong ... Up until recently addiction was viewed as a moral failing. That is finally beginning to change," she says, looking around at the students gathered in a semi-circle of desks, all 20 of them listening intently.

"Is it a choice to do drugs? I know I left the choice arena very quickly. Choice became need, then desperation," she says, referencing her own battle with substance abuse. Addiction, she explains, is now recognized as a chronic brain disease where an initial surge of artificially produced endorphins is followed by a harsh comedown and the compulsion to replenish the dopamine deficit that leaves the user feeling sick, even suicidal.

"We know — by that I mean substance abusers — that it's crazy to repeat our behavior. But drugs and alcohol takes the pre-frontal cortex off line, the part of your brain that rules impulse control. And in that moment when the frontal cortex comes back on line and we are filled with anxiety and shame, we reach for substances to fight it and the cycle starts all over again," Margae adds.

The Turning Point Director offers a quick summary of how Turning Point operates, the recovery center's mission and the importance of peer-led coaching in recovery. At Turning Point, she stresses, we know that every person needs to find their own path to recovery. Part of the process is to "tease out" the co-occurring conditions that so often accompany addiction, including mental illness, ADHD, and social anxiety.

"No one has worked out the code of how much of addiction is genetic and how much is circumstantial. Probably, it's a mix of both," she adds. "People come to us in all manner of situations. Some start drinking or taking drugs at 11 because it's a family problem and a familiar path. Others are triggered by trauma or even social isolation."

Turning to a student sitting next to her, she says you and I most likely have a very different reaction to drinking alcohol and taking drugs. I've learned the hard way that once I start, I don't stop, while for you it's probably not something you have to

worry about."

Her no-holes-barred honesty appeals to the students, who recognize this is a person who not only works in the field of drug and alcohol abuse, but someone who has experienced the trauma of addiction and the struggle of recovery.

"I've found over the years that I've had to change my approach in talking to college kids," Marge says later. "If I'm less formal and offer more real-life stories it grabs their attention and gets them really thinking about the topic."

The impact is obvious. Matt, a sophomore, is considering public health as his academic concentration.

"I was very interested in what the [TPCB] Director had to say about Turning Point's work ...where her staff finds hope, how they meet the clients at their own level," he says. "The fact that the stigma around addiction is shifting is very encouraging and I appreciated hearing that, especially since the political environment in Washington is going the opposite direction."

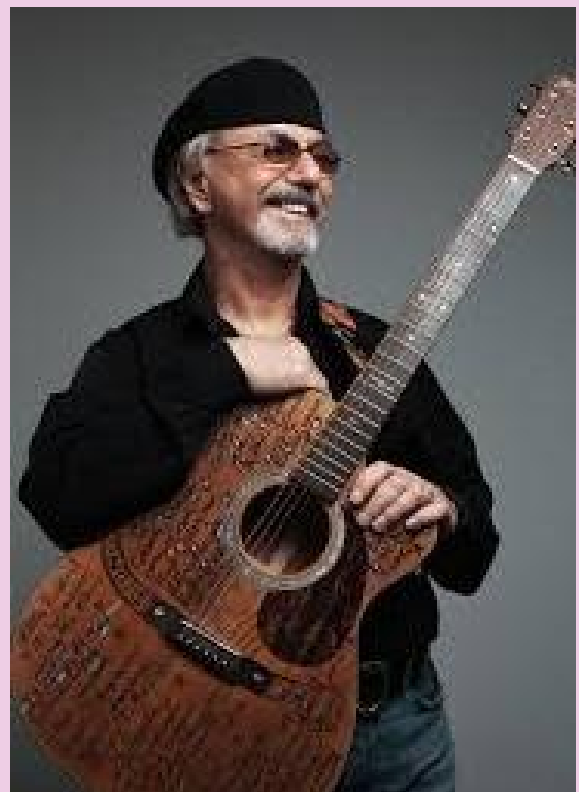
Adds Mairi, another sophomore: "We've obviously done a lot of reading on the subject of addiction, but hearing from someone who has gone through it and turned her life around to help those who struggle was very impactful ... Hearing real-life examples of her work in an area like Bennington was particularly interesting. It actually gave me hope. "

*Homework for this class included a Ted Talk of Johann Hari that can be found on You Tube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PY9DcIMGxMs&t=624s>*

**Dion's** 1961 rock and roll hit, "Runaround Sue," was written about his girlfriend, a Vermonter named Susan Butterfield. When they married, Dion was addicted to heroin and alcohol. In 1968 Susan told him about a 12-step group.

