

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

This is a collection of letters containing personal anecdotes written by current and former residents, alumni, and community members across the State of Minnesota who've had experience with sober living. They detail the impact recovery residences have had on their recovery outcomes.

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

1. Cynthia Scott

1/30/21

Response to proposed study of sober homes in the State of Minnesota

Dear Representative Heather Edelson:

This outside witness testimony is in response to the study on the potential oversight of sober housing programs in the State of Minnesota as proposed in H.F. No. 287. I take no issue with the study itself. What concerns me are the potential unintended consequences of such a study that could undermine the life-saving support provided by sober homes for our loved ones in recovery. Some concerning provisions in the bill point to potential governmental regulations so burdensome and cost prohibitive that affordable sober homes will be priced out of the market, leaving quality supportive housing available only to the monied class. As a retired public-school teacher, who went back to work full-time to help support my son's recovery, I can assure you that I am not part of the monied class. I am just one mom, among so many others, who has gone to heroic measures—risking my own health and financial security—to secure housing and care for my beloved son, who battles a deadly condition.

Following long-term treatment in Costa Rica, my son continued on his winding road to recovery all the way to Minnesota and lives there now at my encouragement. My research uncovered some “favorables” about Minnesota, including its ranking as the third happiest state in the U.S.; its last place ranking for drug abuse stats among the 50 states; its robust response to public health; its favorable location for surviving the climate crisis; its strong social safety net; its employment opportunities, etc. In comparison to the Third World conditions in Texas for people who suffer from brain illnesses, it was a no-brainer that I should send him north to continue his recovery instead of bringing him back home.

I also discovered that the Twin Cities area is a global mecca for recovery, and this led me to the Minnesota Association of Sober Homes (MASH). My son is now fortunate enough to live in one of their high accountability sober homes in St. Paul that was recommended to me by a family friend, who is a director at Hazelden. I wanted to secure a sober home for him that did not warehouse its residents or allow them to lie around and rot and die just as long as they stayed sober and paid the rent every month. MASH homes defy the sober home stereotypes and have standards and regulations that make them conducive to recovery.

Quality, affordable supportive housing bends the harm curve for families, but if the Minnesota legislature overreaches to fix what's not broken in their state, then they could end up doing more harm to us than good. While I believe oversight has promise to remedy the abuses in this booming and unregulated industry, I see provisions in this bill that concern me when I play out the script on them. In particular, if certain “evidence-based practices to support residents in their recovery” are mandated, then will the State subsidize those additional, required supports rather than allow them to drive up costs for sober home residents?

Also concerning is the implication that sober homes may be mandated to allow Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT). This creates a double-edged sword. The jury is no longer out on MAT. It saves lives, and I am in favor of MAT-friendly sober homes, but choice needs to remain. For example, my beloved son is heroically battling an opioid addiction that began with prescription opiates after he survived a serious car wreck at 17. If not for Suboxone, I have no doubt my son would be dead by now, and I would not be writing you this letter. However, it was his decision to choose a sober home that did *not* allow MAT. While I hold the position that Suboxone is sober, my son chose to break his final chain of dependency by withdrawing from it, and with the support of his rehab care team, he did a very long and grueling taper off of that medication. When he was released from rehab, he did not choose a MAT-friendly sober home, because he felt it would be disruptive to his recovery. That is how many walking in my son's shoes feel, and they should be allowed the choice of a sober home that is either MAT-friendly or not. Recovery is not a "one-size-fits-all" journey, and the government should not force this issue. They should let the free market decide.

In a humane world, people living heroically with brain disorders could find quality, affordable supportive housing that offers stability, safety, and peace. It is a worthy intention for the legislature to ensure that this vulnerable population is properly housed in a manner that is conducive to healing, but I hope you proceed with wisdom, with the long view in mind, and with consideration for the consequences—intended and unintended. This is high stakes. Unintended consequences in this arena could cost lives. I encourage you to work closely in productive partnerships with leaders in the field like MASH and with families who already have a painful understanding of what is broken and how it might be fixed. I urge you to ask yourself if the outcome of such a study will ultimately leave this vulnerable population and their families trapped in a Titanic scenario—reaching for a life raft while deck chairs are rearranged as the ship goes down—or if it will lead to meaningful reform that doesn't gut access to affordable, quality sober living. To ensure the latter scenario, please proceed with deliberate determination. Engage and build relationships with stakeholders and find common ground to ensure the availability of affordable, quality supportive housing, where people in recovery can live in health, safety, and dignity.

Recovery is such a treacherous journey fraught with pitfalls and perils. Helping our loved ones break the grip of addiction is just the initial stage in a long road to recovery. Love is not enough in the face of this profound suffering. Families need so much help. I recently participated in a webinar for family members with addicted loved ones. The presenter offered this beautiful closing that left me weeping: "We don't believe in brokenness. We believe in forgetfulness, and we must remind them of who they are." It caused me to reflect on why we parents hang in there against impossible odds. We call them up, and we call them out, because we know they are still in there, but they are lost. Because we love them, because we stay brave, we fight to help them find their way back home. For now, Minnesota is my son's home, and he is thriving there. I want him to be able to remain in his sober home there for as long as he wants to.

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I hope Minnesota finds its way to lead the nation in solving the crisis of affordable, quality sober housing. As a global mecca for recovery, it is already shining a bright light in calling so many of the lost back home. A well-managed sober home is a critical component in the continuum of care. The challenge for Minnesota will be to balance the need for oversight and regulation to cure abuses within the sober home industry with the need for access to affordable, quality sober housing. Instead of leaping toward over-regulation as a remedy, a middle way could be to investigate and implement the best practices of organizations like MASH, who are already ahead of the curve in committing to self-regulation and improvement in the quality of their sober homes.

In moving forward, please consider the ethic of a pioneering mom named Teresa Pasquini, who co-founded the non-profit program "Housing That Heals." Motivated by the plight of her son, who suffers from schizoaffective disorder, her mission became to solve the crisis of affordable supportive housing in our country. She offers us these words of wisdom, "...our collective community purpose must be fluid, flexible, adaptable, and ever present when people are at their most vulnerable. And, vulnerability must always be viewed as an opportunity to empower health and healing through our shared humanity."


I am grateful for your time and consideration of my heartfelt views.

Best regards,

Cynthia Scott
312 Case Street
Weatherford, TX 76086
817.456.0734

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

2. Kourtney Eichten - Canvas Health



January 27, 2021

Minnesota Association of Sober Homes
649 Grand Ave #4, St Paul, MN 55105

To Whom It May Concern,

Five years ago, I was 40 years old in a residential Substance Use Treatment Center for the 11th time. I was homeless, unemployed, on parole and only 30 days clean and sober. I was looking for an aftercare program as well as a sober house; however, I did not want a county funded one as a result of a dozen failed attempts prior. (resident's using drugs and alcohol on site). Moreover, I looked online and found M.A.S.H.

I can still remember the first time I called South Shore Serenity and Mrs. Lisa Gillette answered the phone. She was so kind! I had so many questions as did she. I was filled with hope when she confirmed that she would rent to someone with a felony conviction. I was in awe at the cleanliness, decorations, and organization. This house felt like a real home and I signed a contract to move in.

Months passed and I completed my aftercare, obtained a job and a vehicle, all while remaining sober. I decided I wanted my own apartment, signed a six-month lease, and moved out. Exactly six months later, I moved back into South Shore Serenity. I had enrolled in college and I missed the sober support of my roommates. The accountability and growth that happened for me is priceless.

Today, I am almost 6 years clean and sober and work at Canvas Health helping others to achieve recovery! My foundation was built at South Shore Serenity and I am forever grateful.

Kourtney Eichten
Certified Peer Recovery Specialist



763-250-3819 
keichten@canvashealth.org 
21030 Bridle Pass Drive
Forest Lake, MN 55025 

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3. Jonathan Jakubas

Dear Honorable Representatives of Minnesota, Rep. Edelson, Rep. Koegel, and Rep. Aisha Gomez,

I'm writing to you in concern for proposed Statute HF 287 and the potentially damaging effects on recovery that this may have on residents residing in sober living. While I do understand the importance of regulation, I fear that involvement at the state level will undermine the recovery efforts currently underway at many of these houses. I currently manage Jordan House, a LGBT sober home in district 62B and have experience as both a resident and a manager.

It is my understanding that the proposed measures have come about through negative testimony of individuals who have participated in sober housing. However, I would urge you to consider my experience which has been categorized by positivity and success in sobriety.

As a resident, the Jordan House gave me the freedom to choose my path of recovery. It is a requirement to attend three 12-step meetings per week, so I chose to not pursue any treatment and instead focus my efforts on returning to work and working a program of recovery as outlined in Alcoholics Anonymous. The standards and rules that we have at Jordan House directly reflect those found in AA: Honesty, open mindedness and willingness. We treat others with compassion, we clean house (figuratively and literally), and we welcome new residents with open arms. We know that we were once in their position, seeking refuge from the horrors of addiction, feeling lost and vulnerable.

Twelve step programs, which is what Jordan House is based off of, involve spirituality and conversations around a higher power, or God (however one may define God). While most treatment centers focus their efforts on emotional and psychological health, recovery is a program dedicated to achieving spiritual wholeness. We leave spirituality vast and open. Rather than defining a higher power, AA leaves this open for each individual to interpret and discover for themselves. Therefore, the "programs" that we offer in sober houses are not congruent with the state legislature. It would be disadvantageous and unethical to impose state regulation on our residents' recovery journeys.

As a house manager, I could not be more proud to present the many accomplishments that residents in the Jordan House have achieved through hard work and by working a program of recovery. Since I've started managing in June of 2020, four individuals have returned to school, one of them receiving their GED and accepted into higher education. We recently celebrated milestones of 9 months, 18 months, and 1 year for three members of our home. For those who have moved on from Jordan house, two of them went on to work in the treatment centers. I have members of the house who now sponsor other people seeking recovery from addiction. Most of our members are either working or going to school full time. Many of our members also participate in out-patient programs too. While we encourage such programs we do not require them.

While we celebrate these achievements, it is not to say that our house is without some falter. There have been individuals who have returned to use. However these residents have been treated with dignity and compassion. We, who struggle with addiction, know what it is like to have a relapse. Therefore, I feel it is my responsibility to provide them with a list of sober living homes, treatment centers and detoxes. I take time with them to make sure they are O.K. and help them find a safe place if they would like my assistance in doing so.

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The Jordan House was where my life shifted in a positive direction. It is my honor to return the favor to current residents and future residents. We will continue to uphold our standards of cleanliness, dignity and compassion. We will also continue to celebrate our successes awarded to us through working our individual programs of recovery. I strongly urge the house to consider how state regulation will change what we, at the Jordan House, have going on. How will the House's decision affect the freedom from addiction that we have currently found?

