



SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOL, OTHER DRUGS & YOUTH SERVICES

March 18, 2024 at 4:00 PM

Aldermanic Chambers, City Hall (3rd Floor)

Members: Aldermen Thomas, Barry, Vincent, Kantor, O'Neil

AGENDA

The Chairman calls the meeting to order.

The Clerk calls the roll.

1. Discussion with representatives from Freedom Movement NH.
2. Discussion with Randy Stevens regarding his journey through recovery.

If there is no further business, a motion is in order to adjourn.



Freedom Movement New Hampshire is a faith-based sober living environment that takes a whole person approach to liberation from addiction.

Mission Statement:

The mission of Freedom Movement New Hampshire is to provide transitional housing with peer support and connections to wrap-around services in order to liberate and restore individuals experiencing homelessness and recovering from addiction in the Greater Manchester area.

Vision Statement:

Our vision at FMNH is that by providing this faith- and research- based, whole-person approach to liberation from addiction, we are able to equip individuals experiencing transition with the extra time and resources needed to experience true freedom from homelessness and addiction and live recovered, healed, and restored lives.

- FMNH is a NH Charitable Trust.
- All of the people involved are volunteers.
- Currently we only provide sober living for men.
- Men who stay with us are required to have participated in a minimum of 30 days in recovery prior to coming to us.
- FMNH uses a 12-step approach to recovery.
- FMNH has a shepherding team that shares their Christian faith with the men in the house
 - Bible study is offered but participation is voluntary.
- All men are required to attend meetings that support their sobriety.
- All men are required to work or, if unable to work, to volunteer in the community.
- Since many of the men coming to us are coming straight from a 30 or 60 day program we provide a two week housing scholarship while they get on their feet.
 - We are able to do so only through fundraising.
- Our goal is to stop the cycle of addiction that puts these men back on the streets.
- By being involved in their day-to-day lives and building relationships with the men we have seen success in getting individuals help when we saw they were beginning to slide.
- We strive to provide men the tools they need to be on a steadfast, successful path when they leave our house.
- We are truly a movement. We are constantly re-evaluating what we do and make changes to accommodate the individual while maintaining the safety of the group.
- We have built-out our network and work closely with recovery organizations, other sober living homes, and a faith-based organizations.
- We understand that we will not always be their last stop before securing permanent housing and healthy lives. Sometimes we will be the first house, sometimes the 3rd, and sometimes we will lose them back to the streets. But our hope is that we plant the seeds of success in every life we touch.

OUR VISION

Our vision at FMNH is to provide safe, transitional housing that leverages the existing supports and services in the city of Manchester while creating a unique, faith-filled healing environment that provides a whole person approach to life at FMNH and beyond.



Our faith-based recovery home provides residents with the time and support they need to delve deeper into their recovery with a safe sober place to grow.



Safe Area

OUR PROGRAM



12 Step Approach

FMNH supports a 12 Step Approach to Recovery with Peer Support, In-House and Community 12 Step Meetings.



Safe, Sober Living in the Heart of Manchester.



Freedom Movement New Hampshire offers a whole person approach to liberation from addiction.

Donate now:



157 Amory St
Manchester, NH 03102
603-945-7775

freedommovementnh@gmail.com

www.freedommovementnh.wixsite.com



A Faith Based Approach To Sober Living and Recovery

603-945-7775

From: **Randy Stevens** <stevensrandya@gmail.com>

Date: Sun, Mar 10, 2024 at 4:32 PM

Subject: Revised Version

To: Kelly Thomas <klmt8410@gmail.com>

In my early years, pain and suffering were constants, casting shadows over my life. However, my life has undergone a powerful transformation. I'm not merely surviving; I'm thriving. The journey through recovery has reshaped my outlook. The pain that once defined my life now serves as a testament to my strength, and past suffering has become a catalyst for motivation. Each new day brings blessings, and I stand far from the hopeless place that once held me captive.

At a young age, I began using drugs and alcohol as coping mechanisms to manage the shame, guilt, and trauma associated with my untreated childhood abuse. A trusted figure shattered the innocence of my childhood. As I grew older and decided to put an end to the abuse, he introduced me to drugs and alcohol to lower my inhibitions. Quickly, I discovered the numbing effect these substances had on me. The more I used them, the more familiar and effective they became, leading to an increasing dependence.

Being so reliant on the relief they brought me, I became increasingly desperate for that reprieve. Carrying a multitude of negative feelings bottled up inside me, I felt compelled to find a way to cope with them. Unfortunately, substances were the answer for a long time. I often found myself saying that I only felt "normal" when I was on something. At the time, I didn't give it much thought, but now I realize it was because I couldn't bear the weight of the unwanted emotions inside me.

My dependence on substances led to numerous negative outcomes, triggering a downward spiral into criminal behavior and worsening my addiction. I entered adulthood without the ability to process emotions, oblivious to the extensive damage caused by my substance use. When I finally had enough of being "sick and tired," I achieved abstinence.

Six years ago, I experienced homelessness, addiction, and complete isolation. As I dragged myself from an abandoned building in Rochester, New Hampshire, I vividly recall pleading with God. In that moment of utter desperation, I asked God to either end my life or help me find a way out of this.