*"I went to a meeting, and it changed my life, and here I am. She was right. There's a place that knows the answer and they have the key. And the door opens from the inside, it doesn't open from the outside. I'm clean and sober 57 years this month thank God! One big reason is that I can still remember the drinking days I sing about in this song, "Cryin' Shame"*

**Listen to "Cryin'  
Shame"**

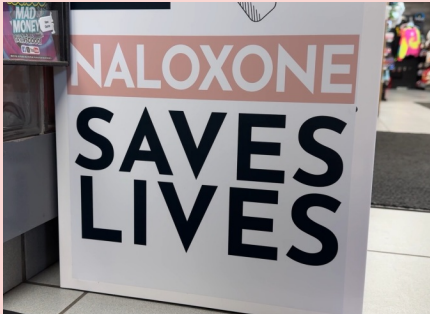


Turning Point Recovery Coach **Heidi Moore** was quoted in a recent Seven Days article about alcohol abuse. She talks about one of her cherished clients who recently lost her battle with AUD. Click the link



to read the full Seven Days article.

**Read the Full Article  
Here**



## And now the bad news...

We spotted a small item in the New York Times last month that we judged worth reporting: The Trump administration plans to axe a \$56 million annual grant program that distributes the opioid overdose reversal medication known as Narcan (Naloxone). The proposal would also terminate training for emergency responders in communities across the country who help administer the medication.

According to the Times, which cites a draft of the administration's budget proposal, the Trump White House plans to make drastic cuts at the Department of Health and Human Services, including numerous addiction prevention and treatment programs.

Last year, recipients of the naloxone grants, including cities, tribes and nonprofit groups, trained 66,000 police officers, fire fighters and emergency medical responders, and distributed over 282,500 naloxone kits, according to the article. Public health experts cite Narcan as an important part of the drop in opioid-related deaths.

In related news, on May 14 the government reported overdose deaths in the United States fell by nearly 30,000 last year. Addiction specialists say that greater access to Narcan played a significant role in the decline on overdose deaths.

If you are worried about the future of prevention and treatment programs, now is the time to consider a donation to Turning Point.

Go To: <https://givebutter.com/SupportTPCBennington>

You can also contact your Congressperson or Senator to voice your views on upcoming budget legislation. Here are numbers for the VT delegation:

**Congresswoman Becca Balint 202-225-4115**

**Senator Bernie Sanders 202-224-5141**

**Senator Peter Welch 202-224-4242**



# THANK YOU

Thank you to all of our generous donors.

Your contributions make a significant difference in our clients' lives and in our community.

*"I had to be willing to lift the veil off the shame and say, 'I'm addicted, I can't do this alone, I don't want to do this alone, I don't feel comfortable, can you help me?' I needed help from other people, so that's the way I stay sober."*

**-Amber Valletta, actress and model**



**Turning Point Recovery Center of Bennington is proud to announce SoberFest returns in 2025 to our community.**

Saturday, September 20  
Main Street/Downtown Bennington

All Are Welcome!  
*Donations appreciated but not expected*  
Food Trucks, Vendors, Family Fun, Music,  
Splash Pad

**Musical Acts to include:**

Live Music at 1PM • Ali & Adam  
Mission City singers • Lee Biddle  
John Dillon • Shannon Roy Band  
Chad Hollister Band • TPC Kids, and more!

If you or your organization wish to be a sponsor, view our partner donor letter, sponsorship levels, and registration form below.

**Partner Donor  
Letter**

Sponsorship Levels

Vendor and Sponsor  
Registration

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## TPC Bennington Groups at a Glance

**"We Stood at the Turning Point" Group:** An open AA meeting that any member of the community may attend.

*[Meets at Turning Point Center, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from Noon to 1:00 pm]*

**Mindful Monday Meditation:** Learn how to use meditation to guide your path to recovery from addictions, including alcohol and substances. All are welcome!

*[Meets at Turning Point Center, Monday 6:00-7:00 pm]*

**Writers for Recovery Workshop:** Discover the power of the written word to process trauma, build self-esteem, and support healthy, sustained recovery.

*[Meets at Turning Point Center. Tuesday 4:00-5:30 pm]*

**Zen Family Wellness:** If you're in recovery, you are invited to enjoy quality family time with mindfulness games, crafts, and activities for people of all ages.

*[Meets at Turning Point Center. Tuesday 4:00-5:00 pm]*

**Breathwork and Focus for Anxiety Control:** Learn breathing techniques that let your body slow down and find the balance between what you're feeling, thinking, and actually experiencing.

*[Meets at Turning Point Center, Wednesday 3:30-4:00 pm]*

**Exploring Yoga Styles:** Explore the subtleties of each style, and learn how regular practice can help improve your strength, flexibility, balance and overall well-being.

*[Meets at Turning Point Center, Wednesday 4:00-5:00 pm]*

**Art Therapy:** Learn how to use art to guide your path to sustained recovery from addictions, including alcohol and substances. All are welcome!

*[Meets at Turning Point Center, every third Thursday of the month, 2:00-3:30 pm]*

**Recovery Community Dinner:** An expertly prepared dinner, free to all members of the community.

*[Held at First Baptist Church, 601 Main Street, every 3rd Thursday of the month, 5:00-6:30pm]*

**Women's Group: Unbreakable Boundaries:** You are in charge of your life, and you get to decide how to live it. All recovery paths are respected and welcome.

*[Meets at First Baptist Church, 601 Main Street, Friday 1:00-2:30 pm]*

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