Lastly, I'd like to make a suggestion to involve the Minnesota Association of Sober Housing in these legislative decisions regarding sober housing. MASH upholds certain standards that I believe are imperative to an effective environment for sobriety, with many of its members also in recovery themselves. I suggest the house implore this association's assistance.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Jakubas
612-300-7786
jonathanjakubas@gmail.com

4. Brandon Huggins

To whom it may concern,

My name is Brandon Huggins and I have been asked to give my experience living in sober housing. I currently have over 2 years sober and I owe a great portion of that to sober living. I must start with a preface of my experience before moving into sober living.

In 2014 I lost my job, was cut off from my family and became homeless due to my addiction. Over the next 3 years my addiction progressed and fighting to survive on the streets of Minneapolis became increasingly difficult. I began having many run-ins with law enforcement and rapidly racked up legal issues. I was court ordered to complete a 30 day in-patient treatment center. With nowhere to go once I completed in-patient treatment, I went back to the life I was living and continued the revolving door of jails, treatment and homelessness. Rinse and repeat. My addiction progressed along with my legal problems. The 3rd time I was court ordered to go to treatment I was required to follow aftercare recommendations of which moving into a sober house was one of them.

I had expectations that a sober house was going to be difficult since I had been homeless for years. I knew that what I had been doing for years was not working so I might as well try this and if I hated it I could go back to the way things were before. I was recommended to Saint Paul Spirit House by my counselor, little did I know that the structure of sober living was a piece of what I was missing on my past attempts of sobriety. Another piece of the puzzle was the connection to other men that are rebuilding their lives as well. The sober house felt more like a

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family rather than an institution. I firmly believe that the relationships I made with the men in that house helped me stick around long enough to see a different way of life.

After a few months of living there I got a job near the house and began to value myself again. I had opportunities to use and chose not to because of what I had learned for the men I was living with. I no longer felt like an outcast, I felt like I was part of a family, a community of support and love. I felt safe for the first time in years. The sober house encouraged me to become part of society and to volunteer.

I was discharged from probation early, promoted at my job. I have a healthy relationship with my family and I reconnected with my heart and no longer felt worthless.

My experience in sober living saved my life. I have purpose now and I'm uniquely gifted to help others that are lost. I believe with all my heart that sober living was the key to my success.

Over the past few years, I have seen firsthand how MASH has upheld the standards of what sober living should look like. I've met many people in the sober community that have gone through MASH house manager training and it is clear what their objective is. MASH requires houses to be a safe living environment for addicts and alcoholics to become self-sufficient and productive member of society. MASH does a great job at regulating a consistency through the houses that belong to the association and constantly looking for ways to improve.

Thank you for your time,

Grateful recovering Alcoholic

Brandon S Huggins

5. Jessica C. - House of Grace Sober Living

January 28th, 2021

To Whom it may concern,

My name is Jessica I was a resident at House of Grace II from 11/2017 to 09/18 while attending the outpatient program at NUWAY in Northeast Minneapolis. It was a very good decision for me to continue aftercare out patient after inpatient treatment at Fairview Riverside. I went thur an interview process to be accepted to live here. As for they wanted women who were only serious about recovery there. It provided good structure and necessary rules to keep me safe and also involved on every level of recovery appects. As for the number of meetings I attended, service work there, having a job, being apart of the house hold choirs. Teaching me structure and disapline that was cruical to my recovery. Starting over can be hard, but they offered me the best opportunity to get and stay sober. I am forever grateful for them and some of the strong women I have meet through them. As of Feburay 4th I will have 3 years of continuos soberity. Generally people that have issues are people trying to still fight change and want things there way. That is not the type of recovery that is proven to be affected. I hope this statement is helpful please let me know if I can help with any thing else.

My number is #612-819-9437

Thank you,
Jessica C.



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6. Sol Ryan - Retreat Sober Living

February 1st, 2021

Representative Heather Edelson:

On August 16th, 2008 I went to The Retreat, a recovery program based in Wayzata, Minnesota and have not had a drink or drug since. I was financially, emotionally, spiritually and physically bankrupt. I still vividly remember the feeling of complete despair and hopelessness but somewhere deep down I knew I was in the right place. I wanted to change but did not know how or even where to begin and somehow had the willingness to accept help.

After the recovery program in Wayzata, I moved into a Retreat sober living home in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The home was in the heart of the recovery community, two blocks off of Summit Avenue and six blocks from the Minnesota Governor's Residence. What I found there was a group of men with a common goal of not only staying sober but engaging in the transformative actions that lead to productive, engaged and valued members of our communities. I began working full time again and was able to pay my own way due to the affordability of the home. The home had high expectations for recovery actions, a zero tolerance policy for drinking or using drugs and did not allow any controlled substances. The sober living management team was supportive and upheld these expectations providing accountability, a feeling of safety and the recognition that drinking or using was not an option.

During the 16 months I lived at the sober living home, absolutely amazing people came into my life and so generously shared their time, experiences and wisdom with me. Many of those same people are still by my side today and have become some of my closest friends.

As a professional now in the field, I have been part of developing the training curriculum for the Minnesota Association of Sober Homes (MASH). We have worked closely with partners in the community to provide training and awareness around eating disorders, co occurring disorders, general mental health, cultural competency, conflict resolution, life safety, sober housing best practices and community engagement.

Sober living is where I learned to live a life in recovery and begin to give back to the community. This foundation and experience has stayed with me for the last 12 plus years and has facilitated my continued growth.

Sincerely,



Sol B. Ryan
715-520-2930

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7. Brian Wilton - NuWay

1/26/2021

Living in a Recovery Residence

For the past decade, I have enjoyed a life in recovery. My experience with sobriety includes my time spent in various sober living programs. After completing residential treatment, deciding to enter a sober home was a decision I am grateful for. I spent approximately eighteen months residing in various sober living programs that provided structure, support, accountability, and fellowship. After completing treatment, these elements were necessary for me to begin sustaining my recovery. Once I had given up using drugs and alcohol, I needed to learn how to live my life. Living in a recovery residence, I became introduced to several other individuals in early recovery, actively working towards similar goals. In early recovery, almost everything is a new experience. I needed to figure out what to do with myself, how to manage my time, and how to continue to support my recovery. Being in a home with other sober individuals gave me the blueprint for what comes next in recovery. This period was a pivotal moment for what has now led to many years of living a happy, meaningful life. The programs provided me with structure, which allowed me to create goals for finding work, applying for school, or volunteering my time. While the homes were structured, they were not overbearing. I felt independent with my actions and decisions, but I knew I could ask others for support if it was needed. The great part about living in a sober living environment, was being able to observe what others were doing. I could watch others going to meetings, applying for jobs, meeting with sponsors, and I realized that these actions could be applied to my life. I witnessed people struggle with addiction in the houses as well. I began to recognize the patterns of behaviors that led to relapses and struggles, and I could address my behaviors to manage my own stressors in life accordingly. I was taught important lessons on honesty, responsibility, and being dependable. In the process of learning what it means to live a life of recovery, I quickly met others that would become lifelong friends of mine. I was exposed to individuals from all across the nation, coming to treatment from all different walks of life. One of the most important things I learned from living in a recovery residence, was that recovery needs to be enjoyable. One must find joy and happiness in recovery for it to be worthwhile. During my time in sober living, I have had countless memories of times spent laughing with friends, learning about myself, and taking on new challenges. I am forever grateful for the experiences that came from living in a recovery residence. I was introduced to a community of recovery that I have built a life around.

Sincerely,

Brian Wilton - Brian.Wilton08@outlook.com

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8. Debbie Ratcliff - South Shore Serenity

My name is Debbie Ratcliff, and I had the privilege to live in one of Mash sober houses. Which the owner Lisa Gillette was very caring and the house was structured with meetings and sober living. South shore serenity in Forest Lake Minnesota, I truly enjoyed. I stayed there for 14 months learning how to live one day at a time without any mood or mind altering substance. I am truly grateful for having the opportunity to reach out for help. It was the best experience that I would be glad to tell others about. I so appreciate the time I spent there.

-ratcliffdebbie735@gmail.com

9. Jackie Wilson - South Shore Serenity

Dear MASH,

My name is Jackie and I'm writing this letter to tell you a little bit about myself. I have been in and out of both inpatient and outpatient treatment facilities in hopes of getting and staying sober. Each time I was discharged from treatment I relapsed. Partly because I went back to living in the same environment. Prior to being discharged from treatment in Sept 2018 I was put in contact with Lisa at South Shore Serenity sober living for women. I spoke with Lisa via phone and she accepted me into the home. My experience there was amazing! Not only did I meet great people that became long term friends, but both Lisa, the owner and Giselle, the house manager played a huge role in my sobriety. They were there to talk to and help me through any concerns and/or problems I had. Lisa had faith in me when I had none left in myself. She would come to the house when I called her for help. She goes above and beyond what is expected of her because "she cares". I was not just another rent payment to her. I was a person who needed her help and she willingly gave it to me. If it wasn't for Lisa I know I would not be sober today. I left South Shore Serenity a year later in 2019 and continued to stay in touch with Lisa. I am now 2 1/2 years clean from all substances. Lisa and her sober home literally saved my life and for that I am eternally grateful.

Sincerely

Jackie Wilson

612 231-2422

wilsonjackie610@gmail.com

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10. Noah Mulligan - NuWay

Nolan Mulligan

Sober Living Letter

To Whom It May Concern:

The sixteen months I lived in sober living were crucial to my recovery. Some of the best memories happened in that house. I gained friendships that I am confident will last a lifetime. During addiction I lived a very lonely life because I pushed everyone away. Because of this, moving to sober living was scary, but I was welcomed with open arms. I never felt like a stranger in the house and never felt alone again. I learned valuable life skills that still help me today in life and recovery. Not everything was perfect. There were struggles that challenged my sobriety, and because I lived in sober living, I was fortunate to go through those struggles together with men who knew what I was going through. I am forever grateful I was able to go through sober living during those early struggles of recovery.

Today, I am fortunate to be working in the recovery field and am a big advocate of sober living. It is critical for anyone who is in early recovery. There is no better way to gain a strong sober support network and emergence into the sober community like sober living. I learned of meetings, sober leagues like softball, hockey, and kickball I would potentially not know of if it wasn't for sober living.

