

Recovering Out Loud

The newsletter of Turning Point Bennington

Issue No. 6 - March 2025 - Hope Starts Here

Welcome to Recovering Out Loud, the newsletter of Turning Point Bennington. We bring you news and views from our recovery community in every issue. Enjoy!



Spotlight: TPCB Board President Brings Passion and Purpose to the Job

Most of us shy away from emergency planning, preferring to cross our fingers and gamble disaster won't strike. But thinking strategically about the when, where and how of a potential catastrophe is Diana Myrvang's life's mission.

Dee, as she is known, is the State of Vermont's Emergency Preparedness Manager and, for just over a year, a member of the Board of Directors for Turning Point Center of Bennington (TPCB). Radiating a passion for what she does and a kinetic energy for getting it done, Dee says she is at her best on the job when engaging with community organizations and the public.

"Helping folks think about what you do in emergencies, how you respond in emergencies. A lot of that is strategic planning, but with a different lens," she says.

"I joined the Turning Point Board and quickly became the secretary. If I'm going to be on the Board I like to be really engaged," she adds fervently. "I like to say I'm in the clouds trying to look down at the organization I am volunteering with. I like to know the history, but I really like to know, do we have 3 to 5 year plan? ... How do you keep an organization viable and healthy from a financial perspective?"

Dee grew up in Vermont and came home to the state in 2015 after four decades on the West Coast and abroad. She currently lives in Manchester with her husband and their youngest of her three sons.

What follows is an interview with her about her role on the Turning Point Center Board of Directors. The interview has been edited for brevity.



"I would say that after 35 years of sobriety, as anyone in recovery knows, you're never recovered. It's a daily practice to take inventory of how you're behaving and what faults are creeping up in personality quirks. We're all human, we're all dealing with an unprecedented amount of stress and anxiety, so it's a constant surveillance. You have to pay attention to your goals and your health and take care of yourself."

-Bonnie Raitt



Bennington and Turning Point Become Stronger Community Partners

Bennington and Turning Point are becoming stronger community partners, jointly focused on helping individuals in recovery.

On March 4, voters embraced Turning Point Center's vital role in the community by approving a measure directing the Town of Bennington to designate \$15,000 from its FY 2026 General Fund to the recovery center.

In another show of support, the town has welcomed the new Paradise Recovery House opening this Spring, supported and staffed by Turning Point Center of Bennington (TPCB).

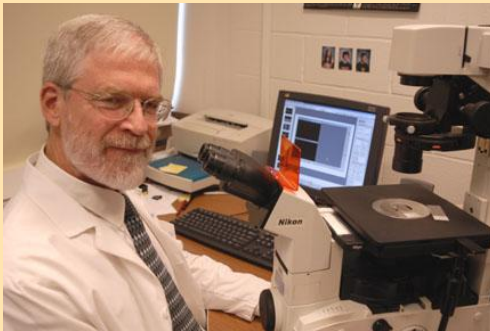
Meanwhile, after its notable success last year, SoberFest will be bigger and better in

2025 thanks to help from Bennington. Town officials are now in discussion with TPCB to move the event downtown, attracting bigger crowds and more vendors.

Thanks Bennington, from all of us at TPCB!

*"What makes the desert beautiful is
that somewhere it hides a well."*

— Antoine de Saint-Exupery



New SUD Medical Database to Help Vermont Policy Makers Make More Informed Decisions

Dr. Daniel N. Krag is a surgical oncologist at the University of Vermont Medical Center and an SD Ireland professor of surgery at the Larner College of Medicine. He and his team are working to build a database of opioid-related research that can help policy makers make more informed decisions.

"I'm a cancer surgeon, and I've dedicated 35 years to Vermonters to make better treatments for cancer patients. But my oldest son, a graduate of UVM, developed this awful disease that we call Opioid Use Disorder [SUD]. He lost to the disease in May of 2020, and we had to bury our son. It doesn't matter whether it's cancer or it's opioid disease. When it hits a family, you do everything you can. Our son should not have died, and we wanted to make sure that this doesn't happen to any other family.

"Opioid disease [SUD] is just that; it's a disease, and diseases get studied. How much information is out there? There are 43,000 published manuscripts, and what we've done is condense that information so much more of it can be used. Imagine seeing all at once what hundreds of doctors and researchers have seen! In the simplest terms. This project is a knowledge broker for opioid disease.

"My team tested this knowledge base with Vermont policymakers—senators, representatives, and select board members. When they used our opioid knowledge base, policymakers were 3-1/2 times more able to answer [information] searches correctly than using any other source. [And] they had increased levels of confidence and had higher levels of satisfaction.

"Opioid disease is very complex, but so are other diseases like breast cancer, and 30 years ago there really wasn't much of an organized approach to manage it. What I and my team have done is taken whatever tools we have available and applied them, so that nobody else's children die."

"I've been around substance abuse since the day I

was born. Addiction is a cruel disease and the medical community, together with the government, should offer help to all of those who need it."

