

# Be Well for Life

SPECIAL EDITION • ADDICTION & RECOVERY SERVICES



Charles and his fiancée ready to begin a new life together.

## Charlie's Story of Courage and Hope Cleansing the Doors of Perception

**Charles Parsons**  
Program Participant

I grew up right down the street from the high school where I played as a kid. I met a bunch of high school kids who hung out there. We'd play ball, talk about hockey and baseball, they were my friends. It was my 9th birthday and they decided to get me stoned. It was love the first time. Soon after I had my first drink which I did not like, but I continued to fit in.

At about 12, while still with those kids, I was introduced to Heroin. I first snorted it and later learned to use the needle, and from that point it was heroin and whatever else was put in front of me. At 16 I dropped out of high school and started working full time as a printer, the first of many jobs. I tried to get off dope, but I had no luck. I substituted coke for dope and that is when I really lost it.

I lost all of what I had overnight, my house, my cars and my girl, all of it. No sleep for days till the coke ran out and the dope overpowered it. I wound up selling coke to pay for my dope habit and work a job. Fast forward almost a year, when two detectives come to the door and busted me.

This is the day that started me on the path that I walk today.

I only did 2 weeks in county and was out on bail back to doing the same stuff I was doing. I managed to escape a major prison sentence. Probation started, my drug habits changed and I stopped coke, pot, alcohol, pretty much everything except for Heroin. I don't know how or why but I just had enough. I reported to my probation officer "I'm addicted to Heroin and I need help". He sent me to detox. I reported everyday 5 days a week 6 hours a day. I had to quit my job and go on welfare to survive. They also put me on methadone.

You need to be removed from the drug for a certain amount of time before you can work on the real problem, yourself. This is a lesson I learned the hard way. While I was in long term treatment I did very well. I ran the whole show. It took me about 6 months to detox off the methadone. I didn't complete program and it took me a year to get my head right. I lasted a month and then I was back to Heroin. I got arrested and received a resentence of 2 years plus 2 years post release supervision.

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER  
FROM WELLIFE NETWORK

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SERVICES

Prison was the best decision I had made in a long time. I began seriously working on myself and figuring out what makes me do the things I do. I discovered some form of spirituality. I found real peace, yes, real peace. When I left prison I went to WellLife Network Center to do outpatient. They helped me reintegrate into society. And now here I am today, 10 months out of prison, 2 years and 3 months clean, engaged to be married to a wonderful woman and getting ready to go to college to get a degree in psychology and chemical dependence. My parting words are to those trying, just keep trying, you will get it right. Just don't give up.

I recall the words of William Henry Blake.  
***"When the doors of perception are cleansed, things will appear as they truly are, infinite and holy, whereas now they appear finite and corrupt."***

William Henry Blake

I think that it is our job as humans to somehow find a way to cleanse those doors. ■

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BE WELL FOR LIFE

## Every Month is A Time for Recovery

## WellLife Network Increases Awareness of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Recovery

As part of its ongoing mission, WellLife Network increases community awareness of mental health and substance abuse disorders. For the past 50 years the WellLife Network has led efforts to provide addiction recovery services, along with prevention seminars. Thousands of individuals coping with addiction, alcohol and other forms of substance abuse and their family members have been helped.

### A Progressive and Pervasive Disease

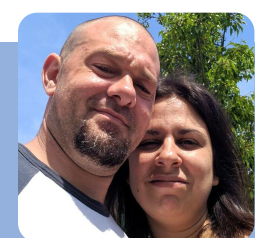
WellLife Network understands addiction as a progressive and pervasive disease that can affect every aspect of a person's life. We offer person-centered treatment services to support individuals and/or their significant others on their path to recovery and wellness.



**2** WellLife Network Leads the Way for Drug Prevention on L.I.



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## Helping Families Across Long Island

We use clinical and medication supported modalities offered at a reasonable cost. At WellLife Network, we believe **recovery is attainable, sustainable and maintainable.**

### Our Approach

The Addiction & Recovery Services (ARS) Department is dedicated to the prevention, education and treatment of substance use disorders. Our primary focus is arresting the symptoms of the disease of addiction/substance use disorder through treatment of all those affected by it through our three outpatient clinics, as well as community awareness through education. Our outreach programs and services respond to the changing needs of the community. Outreach is offered throughout Suffolk County.

Our clinical programs are offered in three locations: Wyandanch, Smithtown and Huntington. The programs are licensed by the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).