Just over six years later, I still look back on the memories I experienced in sober living and smile. My best friend was my house manager and I keep in contact with a majority of the people I lived with back then. Sober living is where recovery meets the road. You are completely back in society and are challenged to implement the tools you learn in treatment in everyday life. There is no better place to practice those tools in sober living

11. Matthew J Hoppe - Coordinated Recovery

To whom it may concern,

I find the bill introduced at the state legislature to regulate sober housing to hurt the recovery process and mental illness. I'm afraid I have to disagree with this bill and do not think it is in the best interest of people coming out of treatment in early recovery. Financially they will not be able to live in sober housing. Living together, you hold each other accountable and grow socially, financially, and intellectually. You learn how to deal with life on life's terms and support others who have a similar past. Living and growing without worrying about being judged is not something you can put into words on the importance it has on early recovery. Addiction is giving up everything for one thing. Recovery is giving up one thing for everything, and having the support of people with some sobriety under their belt when you are going through it for the first time is priceless and a huge part of recovery. At least it was for me.

I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for affordable sober living. I went into sober living after putting myself through treatment for alcohol addiction. Sober living changed my life. I learned a new way of living. I was in a safe environment and was able to complete outpatient treatment. Sober living helped me grow emotionally, spiritually, and professionally. I returned to my job at the local hospital as a Registered Nurse, and sober living gave me the support and encouragement when I wanted to return to school. When you have your lowest days and don't know how to express what is going on, you can go home, and your housemates get it. They have been through it, have advice on coping, or what has worked for them, or they pick you up when you fall. I am now in a master's program for psychiatric nurse practitioner, work two part-time jobs, and manage a sober house. If it weren't for an affordable sober living when I got out of treatment and the compassion, knowledge, and acceptance I received, I wouldn't be where I am today. Still sober, enjoying life, trying to help the newcomer, always living life.

With Best Regards,



Matthew J Hoppe

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12. Brenden Ellingboe

Hello,

I wanted to give my personal testimony regarding my experience in a Minnesota-based sober home.

After a mental-health crisis, my housing was placed in jeopardy and I immediately turned to the sober housing network in Minneapolis. I found safe, and stable housing with A Better Direction, and have successfully begun transition to being able to support myself and my needs.

Sober housing as it stands, provides us with the much-needed support while we look for jobs, attend out-patient treatment, and attend support groups. The community and structure that MASH and Minnesota sober homes provides a safe way for those looking to live a life free of substances.

I am still stable and sober today, and although I'll be moving on my own next month, I know I've created life-long friendships, and a rock-solid support system to aid in my recovery.

Thanks

Brenden Ellingboe.

ellingboe.b@gmail.com

13. Michael Boyer

To whom it may concern.. My name is Michael Boyer I am a 46 year old man who struggles with a lifetime abusing drugs and alcohol.. I in 32 years have NEVER passed a drug screen for anything.. In February of 2020 I got my second DUI. I lost everything , my job, my drivers license, my new truck, my home, my family..... For another 2 months I drank n smoked my problems away...SO I THAUGHT. I asked myself if this is truly the life that I want to continue to live.. At that point I checked myself into Fountain Centers impatient Treatment programs.. Upon graduation I was then left wondering where I could safely continue my changes to my life.. I was offered a bed in the Sober house I continue to reside in.. My sober house provides me with a safe way and sober people to call friends. A sober house only works for those who truly want that desperate change in life.. it only works if you give it 110%.... I am HONORED AND PROUD TO SAY I AM STILL SOBER. I in no way could have made this positive change in

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my life if it wasn't for my sober house. Here we are all held accountable for our actions and choices we make. We are given a safe environment, safe people to live until we believe we are truly ready to handle our lives again. My sober house has given me hope for my future of sobriety.. I wish all struggling addicts, alcoholics a safe recovery in their sober houses. Without sober houses there would be ALOT MORE people with no safe place to recover from this disease of addiction..

Sincerely
Michael Boyer

michaelboyer1974@gmail.com

14. Charles Stannard

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm a resident of a privately run sober house and have been thriving in recovery and sobriety, since I moved in.

The house provides me a group of like-minded roommates to attend 12 Step support group meetings and I've formed meaningful healthy friendships here.

My house manager has established clear house expectations that provide much needed accountability for me in early sobriety.

Charles Stannard
612.469.2900

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15. Natalie Thiel

January 27th, 2021

January 27th, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Natalie and I lived in two sober houses in Saint Paul, Minnesota from October, 2017 until December, 2018. I had positive experiences in both of these houses and am in favor of MASH continuing to regulate sober living to allow for autonomy. I am writing to share my experiences in sober living and to advocate for autonomy of sober living homes within the community.

After completing in-patient treatment followed by residential day treatment for alcohol and drug addiction I was recommended to complete an intensive out-patient treatment program and move to a sober home. I was skeptical to move to a new city into a house full of women I didn't know but I quickly saw why this was the best place for me to be. The women in the house had all once been in my situation. The women welcomed me into their community and were available to share recommendations for meetings, help me find a sponsor, and invited me along to social gatherings of others in sobriety. My house manager required that I attend 12 step recovery groups and work with a sponsor along with my intensive out-patient treatment program. My first sober house experience was not successful and I did not remain sober. I was asked to leave the home as continuous sobriety was a requirement to remain in the home.

After leaving the first home I tried to live on my own and continued to struggle maintaining sobriety without the structure I needed. I reached out to the house owner to ask if I could return to her sober house and she suggested I move into another house. This house was smaller and had extra rules for support. As the house required 30 days of sobriety before moving in, I agreed to additional requirements including creating a weekly calendar to share with my house manager and attending extra meetings with my new housemates. The house owner allowed me to move in with 2 days of sobriety and I followed the suggestions she gave me to support my recovery. The second house had a strong community of women who attended the same meetings and spent a lot of their free time together. The longer I remained in the house, the more clearly I could see that all the house rules and requirements had reasons behind them to support me in my recovery. Living in this sober environment allowed me to set up a solid foundation for long-term sobriety and recovery.

This house was successful for me and many others to follow because of the autonomy allowed to the house owners. In my experience, the house owner created requirements that I needed to follow to help me stay sober. Others may need more or less requirements and having houses that offer differences is a strength of the Saint Paul sober housing community. My home required that I work a 12 step recovery program with a sponsor and this was crucial for my long term sobriety. The owner's discretion on house management is another strength; I felt comfortable with my house manager knowing that she was once in my situation. She also lived in the community, could offer support in finding valuable meetings, and supported me in building connections in the fellowship.

Thank you for taking my thoughts and experiences under consideration.

Sincerely,



Natalie Thiel

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

16. Nita Easley

To whom it may concern I've been at CVH Recovery House since August of 2018 sober housing has helped me get my life back together I've been able to maintain my sobriety coming into 4 years I've been able to have stability structure responsibility and accountability and it's affordable I have been a person that is always lived on my own which was not always healthy for me because I tend to isolate and be in my own world but Community Living has allowed me to bond with other women in recovery put me in a position where I did not have an option not to attend my meetings or have a sponsor it also encouraged me to continue in therapy I have had a tremendous amount of growth just from being in sober housing my name is Nita Easley.

17. Lance Blair - Aspire Sober Living

Sober living has greatly impacted my life in a positive way! It was great for me in my recovery to be held accountable not only to stay sober but to go to meetings every week, have employment, work a good program, complete my chores, and help with other around the house when they needed it. The fellowship of my housemates and being able to talk with someone that can relate to me was priceless and very important. I cant say enough good things about my sober living experience and I am so glad I choose that route, I don't believe I would be sober today if I had not.

Thank You

Lance Blair

Lance.Blair@culliganwater.com

18. Thomas Walmsley - Aspire Sober Living

To Whom It May Concern,

There has been a series of questions raised about the efficacy of sober living over the past year, concerns that perhaps the current structures are not wholly capable of meeting the requirements demanded of them. I am currently writing this letter to express my own insights into what this environment has given myself to help one move forward in life.

Most fundamentally I have been given a chance to succeed, a chance to move beyond the place that I had found myself stuck in, a chance to rejoin families, friends, broader communities, to become the person I had lost sight of through the despair and trauma, something I had assumed lost to myself in the intervening years. And not only have I seen these transformations take place in my own life, but in the lives of others as well, some that I have come to know intimately, some only in passing. But this sight of not only growing yourself, expanding your own limited sphere, but being in communion with others around oneself as they undergo the

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

same personal transformations is a gift I'm not convinced that many have the privilege of being witness to as they move through life. However, this is almost a universal experience among the recovery community. It is a gift beyond price, perhaps even beyond the power of words to convey. In the recovery community it is something that often does not need to be put into words directly, for those who take it seriously and have their lives transformed as a consequence, it is a shared and ineffable experience. One that cannot be put into mere words but the results of which are clear for all to see, for those who wish to look. If one doubts this fact, known to all its own members, they need only look at the rebuilt families, lost sons and fathers, growth where there only used to be disarray, despair and being stuck in the past exchanged for growth and a yearning for what the future could bring. This is what sober living has given myself and those around me, even if it has not always done so in a direct causal way, it has given those promises time to flourish in its own timing. And that is all many in this community of people have asked for a chance. A chance to clear out the past. A chance to become the person I could be, instead of the person I could become. It has been given to me through sober living.'

I understand the changing environment and pressures, especially of the last year and its chaos, have raised questions of this community and its association, MASH, abilities to meet that which is demanded of it. Perhaps many of these are justified in asking. They usually are, especially by those outside. I would like to take the time to place the reminder, that when confronting this problem, that we deal with among the most dispossessed of our society. People oftentimes fresh from institutions, some from broken homes going back generations, many ground down by life and its many tragedies, feet kicked out from under them at every seeming opportunity, many screwed right from the get go in every way imaginable. This is the population that sober living is confronted with, and in my own humble opinion has risen above in its own call of duty in this regard. Provide clean living, a warm home with roofs over heads where there previously wasn't, a chance to begin again, a place to become one's own person but directed towards their own ends. A chance to become something previously thought impossible. And perhaps most importantly, a community, a place of security with their fellows, with whom you can share your own life with the tribulations of others, your triumphs and failures, your status as sinner and saint, joys and dispairs. The chance to become your own person and in doing so share this gift with those around you. This is a gift that cannot be undervalued and overlooked in the scope of its transformative power. All I would ask is that this is not forgotten when being confronted with the wicked problem of how to lay out the future success of this community.