-Flea of the Red Hot Chili Peppers



TPCB's New Programs Manager Can't Resist a Challenge

Gary Dennis loves a challenge. So he explained, teeth chattering, to an elderly woman walking her dog at Lake Equinox last month. In the coldest January in three decades, Gary had just taken a dip in the lake's icy depths.

His latest and more significant challenge is stepping in as Turning Point Center of Bennington's Programs Manager. His job, Gary says, will focus on outreach. TPCB outreach coaches meet folks at their homes, in shelters, in temporary residences, hospital emergency rooms and community gathering places in an effort to bring recovery connections directly those suffering from substance abuse disorder.

"Our coaches are working to create trust and link people to services that can help," Gary says. "I'm hoping to expand our outreach program north into the county, into Manchester and Dorset."

Gary, who was born on New Jersey's shoreline, came to Vermont in 1996 by way of Lyndon College in northern part of the state.

"Vermont, as many people know, is way cooler than New Jersey," he says with a laugh. "It's also a lot less hectic and crazy and more my speed, so I stayed here."

An avid swimmer and triathlon competitor, Gary has coached sport in local schools and created sport programs for young athletes. He has always been an active member of whatever community he's found himself, a quality Gary attributes to his mother's example.

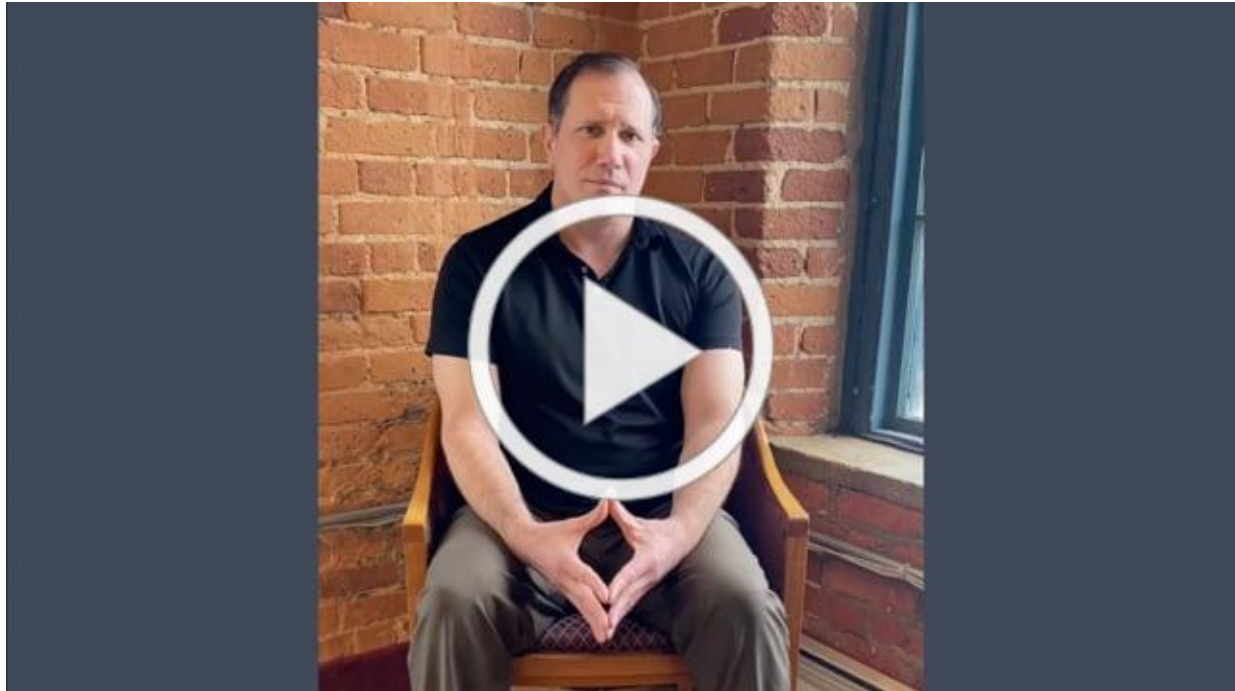
And while his position at TPCB veers far from his former job titles, the recovery journey is a path he knows well.

"Having lost members of my own family to substance abuse and having fought that particular battle myself — I am now 16 years sober — I know what it's like to struggle with substance abuse."

"For me the most challenging aspect of the job is recognizing the number of opportunities we have to make a difference, and at the same time not feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work. It's a matter of picking and choosing the battles to fight."

For a long time, Gary adds quietly, he has wanted to work in the recovery field. He has wanted to help.

"I'm very aware that I'm new to the field and of the steep learning curve I face. I'm up to the challenge," he adds determinedly.



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]

Women's All-Recovery Group: 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 The Coffee Bar, 109 South Street, Tuesday 4:00-5:00 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 5:00-6:00 pm]

Breathwork and Focus for Anxiety Control: Learn breathing techniques that let your body slow down and find the balance between what your 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, 3:00-4:30 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]

ACoA - The Body, Mind and Spirit Group: Share in a safe, nonjudgmental environment to identify and heal core trauma, experience freedom from shame and abandonment, and become your own loving parent.

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

DONATE

Turning Point Center of Bennington
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