### School & Community-Based Programs

Social Workers provide individual/group counseling in certain school districts along with parent engagement and education/consultation to school personnel. WellLife Network offers programs which emphasize prevention, intervention and education. Our chemical dependency prevention program uses evidenced-based practices provided through classroom education, workshops, and group discussions, including Narcan training.

**If you or a loved one needs help  
Call: 631.920.8000 or 866.727.WELL**

# Prevention

## WellLife Network Leads the Way for Drug Prevention Services on Long Island

**Keith Scott**  
Prevention Coordinator

Long Island is in a crisis – Suffolk County is currently leading the state in overdose deaths with 337 during a recent 60-month period. Heroin was involved in 637 drug-related deaths statewide in 2013 versus 242 in 2009, a 163 percent increase. Prescription opioid deaths rose from 735 in 2009 to 952 statewide in 2013, a 30 percent increase.

### Alarming Rise In Overdoses

Due to these alarming numbers, as the Director of Opioid Overdose Prevention Services at WellLife Network, I have made it my mission to make training to use the lifesaving opioid overdose antidote, Narcan, readily available.

Since coming onboard in October 2014, the prevention department has been able to hand out 678 kits and train some 1,848 families, first-responders, therapists, and community members in the administration of Narcan. Suffolk also reported the highest number of Narcan administrations in the state during 2015, with 234 being reported. One of the most poignant moments I experienced was a mother of an addict (who had just completed Narcan training), revealing that “... **because of you I will sleep better tonight knowing I have Narcan in my house.**”



WellLife Network's Keith Scott developed a highly successful group training program on "The Dangers of Drugs" for students at the Wyandanch Elementary School.

Working in prevention has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my professional life. The prevention department has been able to assist some 2,500 lives this past year. Our programs enable me and my staff to be proactive in our approach to this menacing issue.

### Detering Adolescents from Experimenting with Drugs

Our number one goal is to deter adolescents from experimenting with drugs and alcohol. The evidence-based program that we use, **Too Good for Drugs**, is proven to decrease the impulse to smoke cigarettes by 33%, decrease intentions to drink alcohol by 38%, and decrease intentions to smoke marijuana by 25%.

We also teach children how to deal with stress and encourage the youth to develop a healthy self-esteem in a safe, welcoming, environment. This dual approach is important when fighting the opioid epidemic facing our region. ■



### On the Home Front

**Sergeant Raymond Vutrano**  
Outreach Specialist

I am a combat Marine veteran who served in Afghanistan. I was engaged in over 50 fire fights with the Taliban, fighting the enemy with courage and tenacity. It was these daily fights that caused many Marines to come back home with new problems. We were fighting an enemy that was visible, but when we returned home I watched as the men fought another battle – PTSD and substance abuse issues.

I came to realize that many Vets were lacking basic coping skills that are ingrained with us at a young age. This is what ignited my passion for working in the prevention field. I want to be able to teach adolescents the skills necessary to deal with a variety of difficult emotions, instead of using substances to cope.



## A Voice of Recovery and Inspiration

“ My name is Fred\* and I’m an alcoholic and an addict. I have struggled with alcohol and drugs my whole life. I’ve been in jail, institutions and I almost died – then I found WellLife Network. ”

I tried to get sober many times in the past. I always failed. A few years ago I got my second DWI (driving while intoxicated) in 6 months. I was handcuffed to a hospital bed and near death again. A rehab facility was suggested and I took it. I told the counselor that 28 days would not help me. I needed to do something different. I went away for eight months.

They told me I was a man worthy of love and respect. I started working on me because that was the problem – me! I did all the work suggested. I wanted to live and stop hurting people. I left rehab – took the suggestion of an outpatient at WellLife

Network, and went to Alcoholics Anonymous. They told me I needed to continue to work on a daily basis. I pray to my higher power daily – I talk to other addicts, and it works for me! Thank you WellLife Network for helping me to live again.

Fred’s Counselor at WellLife Network writes. “When I first met Fred he was somewhat motivated for change but he didn’t know what to do. He was attending Alcoholics Anonymous, (A.A.) but with little involvement. Fred is an active addict, with a long history of alcohol abuse which led to an alcohol blackout as he walked into ongoing traffic. The injuries he sustained

caused a permanent disability. With the intervention of WellLife Network programs, Fred is now sober for almost three years. He continues to attend treatment and is on probation for the two DWIs he received prior to inpatient treatment. He now recognizes the consequence of his past behavior. Fred has shed weight and ‘sponsors’ younger people in the program of A.A. He is proud of his recovery and reports he will continue to follow the program and encourage others to do the same.” ■

\*Name and identifying details have been changed to protect the individual’s privacy.