I would like to end out this letter with a reminder of what these opportunities have given people, not what it has taken away. Human endeavours always trend towards failures not successes. And it is easy for us to only pay attention to the failures. But I am asking that we focus on the successes of this community, and the lives it has transformed as a consequence, not the failure. Only those cynical and not serious about problems contending with problems do this. The questions and concerns being raised over the course of the last year do not stand without merit. The question becomes what must we pay attention to over the course of these questions and what steps can we take to prevent the failures we all fear. In this course I can only offer my own experience and assessment of these situations. And in this I would say that my own sober housing specifically, and MASH broadly, has more than fulfilled its obligation, that this

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

community has risen to meet the call of duty. No one is ever entirely sure what aspects of a situation contribute to its success in its conclusion. Changes that are necessary must be implemented with caution and forethought, incremental in nature, otherwise risk all the previous gains that have been established. This community has been hit hard over the course of the last year, its members know firsthand, ask any. I myself have been involved in situations that have left me drained. Relapses, overdoses, depressions and traumas. The fundamental question however, is not why do these things happen, but what do we do in the face of what we are confronted with. History is replete with examples of where those who were confronted with the inherent tragedies of life acted too hastily and too fearfully. Lost sight of all the successes and gains made that came in small and unsexy ways that were lost to sight in the tumble of painful calamities. If we can, let us avoid the mistakes of those that have come before, if possible. And learn from the little ways they brought a better world into being that we now inhabit. That is all I ask, and have learned through my own painful journey through life, look to what has been accomplished not the failures. Hold onto those wherever possible. It is a lesson I'm not convinced that I would have understood without the opportunities afforded by sober living, and it is all I ask to not be forgotten when reviewing the problems confronting us moving forwards.

Thanks and Sincerely,

Tom Walmsley

19. Patrick Flanagan - Sober Home for Women LLC

Rep. Edelson, I can not convey enough via email how much sober living means to me and how positive my experience has been with MASH. I would love an opportunity to meet you and discuss at least via zoom. I lived in Edina for over 15 years last living at 4506 Golf Ter on the 10th green of Edina CC of which I was a member for over 10 years. Alcoholism almost killed me and although I will not get into my story on this email I am an open book and would share it with you at anytime in person or via zoom.

My sober date is Jan 18th 2019 and after a 40 day stay at the Retreat in Wayzata I lived at 505 Summit Ave one of the Retreat sober homes for 5 months. It saved my life. The structure and accountability was key for me. The ability to live with other men in early recovery was crucial to my recovery. MASH does an amazing job keeping the residents and the owners accountable.

I know this about MASH because two years ago I was a resident and now I am the owner of the Lion House in the Como Park neighborhood of St Paul. The Lion House is a beautiful 100 year old mansion that I converted into a 14 bed women's sober home last year. We are now full with a

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

waiting list and we offer an amazing community for our guests. We are a proud MASH member as well.

<https://www.lionhousestpaul.com/>

I know you have a hard job that is only made harder with the past years events in our state. I know this because my father (Mike Flanagan) spent his whole career at the State Capital as a lobbyist. I now live up the street in Cathedral Hill. My Dad's biggest client was the MN State Bar Association and he wrote the legislative review every year after the session.

Last week I drove my two year chip over to my Mother who is a resident at Friendship Village in Bloomington. My father passed away 11 years ago from Alzheimers. After my 86 year old mother wiped the tears from her eyes she said "your father would be so proud!"

Sober living and MASH saved my life. I would welcome the opportunity to talk more.

Best,

Patrick Flanagan

Patrick Flanagan

612-889-9182

The Irishman and Associates

<https://www.theirishmanandassociates.com/>

The Lion House

<https://www.lionhousestpaul.com/>

20. Damon Stewart - A Better Direction Sober Living

I'm a client of A Better Direction Sober Living at 2301 S. 5th Ave Minneapolis, MN 55404. One of the main reasons I chose this particular house was because I knew several individuals who were already clients. We had been in a medium intensity treatment program together. Most of us have shared personal information about our lives in and out of addiction. I believe that makes us closer and more accountable to one another. There is a sense of family and fellowship here. Privately operated houses have the ability to be more selective of potential clients to be sure they are more inclined to add to the positive cohesive atmosphere of the house they're placing them. Sobriety is not only not using it's also getting involved in the fellowship and community to broaden your resources to achieve quality and quantity of sobriety.

My past experiences with state operated and publicly funded sober homes does not come close to the level of accountability, positivity, and cohesion I've found here in Minnesota. I believe it would be a disservice to addicts in this state and other states who come here for treatment and sober living to remove the opportunity to choose what sober home you plan to live in as you acclimate into society again. Also, it allows the staff and clients of that house to interview and vet those potential clients to be sure that they have the right accommodations and atmosphere for those potential clients and vice versa. Plus, remaining private allows owners and staff to be more flexible on the rules and regulations of each home individually or as a whole for clients some may show more responsibility than others can have more privileges as they go along and those can be determined by the house owners and the clients can choose to type or measure of living that they need. Thank You,

Damon Stewart

21. Daniel Fischer - Hatch Place

Leaving an inpatient addiction treatment center is a frightening thing for some people in early recovery. Starting a new life, rebuilding what was lost, and transforming into a successful productive individual is daunting to the strongest of people.

Sober living residences give those in desperate need crucial support, structure, and genuine connections.

That is exactly what is needed for families to heal and for sustained long term recovery. Our Sober houses and the miracles that happen within their walls make all the difference in defeating the hopelessness that accompanies addiction.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to live with and flourish alongside amazing individuals thanks to Hatch Place Sober Living. The understanding, caring, and supportive network that naturally develops is phenomenal. This diverse group holds each other accountable, requires that we be of service to our communities, and strives to reach out to those still suffering.

My entire life has changed due to the sober house that opened the door for me. I was able to live again with the security of knowing I had affordable housing in a wonderful home filled with hope. I promised myself to be grateful and not waste this amazing gift of a second chance at life. Thanks to sober living my entire existence has changed. I've learned volumes from Dustin Madigan, the owner of Hatch Place, about kindness, unselfishness, and faith. We need to love ourselves enough to know we deserve more, be brave enough to demand more, and disciplined enough to actually work for it.

Sincerely, Daniel Fischer

22. Leslie A. - Hatch Place

Hatch Place

LESLIE A.

To Whom it may Concern
My experience with Sober
Living has had a Positive
Influence in my Life.

The Biggest Value of Sober
house living to me, is the
Community of Recovery,
Drug free environment, the
Support from house mates
also Being Supportive to
Fellow house mates

Sober housing makes a
difference

Thank You



23. Michael E. - Hatch Place

I Spent 60 Days at Hazeltion
Betty Ford I was a Terrible
Alcoholic after 60 Days I Know
That I couldn't go Back to
Iowa, I needed to stay in
Minnesota or I couldn't stay
Sober going home to my
destructive Environment.

The Hatch House is Sober + Safe
Place where I am able to
work on my continuing Sobriety
continue to work on MYSELF
And my Health with other People
in my Position.

The Hatch House and all Sober
Housing are a reliable resource
For my continuing care And
recovery

Thank You
Michael E.

24. Jay C. - Hatch Place

Since moving in here I've had had the priviledge to live with a hause full of sober people for the first time in my life. That's something I never experienced growing up. I've also made some great friends here that'll live an impact on my life for as long as I live. It's also nice I've gotten to meet these guys with similar experiences as myself, that definithly made it easier to relate with them. And it's nice to have this experience of living a sober life before I go back out into the "real world" whereas if I just went out on my own before this I'd more than likely end up right ~~where~~ where I was before beginning this experience.

— Jay C.

25. Michael Kelly - Hatch Place

1-28-2022

To whom it may concern,

In contemplating what to write, I looked back over the journey I have been on in my fight to Eliminate the need to use alcohol to navigate life.

Several things have proven to be a part of the whole picture, like puzzle pieces being placed, ever so carefully, together to complete the picture to my current level of "complete". I owe a great debt, number one, the God of my understanding & will forever be at my foundation. I did, however, need to seek out help from other human beings - some addicts - some not.

In thinking about the help I was given, I would like to point out the things that I hold dear to my heart, that provided much needed "stepping stones" to where I am today. First, rather than being cast out & sent to prison, the Judge in my case offered the option to repeat primary in-patient treatment with the understanding that I would also seek out mental health help. Following those first 45 days and with my mental in-check, I moved on to one twelve half-way house which provided further support & education. I was recommended to continue treatment at halfway while living in Sober Living. This brings me to now - today.

Today, I couldn't be more blessed than to have found Hatch Place which has provided an extremely supportive environment with housemates that are "on fire" for

Sobriety! We hold each other accountable to each other, to our programs and most importantly to our word and commitment. In short, this last stop on my "rehab" journey has been a Godsend, preparing me to re-enter society as an honest, respectable positive impact on my community - Society!

As with all the other stops, this current environment - Hatch Place Sober Living has been no less important nor impactful.

I humbly ask that you take into consideration just how important this has been in playing its part in saving my life!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mike Kelly". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

26. Jim Paulson - Hatch Place

Minnesota Association of Sober Homes...

R.E. Hatch Place experience

My personal experience as a resident at Hatch Place has been an overall pleasant and rewarding one. Rewarding by enabling me in a productive manner toward achieving multiple recovery related goals. Including, but not limited to completing an Outpatient TX program, and obtaining a lucrative job where I enjoy working. For the nine months that I've lived here the residents I've encountered have been respectful, and for the most part engaging in solid recovery programs. Although I really don't have anywhere to compare Hatch Place to, it has always been a place where I've felt comfortable, and respected, in a satisfactory way...

Sincerely

Jim Paulson

27. Deanna Hirman - House of Grace Sober Living

Deanna Hirman

deannahirman@gmail.com
612-743-0471

January 28, 2021

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you today to give you an idea of my personal experience of residing in a sober home following my time at an in-patient treatment facility. Nearing the end of my 30-day program, my counselor advised me of transitioning to a sober house directly out of treatment. This was needed in order to learn how to function as a sober person while looking for work and permanent residence. The decision to do so, I believe, was crucial to my long-term sobriety.

Living in the sober house along with attending an intensive out-patient treatment program, gave me the tools to live a sober life and not fall back on old habits, toxic environments and past relationships that would sabotage the work that I put in at that point. Without the support of the other women that I met during my time there and the love and care the owners gave me, I feel, I would not have made it the past 4 years of my sobriety to date.

I have learned more than I could ever put in writing but know that this type of transitional housing, for those serious about staying sober, is paramount to the success of the individual. In-patient treatment helps you get sober. What you do with your time after you get out is what determines whether you stay sober or not. My sober house introduced me to my first sponsor, held me accountable in going to my out-patient every day, which in turn, gave me back good work habits and ethic. They kept me grounded and helped me push forward, even when I did not think I could continue. The people I have met and the diversity I have learned are beyond words. I'm not saying it was easy, it was the hardest time of my life, but it was worth every second.