I had been stripped of everything that held meaning. Life felt utterly hopeless and without purpose. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) had taken my children. Withdrawal was my constant companion. My family had ceased communication with me. There was no work, no home, and no life worth living. The worst part was facing the sad reality that I was the architect of my current state. Through the haze of addiction, I realized I had created this mess and had to start helping myself get out of it.

At the edge of total destruction, something within me changed. A deep conviction for recovery took hold, and suddenly, nothing was more important than transforming my life. I began making changes, starting with the external aspects. Subsequently, I embarked on the more challenging

journey of transforming my inner self. I attended meetings, found a supportive community of Precovery, and worked toward securing housing. At 18 days free of addiction, my youngest child entered the world. Despite the persistent chaos in my life, she became a bright light, emphasizing the crucial need for sustained sobriety.

Reality struck home 13 days later when I was arrested for crimes I had committed earlier that year. One month substance-free, those doors closed behind me. Faced with a choice—wallow in self-pity and spiral down again—or resolve to use every moment of this incarceration to become the man I was meant to be.

I regret the behaviors I participated in for years; however, I believe that my lived experience has enhanced my ability to connect with peers who still suffer. During my two-and-a-half-year incarceration, I focused on building a strong recovery foundation through mindfulness, spirituality, and maintaining a positive attitude. Completing two separate rehabilitation programs allowed me to start mentoring others and be the change that I wanted to see in the world, even from inside the walls.

As I dedicated more effort to learning new ways of coping with my untreated trauma, I discovered effective methods to manage my emotions, resulting in positive outcomes. Previously, I tended to be argumentative and aggressive toward other men. Now, through practices such as conscious breathing and grounding techniques, I have cultivated the ability to respond more effectively when my trauma is activated. This ongoing practice has become a constant in my life, and I've never felt better.

Through my deep reflection, I've come to believe that life thrives on the connections we build with others. By approaching them with compassion, respect, and kindness, I open myself to experiencing these qualities in return.

Throughout this journey, I've learned to take ownership of my mistakes, challenge irrational thoughts, identify triggers and areas of vulnerability, and maintain a deep mindfulness and meditation practice. Reflecting on every interaction allows me to continually improve my future interactions. Taking responsibility for my actions and being open to constructive feedback positions me in a way that encourages others to feel open to sharing with me. This concept of open sharing has had a transformative effect on my life, which is why peer support resonates so strongly with me.

For myself, the most important aspect of my recovery pathway is my spirituality. I have surrounded myself with a caring and encouraging group of friends. This connection to the people around me has helped me day after day.

As I left prison and moved to the halfway house in Manchester, I set five goals for myself. From that point on, every decision I made, I asked myself, "Does this help me achieve one of my five goals?" If the answer was no, I didn't go through with it.

Before entering the halfway house on my journey, there was one crucial aspect missing from my treatment plan—therapy. I initiated counseling during my stay in the halfway house and have consistently continued since then. While there are numerous things one can tackle independently, holding oneself accountable and maintaining complete objectivity often require external support. Personally, my therapist and the individuals I've chosen for my accountability team play a pivotal role in propelling me forward while fostering a level of self-awareness that I couldn't attain alone.

With my goals in mind, I seized the opportunity to kickstart a career as a peer support specialist with The Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester (MHCGM). The support and encouragement I experienced from my team played a crucial role in my success. MHCGM, being a Recovery Friendly Workplace, is committed to providing a supportive environment for individuals like me. While at MHCGM, I recognized my desire to further my education and earn a degree in Social Work to enhance my ability to help others effectively. I enrolled in school and made the move from the halfway house to a rooming house next door to my church

I started building a relationship with my children, attending school, working long hours at MHCGM, working on myself during therapy, and strengthening my connection to the community by volunteering at Hope for NH Recovery, where I provided ear acupuncture for members.

In 2021, something happened that would change my life forever... I met my love, Shannon. We were working together, supporting people experiencing mental health crises. It's in that kind of work that a person's heart is revealed. Seeing her heart shine was a beautiful sight.

In the next few months, numerous positive changes unfolded in my life, providing constant encouragement. Recognizing my diligence as a tenant and hard worker, the owner of the rooming house offered me a two-bedroom apartment, setting the stage for the next phase of my life — gaining full custody of my youngest child. I moved into the new apartment and that same year I was granted full custody of my beautiful three-year-old girl!

Numerous challenges have marked my journey, from childhood sexual abuse to the consequences of 17 years in active addiction. Overcoming these adversities isn't a one-and-done process; it's a constant, moment-to-moment effort, every day. This journey is fueled by support, self-love, and a positive attitude—shifting thoughts from negative to positive, even in the face of overwhelming challenges.

Throughout my journey, I've encountered significant challenges that have tested my emotional resilience. These experiences, while emotionally demanding, have become opportunities for personal growth. Equipped with coping skills and a strong support system, I navigate through difficulties with a sense of determination. Some may wonder why I choose to share personal experiences openly. I believe it's my way of emphasizing the importance of recovery and ensuring that others don't feel alone in facing their own struggles.

We chip away at the stigma surrounding addiction every time we share our stories. My hope is that others, whether directly or indirectly impacted by substance use disorder, will be inspired to feel compassion. When you encounter someone struggling with addiction or mental health, it's essential to remember that you may not know their whole story or the life experiences that led them to this moment. Your kindness and compassion could be the catalyst for changing the trajectory of their life forever.