The people, places and things throughout my sober journey have saved my life and my sober house was the leading steppingstone in this journey. Without those two incredible women who let me into their home four years ago, with open arms, I know I would not be where I am today. I am forever grateful; these types of programs need to continue in order to save lives.

Warm regards,

Deanna Hirman

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

28. Tiana Darst - House of Grace Sober Living

January 28, 2021

Tiana Darst
3611 Washburn Ave N
Minneapolis, MN 55412
(612) 987-5464 (mobile)

RE: Personal Statement regarding how sober living benefitted my life

To Whom It May Concern:

I was a resident of The House of Grace, a Minnesota sober living home 2/17/19 thru 7/31/19. Before I moved into the House of Grace, I struggled to maintain sobriety because I lacked a stable living environment. The months that I lived at the House of Grace set me up for long-term sobriety success. The living structure provided by the House of Grace was what I needed to accomplish sobriety and recovery. A sober living environment was crucial to establishing my long-term sobriety and continued success. I am thankful to the House of Grace and all the sober living homes that provide the structured support needed for those (like myself) in need.

Best regards,



Tiana Darst

29. Susan D. - House of Grace Sober Living

January 28, 2021

To whom it may concern,

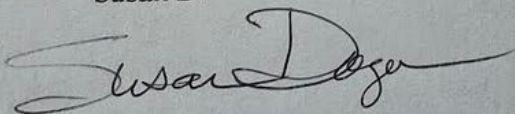
I am writing this letter so I can share the impact House of Grace, a sober living house had on my recovery.

I am 57 and sober for 4 years and 3 months. I spent my first couple months of my recovery in an inpatient program. Following those 2 months I went directly into a sober living house and attended outpatient treatment. This arrangement gave me the support and tools I needed to continue my recovery. I was required to attend meetings, daily outpatient, find a sponsor and stay sober. Weekly house meetings along with drug and alcohol screening held us accountable. Without this opportunity I would have had to return to my previous environment much too early.

Sober housing is a very important step to prepare you for what's to come next in recovery. 30, 60 even 90 days is not enough time to get on track. Most programs are only 30 days then what? A place to live, learn and better yourself is a crucial factor in remaining sober. The life long friendships created in the sober house community helped me become the woman I am today. I am still in contact with the home owners and the women I met while living there. I will forever be grateful.

Sincerely,

Susan D

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan D.", with a stylized, flowing script.

30. Marissa S. - House of Grace Sober Living

1/28/21

To whom it may concern:

My name is Marissa Spille, & I am writing on behalf of my sober home! House of Grace, where I lived for 2 years. I needed a safe home with structure & rules, as well as love & support, & I had all of those things in my sober home. Prior to House of ~~Grace~~ grace, I had attempted & failed to stay in prolonged recovery many times, because I had nowhere to go after treatment that wasn't the same toxic environment I tried to get away from - If nothing changes, nothing changes. In order for me to get & stay sober, I needed to change EVERYTHING about my life, the people I hung around, the places I went, & mainly the environment I lived in. My choice to live in a sober home changed my life for the better, & I am forever grateful. I have 2 yrs of recovery now, I live in my own apartment, have a full time job, & am a positive person in society. I owe it all to God & House of Grace. Thank you for your consideration! Sincerely-

Marissa Spille

31. Tiffany S. - House of Grace Sober Living

To whom it may concern:

Hi my name is Tiffany Sund. I was a resident at House of Grace from 12/07/18 to 01-01-21. Sober living has benefited my life in so many ways. It taught me how to live with others in a stable, safe and recovery based environment with other like-minded people. I learned how to communicate in a healthy manner, cope with addiction and graduate a treatment program. After I graduated a treatment program I worked a full-time job and was able to save money to get my own place. I still attend AA/NA.

meetings and work with
a ~~self~~ sponsor. This house
was amazing. I have
24 months sober and
I ~~couldn't~~ couldn't
have done it without
this house. Thank you
for reading!

Tiffany Sund

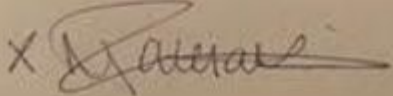
1/28/2021

32. Nicole R. - House of Grace Sober Living

Sober houses

Hello, my name is Nicole and I am in long term recovery. I lived in a sober house while I was in outpatient. The sober house is and was instrumental in starting me off on my road to full recovery! Sober houses are a MUST, in my opinion, in helping keep people either early in recovery or people like my birth mother who has lived in a sober house for the past 30 years off the streets and sober. Without the sober house, left to their own devices, most people who are battling addiction, will not make it on their own ESPECIALLY right out of treatment. If prices raise or sober houses are taken away, more and more people, not yet strong enough to stay sober on their own will end up going back to what they know, drugs and alcohol. There then will be more homelessness, overdose rates will raise and we will lose so many more talented human beings than we already have bc of the awful disease of addiction. Please rethink decisions YOU are making for other people's lives and the pressures that you are putting on sober homes. If you have never battled the awful disease of addiction or had to live in a sober home to stay alive, count your blessings. Thank you so much and I hope you realize the seriousness of this issue.

~Nicole

X  1/28/21

33. Tanya J. West - One Love Housing

January 27th, 2021

To Minnesota State Legislature and Minnesota State Representatives,

My name is Tanya J. West and I am currently a house manager for One Love Sober Housing in a North Minneapolis location. Before becoming a house manager in sober living I was a resident.

Before I came to sober living, my life was unmanageable. For many years of my life, I had no goals, no direction, no guidance, no structure, and no positive influences. I felt I had no real purpose here on earth. I became an addict and my life was totally unmanageable, and I felt there was no hope for me.

I ended up getting caught up in the legal system. After spending some time in the workhouse, I entered an inpatient treatment program. After I completed treatment, I needed to go to a place where I could continue practicing the tools I gained from treatment and be in a safe environment, with structure and amongst other sober minded individuals. I moved into One Love Sober Living. Being in a sober house has helped me to be a better law abiding citizen. I have direction, I now have structure in my everyday life skills, I have positive guidance and influences that I look up to. I now have goals of one day being a pillar in my community to help youth that came from broken homes, that have mental health issues and drug addiction like I had myself, and to give them direction, guidance, and structure in their lives. Just in the year that I was living in sober housing, I have been able to find a real purpose and I want to help with getting rid of this drug pandemic to make our communities safer for our children and grandchildren to grow. Truthfully, I never understood the concept of why you would call prisons, "correctional facilities". Because I don't see the prison systems CORRECTING anything in life. The real correctional facilities are when you are living back in the communities, in housing that teaches you how to be a responsible law abiding citizen, with structure, positive influences and life skills. The prison system is just punishment for the poor choice people make in their life. But the real life skills and correction starts when you come to a sober living facility or sober house. I agree that there are some addicts that have been in sober living and they feel that it didn't help them. I can only see two reasons why they feel that way. 1.) Maybe the sober facility or home they were living in wasn't a well managed sober place. Or 2.) They really weren't ready to learn how to better their lives and/or due to legal issues, they were forced into being sober and really had no intentions on being law abiding citizens. But whatever the case, there are many that I have seen, come into our particular sober house and have had the best positive experience and have continued on their own living constructive sober living on their own. Sober housing is a stepping stone for those that want to better their lives with that structure they need to maintain a sober lifestyle. The sober house I manage now has 12 other women living in the home and they are all having life changing experiences that keep them motivated to continue to stay sober and to be law abiding citizens.

So with all that being said, to shut down these sober living houses and our facilities would only devastate our communities, send addicts back into a downward spiral, crime rates out of

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

control, and more deaths due to the drug pandemic. We need these safe and structured places in our communities throughout the state of Minnesota, and I honestly believe that we need a lot more of them. Of course they need to be under regulation and monitored to ensure that they will continue to be a safe environment for those that are needing and wanting to change their lives around. But without the stepping stone that a sober home can provide, there will be nothing for ppl that are coming out of prison, or inpatient treatments to continue down the right path. Just putting them back out in the streets to struggle will only make people feel more defeated and they will just turn back to what they know, drugs and criminal life. So if you really want to help make our state, the state of Minnesota better, you will understand the importance of sober housing.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Tanya J. West

Sober House Manager One Love Housing

Recovering Addict and Law Abiding Citizen (thanks to sober housing).

34. Gina Maynard - One Love Housing

To whom it may concern,

Just before being released from prison my release plan was denied. I was not able to go home. At the time I was devastated and a bit panicked. I didn't have a back up plan, I didn't know anyone else who had space for me to stay with them. So I began looking at sober house options, my only option to leave prison. I had no prior experience with sober houses but was shocked to discover that the few options there are for females were nearly all at capacity or operating with a waiting list. I was drawn to One Love, at first because of the name and it being faith based. At the time I was not really sure why I felt it was where I was supposed to be. I was released from prison and nervously arrived at my new home. Upon arriving I felt welcomed and accepted by the other women at the house. The house was clean, nice and cozy. Although I had only planned to stay for the 3 months minimum required by my parole. I have continued to stay for almost 7 months now. I now understand the purpose and reason for coming here. Had I returned home I would have been surrounded by people in active addiction, remained in a toxic relationship and eventually would have relapsed. Instead I have structure, am surrounded by recovery, living in an amazing home with women at various stages of their recovery. We are all working towards the same thing - healing, growing and rebuilding ourselves. We are a sisterhood, we help, love, support and hold each other accountable. One Love has become my home, a place I feel safe and loved, a place I am accepted, supported and appreciated. A place that has given me the opportunity to create friendships, gain resources, and discover just how much fun sobriety really is. I am learning how to live again, be responsible, show up sober and grateful everyday for life. A sober house is a stepping stone, providing a safe and structured environment for recovery. It is up to each of us to truly want to change and utilize the tools available to rebuild our life.

Sincerely,
Gina Maynard
One Love Sober House Resident

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

35. Anil Ramkissoon - Living Ark

01/27/2021

Anil Ramkissoon

9583 Parrish Avenue NE

Otsego, MN 55330

To Whom it may concern:

This sober house at the above address has given me a second chance in life, before this I left treatment and was homeless living in my car. The structure and support here, has given me the resources to put my life back together. I've been sober for 5 months and still going strong, without this sober house I will for sure go back to drinking and possible death.

Anil Ramkissoon,

Anil Ramkissoon

36. Nixon Vavantwerp - Living Ark

I am a former resident at Living Ark sober home.

This place saved my life. It promotes recovery and getting my independence back. The guys here are awesome and the owner goes above and beyond in helping out everyone.

Nixton Vanantwerp

N Vavantwerp

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

37. Lisa - Central Village House

How has Sober housing helped me to become who I am today?

Hi, my name is Lisa and I am an alcoholic in recovery and I currently reside in a sober house in St Paul, Minnesota. I have been in and out of numerous inpatient/outpatient treatment centers since 2009. I've always chose to return back to the toxic environment that I lived in after completing treatment, but in 2019 I chose to go live in a sober home. It's one of the best choices I've made in my life. I am very grateful today as I have 6 1/2 months of continuous abstinence from alcohol and I contribute a lot of this for choosing to live in a sober home.

Sober living has helped me in so many ways today. It has helped me become a stronger person. It has helped me work on being patient and tolerant. It has taught me to stay grounded. Living in sober living has helped me be accountable for my actions/behaviors and deal with them in a more effective way. The house manager genuinely cares about us and wants nothing but for us to SUCCEED!!!! I feel so strong in my recovery today and I make way better choices as well and I feel that sober housing has played a huge role in that.

How has Sober housing helped me to become who I am today?

Hi, my name is Lisa and I am an alcoholic in recovery and I currently reside in a sober house in St Paul, Minnesota. I have been in and out of numerous inpatient/outpatient treatment centers since 2009. I've always chose to return back to the toxic environment that I lived in after completing treatment, but in 2019 I chose to go live in a sober home. It's one of the best choices I've made in my life. I am very grateful today as I have 6 1/2 months of continuous abstinence from alcohol and I contribute a lot of this for choosing to live in a sober home.

Sober living has helped me in so many ways today. It has helped me become a stronger person. It has helped me work on being patient and tolerant. It has taught me to stay grounded. Living in sober living has helped me be accountable for my actions/behaviors and deal with them in a more effective way. The house manager genuinely cares about us and wants nothing but for us to SUCCEED!!!! I feel so strong in my recovery today and I make way better choices as well and I feel that sober housing has played a huge role in that.

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

38. Peter Dubose - Pink Cloud Recovery

Dear MASH,

My experience here at the Jordan House has been great I started off slow in the house but as time went on I started to grow as a person. I will be getting 11 months on the 3rd of February. I started Nuway in June and I graduated on November 20, 2020, I have also got a job at Kowalski's November 9th. I will be moving to St. Paul in February so I can start managing a sober house, so my experience at the Jordan House has been a wonderful stay and the people here have been a blessing.

Sincerely, Peter Dubose

39. Eric Fillman - One Love Housing

To Whom it may concern,

My name is Eric Fillman and I would like to share my experience with sober living. First, I would like to start out with a little of my past history. I started using drugs and alcohol at the age of twelve and continued heavily up until I was thirty-five. I've accumulated numerous minor drug offenses, DWI's and felony fleeing charges. I've never been able to stop my use for family, friends, or probation. Finally, after reaching the point of being homeless, sleeping in cars, having no family and friends that wanted anything to do with me. I decided it was time to get sober. One of the worst feelings I have ever had was not caring whether I would even wake up the next day. Due to getting a couple DWI's I had a choice of going to jail for a year or getting sober. I made the right choice and began a twenty-eight-day treatment. It was a nice time to get my head on straight and get my mental and physical health in order, but I knew I wasn't going to be able to get done with the program and be cured. That's when I had the opportunity to be a resident at One Love sober housing. It was there that I was able to learn how to deal with life and use the skills I was taught in treatment. To be able to be in a house with people that were so supporting and going through some of the same things I was dealing with was huge for me. You don't just get sober and suddenly things are great. With continuing in an outpatient treatment program when I moved in, I was able to get debt taken care, get rides to recovery meetings and expand my sober network. Finally, when I was ready to move on from treatment and get back to work the residents and staff helped me get a job where I am still currently employed. It was during this time I built real relationships with people and learned how to live life on life's terms. I continued to live at that house for one year when I was given the opportunity to manage of the sober houses where I currently reside. I love having the opportunity to give back what was so freely given to me. Part of my continued programming is to work with other addicts and alcoholics because not only does it help them it does so much more for me. I feel so blessed to be where I am at today. I had no idea what sobriety was going to look like for me, I just know I had to do it. I realize how important it is for me that I went to sober living after treatment. I know without I wouldn't have made it. My relationships with family are great, I enjoy waking up in the morning. My obsession to drink and use drugs is gone. I've learned there is nothing that you can't come back from and more importantly it is never too late to change. There are so many people that are just like me that need more than just a twenty eight day program and I look forward to meeting them and supporting them as they start down the same path that got me to where I am today. Through my

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

time at One Love Housing I've had to the opportunity to witness miracles at seeing people in the same spot I was in flourish in their recovery.

Sincerely,

Eric Fillman

40. Kristin Rapp - Right Time Sober Living

Jan. 25th 2021.

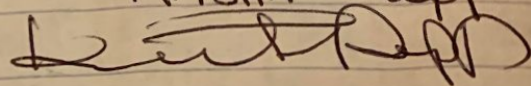
Dear Representative Baker,

My name is Kristin and I'm an addict. I have been Sober since Dec 1st 2018, 25 months. Longest I've been sober since I was 12 years old. I was one of the addicts who would abuse anything. Meth caused me the most consequences. I've been in and out of jail my whole life. Even went to prison once. I lost my kids my house my education (nursing school.) due to my addiction. I've been living in the street heavy in addiction since 2012. I'll be 38 this year and in the course of 20 plus years I have been to treatment 13 times. I've only been to one sober house. It was a game changer. It saved my life. When I left treatment I had no one and no where safe to go. I was suggested a sober house thru the NuWay program. Right Time Sober Living. 12 women in the house sober all the same thing in common.

Learn how to stay sober. Live a life of Recovery. I had the support I needed to heal and grow. I felt safe. I was held accountable, required to go to outside AA/NA meetings where I built a sober network. Ended up graduating Nuway. got a full time job and decided to stay at the sober house and pay. Rent! it gave me the support I needed. Eventually I had an opportunity to become the sober house manager. where I learned to be patient, assertive, responsible, caring, compassionate. I was able to help other addicts stay clean. This sober house saved my life. I'm grateful everyday I chose to come here. and would recommend sober living to anyone trying to get sober and change there life

Sincerely

Kristin Rapp



41. Tracy Curley - Right Time Sober Living

①

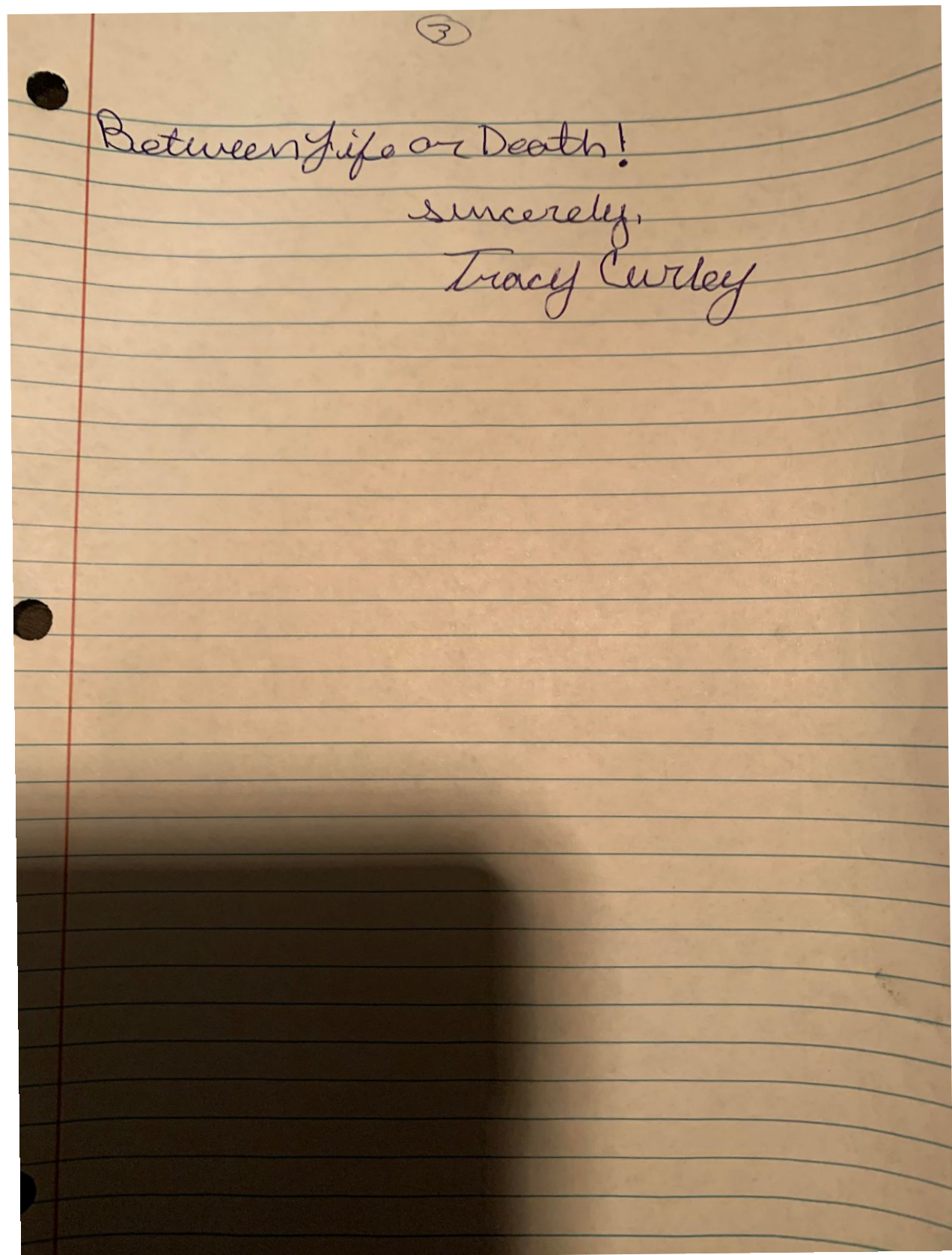
Thursday Jan, 28th
2021

Dear Representative Baker,

I'm writing this letter so that I can express the importance of sober living, and what this program has done for me and continues to do, sober housing and programs for addiction have literally saved my life! Without the support of my sober house I could not be where I am today!

Let me first say my name is Tracy and I am an addict, I am 51 years old and have struggled with addiction my whole life. It wasn't until Dec 18th 2019 that I finally surrendered to the fact that my life had become unmanageable. I decided to enter a treatment center for drugs & alcohol, I entered that program with only the clothes on my back, I was ready to face this head on. I stayed at the treatment center for close to 90 days, I felt safe and healthy. I was excited to graduate, all at once reality hit me, I had no where to go, I panicked, I thought if I leave here and I have no where to go I will for sure go back to the only thing I've known my whole life, the streets. I decided with my counselor to enter an after care program at Neway in St. Paul, because I had no money and no address I still was scared I wouldn't have housing, so Neway told me that there was a camp

that Participates in a program that provides Housing for people in there program and that they will pay rent as long as I am in after care but I would be responsible for a small portion of the rent, they gave me the # for right time sober living, I called and was able to move in that next day, they were very professional and worked with me to get placed in a house, I was nervous but very grateful! Had it not been for me, Sober Housing I believe whole heartedly that I would not be sober today, I have been sober for almost 14 months the longest I've ever been in my life. I graduated after care on Dec. 31st 2021, I was able to find a full time job and get a car, so I can successfully get my own place to live and be able to pay rent on my own, but I have chosen to stay at the sober house, I live in and pay full rent. I chose to do this because, I get the support that I need here, I credit my way and right sober living as a huge part of my sobriety. Without this program I may have ended up in prison or worst dead. I am only one voice but I know there are many others who feel the same way! Thank you for taking the time to read this letter! People struggling with addiction need sober housing, it can be the difference



42. Janet - Right Time Sober Living

January 28, 2021
Janet, [Signature]
5551 Fernwood St. N.
Roseville, MN 55113

Dear Representative Dave Baker,

I am enthralled with your bill and
file # 1440.

I have been sober 18 months at this time.
I went to both inpatient & outpatient
treatment. Then what? I had lost
everything including myself to addiction.
I did not know how to live a sober life. I
then entered Right time sober living & learned
how to live. Without the Sober House I
would be in the street drunk. That is all
I know. The Sober House brought me
AA, CMA Meetings, friends, accountability,
chores, adventures in life. Without JJ
Sober Living I would not have made
this journey. Please fight for your \$1
Many thanks
Janet

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

43. Ray Jensen - Right Time Sober Living

Representative Baker,

It has come to my understanding that there is some doubts and concerns regarding the sober house community in Minnesota.

I have lived in a sober house for a little over 2 years now and I have seen a few things. I've seen lives be saved, chances and fresh starts be given and even serious mistakes be managed and handled.

I'm an alcoholic that has recently celebrated 2 year 6 months of sobriety. There are 4 things that have enabled me to reach this milestone.

- my counselors (and by extension treatment center)
- my sober house (and by extension the strong sober community it provides)
- my renewed faith in God
- and my self.

I work downtown St. Paul as a security officer. In my position I deal with many homeless people in active addiction. This also helps me because it shows me where I've been and yes, where I could be again. I have been blessed because I have been able to reach out to a few of these people and help them because of my experiences. I talk them through how to get a Rule 25 and then how to find sober housing. This gets them off the street and started in their own recovery. This is possible because of the extensive and strong sober house community in the Twin Cities as well as the mid west.

It is time for me to move on to my own apartment (my child wants to move back in with me) but with the current environment (covid) it's proving to be hard to find something in my price range. The current sober house company I stay at, RightTime Sober Living, is letting me stay self pay until I fully get my feet under me and can move on.

If there is any doubt that the recovery community and specifically the sober housing community is needed come spend the day with us and hear our stories. Every story is different but they also have common threads.

The need for safety, community and a roof over our head.

Thank you for your time,

Ray Jensen

rayjensena2z@gmail.com

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

44. Jeffrey Wagner - Como Area Sober Living

To whom it may concern:

As a sober house for the last 3yrs. I have seen many guys in recovery benefit from sober living.

It bring recovering people a safe and a guide to sober living

With 10 people all with the start to a new life try hey talk to each other about feelings and what's working for them

They form sober friends and are required to go to 2 AA meetings a week plus a house meeting for feedback and how they are doing

With out sober houses the relapse rate is higher cause they go back to where they lived and using friends

I know the sober house has kept me sober and clean for 41/2 yrs

This is the longest I've been. Clean!!

thank you

Jeffrey wagner

612-434-6262

45. David - Como Area Sober Living

I can honestly say that living in a sober house was the single biggest factor in my ability to maintain long term sobriety. Looking back on my time in the Como Sober Living home I always feel like my higher power put me exactly where I needed to be and I recognize now how incredibly fortunate I was to have the opportunity to be a resident there. My success or failure in this world hinges on my ability to stay sober. When people ask me how I have been able to stay sober and find some success in this world I tell them every time its because I chose to live in a sober home for an extended period of time.

I moved into The Como Sober Living home after completing my second inpatient treatment program. I was 45 days sober at the time, I was 33 years old, and I had no place else to go. I wanted sobriety but I had no idea what maintaining long term sobriety looked like and I had serious doubts about my ability to achieve it. Thankfully a sober living home is the perfect place for a person in that predicament. The first person I met was the owner of the house, he was very kind and welcoming and his demeanor went a long way to help assuage the apprehension I was feeling. He explained the house rules, showed me my room, and told me he thought I would probably get along with my room mate pretty well. He was right my room mate and I became fast friends, he was a little bit younger than me but we had incredibly similar outlooks on life and sobriety. We started doing pretty much everything together. We went to meetings, we went to movies, we went to the mall. We even purchased motorcycles together and took them on vacation for 4 days to Arkansas together all while living in the sober house. We are still best friends to this day, almost 2 years removed from sober living. In fact thats one of the most important sober relationships that I have in my life and I owe it to living in a sober house.

Some of the great things about living in a sober home are that it surrounds you with like minded people who are all trying to accomplish the same goal. All the guys in the house were friendly and engaging. We shared in each others successes and we helped each other work through our individual struggles by sharing insight and experience that we had all learned on our individual journeys and the sober house gave us a safe clean environment to do that in. A sober house provides people with the perfect mix of freedom and structure. It allows you to get out into the real world and start forming a foundation for future success all while keeping you accountable to your sobriety.

My life today looks nothing like it did 4 years ago when I was using and I owe all the success and joy that I have experienced in my life up to this point to my 2 year stay at the Como Sober Living home. For anyone considering whether or not sober living is the right choice I would highly encourage you to embrace sober living for the fantastic opportunity that it is.

Regards, David

46. Michael Cann

I am an alumni of sober housing, and it was always a vital part of my early recovery, having a safe sober place to come home to was very essential, especially in those first 6 months of sobriety when cravings were strong at times, having a healthy environment to foster recovery and be held accountable played a very important role in keeping me on the right track. My recovery journey wouldn't have been the same without sober housing

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

47. Nicholas - Como Area Sober Living

To whom it may concern,

When I first entered Como sober living I was fresh out of my fifth treatment! I had no idea what to expect! It turned out to be one of the best decisions I ever made. It gave me a safe place to stay clean, with people who have that same goal in mind. John was very welcoming and actively visited to make sure we were all okay. We were still free to do as we please, we were able to start working, have family/friends over, while still having structure/accountability for our recovery. My roommate and I came from completely different back rounds but had the same mentality for our recovery and outlook on life. We did everything together, from meetings, to going to the mall/movies, to buying motorcycles and going on vacation(all things I couldn't even dream of doing while in active addiction) all while staying in sober living. To this day he is still my best friend and we actively stay in contact, I stayed in Johns Como area sober living for 2 years and I believe it is the main reason I'm clean to this day after almost 2 years after leaving! I have 4.5 years clean, was able to start my career, purchase a home, have a lot of friends in recovery that I can count on! If someone wants to get clean I will always recommend sober living! It was a invaluable experience that I will treasure for the rest of my life!

Regards, Nicholas

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

48. Jenna Larkin - Summit Hill Sober Living

To Whom It May Concern,

On January 11th, 2021, I celebrated ten years of continuous sobriety from drugs and alcohol. When I got sober at the young age of 21, I was literally dying from drug and alcohol abuse. I was so physically and mentally addicted to drugs and alcohol, that it took me a few tries to quit completely. I had went through four different treatment centers and three different sober living homes in St. Paul (including Summit Hill Sober Living, The Retreat house, and St. Paul Sober Living) and I will tell you this—each sober house helped save my life.

Summit Hill Sober Living, in particular, helped me tremendously. It was the first sober house I ever lived in. I came from the suburbs and was unfamiliar with city life; I was terrified and I was desperate for help. Summit Hill Sober Living made me feel safe, cared for and provided me a family of recovering women who supported me and lifted me up. I not only learned how to live life again sober, I grew up and became a woman in those houses. They provided me with the tools and the resources to be successful, starting with how to ride the city bus to my Caribou Coffee job and ending with how to not drink anymore and live a sober life.

I quickly want to mention the importance of multiple options for sober living. Usually when you relapse in a house you are asked to leave. If I did not have any other options for another sober house and I only had one chance, I would not be here today. The fact that there are multiple options and availability in sober living homes in St. Paul is absolutely crucial. Sometimes we need more than just one shot to stay and be sober for the rest of our lives, and that's ok, it's part of the process.

I would almost bet my life on it today—that if it weren't for my 16 months total in sober living from 2011-2012 I would not be alive today. That may sound dramatic to some—but it is the truth for addicts and alcoholics like myself.

Ten years later, I am an upstanding citizen of St. Paul. I received my Bachelor's degree from St. Catherine University, I have a beautiful six year old daughter, I have an established career where I have the honor of helping those in need daily, and I give back to the community by volunteer work and donations.

I have also witnessed hundreds of people that I know on a first name basis whose lives have also been changed and saved by sober living homes in St. Paul.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jenna Larkin

49. John Pape - Horizon House

From: John Pape

RE: Sober House Living and Recovery-

When Released from Federal Custody in Oct of 2021. I had no clue where to go or what to do. I had done 8 years 4 months in Prison Clean wanting something Better.

I have been in a Sober house (Horizon House West) for 3 months. In that time I have started a solid Sober network, found a Church in the Community and a Support group for Men.

All this has been possible Because of who manages and operates this house. They have played intricate parts in my remaining Sober and being accountable for what I do

This Comes from a man who has done this 9 times before and failed. This is the first time I have remained clean and have strived for and attained some of my goals.

This has been the best transition from prison to a Sober release that I have personally experienced.

Would I recommend it to people only if you want to stay clean and goal orientated.

Thank You All the Staff at Horizon House for your care and attention to details. And for making all of us feel like we count to.

50. Matt Zavorel - Horizon House

Matt Zavorel

Sober Housing is completely on another level^{up} for transitional Housing to anyone seeking long term recovery. There is a level of accountability expected of you but there is also a sense of belonging and community. It is a home filled with others that are on the same journey all at different times of the journey some have been there and can share advice. Sober housing has helped me in my recovery by being an essential part of my recovery by being paired with a patient it has helped me along my journey. I am currently 1 year sober and I can attribute the last 7 months of my recovery to Horizon house west in Duluth, mn. The management is top notch and helps you walk your road to recovery and is always there for you. The house owner has provided us with an amazing house to live in and we appreciate that every day by keeping it clean and respecting it. I highly recommend to anyone looking for a place to continue their journey of recovery to live in a sober house it will be a better choice than doing it on your own. In recovery we are taught the opposite of addiction is connection and living in a sober house you will find that connection and accountability to live in long term recovery.

51. Keith Bosley Jr.- Horizon House

Horizon House has helped me
in many ways such as putting a roof
over my head so I didn't run back to
old bad places I used to be at in
duluth. The Community is very good here
Everyone is truly helpful with everything!
& Supportive in recovery.

I am now 436 day sober into my
recovery and I feel great!
And everybody has been supportive since being
here. I love it. I would def recommend
Sober living to someone. But only someone I
think deserves it. Cause alot of people
take it for granted or abuse it. I'm def
grateful for this amazing home. So thank you
guys for the opportunity.

Keith Bosley Jr

52. Zachary Needham - Horizon House

I am absolutely grateful to be here @ Horizon House East. Both Talib and Clinton are very accepting and treat us as equals. So right off the bat I felt welcomed & safe. Not only does this house help hold myself accountable for my behaviors, it also helps me feel not so alone. I just moved out here from Minneapolis and would feel much more isolated if it weren't for my housemates. I haven't used meth since August 12th and I am in therapy for the first time in awhile. I can honestly say that without

Sober living That I don't ~~think~~
think I would have accomplished
this. The other men in this
house have been Kind, supportive
and respectful. There is
Something to be said about
the fellowship of a house
full of guys struggling
with similar issues. I have
rarely achieved this length of
sobriety on my own; Throughout
my life I have been in and out
of jails & institutions and
I appreciate how progressive
Minnesota is when it comes to
addiction. I would highly
recommend sober living to any-
body seriously wanting a sober
lifestyle. — Zachary Needham
1/28/21

53. Leonard Bozemon - Horizon House

1.28.21

Dear. MASH

My name is Leonard Bozemon I just wanted to explain how Horizon House helped me obtain my long term goals well I just want to say I had been hard for me to obtain housing Because of my past use and Background. and stability is a really Big part of my Relaps or lack there of stability. So that is a couple of ways Horizon House is important to me. To Be able to get traction To get my feet planted firmly on the ground. well I haven't Been here long Enough to tell But so far the community is a very supportive group of guys and I feel very privileged To not only Be here But to have met these men. its far in a manner were we all look out for Each other and its like a little village. I like it very much so I would Definitely Recommend the Horizon House to anyone seeking long term sobriety and looking for a change really this place has Been amazing I like the idea of the support of a sober community I Really Do and I cant wait to see what the future has in store for me for once Im excited about my future I Really am

54.

55. Adam J. Caya - Horizon House

My experience started when I detoxed off heroine. I was also physically sick from a stomach bacteria. My health prevented me from participating in a inpatient program. I entered Horizon house, detoxed off methadone even by choice. I graduated treatment, and started good job. Horizon house saved my life, and continues to save it everyday through every trial and tribulation. Very supportive environment. The sober living house I live in actually cares and would bend over backwards to help you as long as your helping yourself. It is a strong need, especially these days we have faced. I would strongly recommend sober living to others, it did wonders for me.

Adam J. Caya

56. Jose - Horizon House

Living in a sober house
has helped me transition
Back into Society. I was able
to find a job, and a place
to move to after I am done here.
While living here I was able to
establish a sober support network.
I learned how to be more
vulnerable with some of the house
peers I got close with. The
house management help me/other's
stay in check. The whole idea
to live in a sober house
is to help ~~an~~ someone to help
rebuild your life such as being in bed
on time to waking up to providing
for yourself. Yes I'd recommend ~~that~~
~~many~~ a sober living house is one
of the best ways to get someone
back into society.

Jose
1/10/21

57. Jason Holland - Horizon House

I wouldn't have been able to get so where I'm at in my recovery without the opportunity to come to the Horizon house. There support from the Nursing Program which covered most of the rent each month while I was able to find a job along with continued care in there treatment program. I've been at the Horizon house now for 3 months. In that time I was able to find a job, complete the Nursing Program, Find sober support in the Recovery Community here in Ukiah. I would recommend the opportunity to go to a sober house to anyone who wants long term recovery. The management and the people who run Horizon house are great as well. I have nothing but good things to say about my experience at the horizon house.

Jason Holland
for Matt

58. Doug Desenberg - Rejuvenate Homes

**Doug Desenberg
184 N. Howell St
St. Paul, MN 55104**

I was a resident of Rejuvenate Homes Dayton House from September 2016 through November 2018. Prior to this I'd had many failed attempts at sobriety. When I came to Minnesota in July 2016 and the residential recovery program at The Retreat I was very sick physically, spiritually and emotionally. My life was in shambles. When my time at The Retreat ended 35 days later, to say the least all the above still applied. Going to a supportive, structured sober living home saved my life. Without question my time spent in the sober house was the difference maker in my building a life of lasting recovery. There are many identifiable reasons for this. In a nutshell, the sober house provided me a safe sober place to live, the support of the other men in the house, accountability for living a productive life focused on recovery and the time I needed to make lasting, safe, intimate friendships and become immersed in the recovery community and the community of St. Paul.

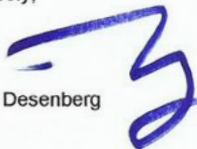
It is important to note that my sober house was and still is a member home of MASH. They operated, managed and maintained the house according to the MASH standards, which I came to see as brilliant and well designed. They are rigorous, altruistic, ethical and to a large degree designed to point people in early sobriety towards lasting recovery. The existence of MASH in my opinion is why the whole sober house thing works and has changed and saved so many lives over the years.

In my case I also really needed to be in a sober house where Medically Assisted Treatment drugs were not present. Prior to coming to Minnesota for recovery, I had been prescribed Subutex (Buprenorphine) in an attempt to deal with prescription opioid addiction. I am not here to pass judgement on MAT generally but in my case it became my biggest problem and health issue. I abused the Subutex and when I entered detox in 2016 I had a very large habit, taking upwards of 48 mg per day. It was killing me. Getting off that medication was without question the hardest, most painful thing I've ever endured and the withdrawal symptoms lasted for at least 6 months. I needed a sober house where that medication wasn't present. I was very fortunate that such sober houses existed. I believe that is important for a lot of people and I'm grateful that there are sober homes today that are completely free of mood altering medications...as well as sober homes where such medications are permitted for those who choose that path

Living in a structured, safe sober living home really worked for me. Today I have been sober for nearly 5 years and I lead a productive life that's focused on helping others in their recovery journey. I am a contributing member of the local community of recovering people, I consider St. Paul my home and I contribute to the community in positive ways. I and my family will always be very grateful for The Dayton House, Rejuvenate Homes and MASH.

Sincerely,

Doug Desenberg



59. Misty Eliason

meliason@d.umn.edu

January 31, 2021

Minnesota Association of Sober Homes (M.A.S.H.)

To Members of M.A.S.H.,

I am writing in regards to my stay at Lisa Gillette's sober home in Forest Lake from December 2013 to spring of 2014. I attended treatment at Hazelden in Center City from August 29, 2013 to December 10, 2013. As part of my treatment plan I was to stay in a sober home following inpatient treatment. I was happy to find Lisa's sober home in Forest Lake. It worked out perfectly in that I was close enough to the Twin Cities to attend ongoing treatment (Intensive Outpatient Treatment and Extended Outpatient Treatment) yet was in the nice setting of a small town. I am not a fan of city life and I was thankful to find a spot in a quieter area. I still recall the day Lisa picked me up at Hazelden. In a time of worry and uncertainty, Lisa's warm and kind demeanor helped me feel comfortable from the get-go. She made me feel at home instantly.

At the time, I was not enthused (to say the least) to go to treatment let alone extend my time away from home by staying in a sober home for four months. Looking back, it was an essential part of my recovery. Lisa's sober house provided a safe and supportive environment in a period of which I was quite vulnerable to relapse. The rules of the house were clearly outlined and the curfew and sign-out helped me learn to be reliable and communicate to others where I was going and an estimate of when I would be back. This previously was something I was horrible at! Back during my drinking escapades my dear husband spent hours worrying where I was and when (and if) I was going to return home.

Staying with the other ladies of the house helped me work on setting boundaries and learned and practiced a style of assertive communication. This was key since one of the many parts I needed to learn as part of my recovery from alcoholism was communicating effectively and saying "no" in a kind, yet direct manner. Historically, I had a difficult time saying "no" which often resulted in the dreaded resentment us alcoholics frequently drink over.

I was still new in the program (A.A.) while I stayed at the house. As part of the rules of the house we were expected to attend meetings and encouraged to look for a sponsor (if we didn't already have one). Lisa served as a temporary sponsor while I was still learning

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

about A.A. Even after I left the sober house to return home Lisa was in contact with me. She was always there if I needed to talk or needed advice — and she still is!

Sincerely,

Misty Eliason

60. Trevor Burns

Trevor Burns

610 Summit Ave #202
Saint Paul, MN
(218)349-8778
Trevor.burnsmn@gmail.com

21st January 2021

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing this letter today on behalf of recovery oriented housing in Minnesota. "Sober homes" offer addicts and alcoholics a space to work on themselves and return to our communities safer and healthier than they were before entering.

I know this because I lived in one of these sober homes. Coming to the house in Saint Paul newly sober after years of struggling with alcohol and drugs I found community, safety, and a group of men living together committed to bettering themselves. Without the house's support and safety I would not be where I am today.

While at the sober home I was able to work on my recovery-being held accountable by other residents and the rules in place to help me stay sober. I was encouraged and able to find employment. I found a community that has stuck with me and helped me maintain my sobriety 6 years later-a community so important to me I now live only blocks from my original sober home.

I believe that there could be improvements to how sober housing is regulated but those regulations must be made with the intent of improving housing accessibility and not in any way limit these life saving programs. The system is by no means broken, it saves lives and makes our state healthier every day.

The housing I lived in was on a busy, noisy street in Saint Paul-we were the quiet house. Residents worked on their programs, found employment, and became members of the neighborhood. A community's unjustifiable fear of addicts is not reason enough to limit what is a much needed system that saves lives in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Trevor Burns

Letters from Sober Home Alumni

61. Aubrey Williams - Como Area Sober Living

Hello my name is Aubrey Williams and I'm currently staying at Como Area Sober Living Danforth house owned and operated by mr john larson he is a all around great guy super professional and also a inspiration to many in recovery..and this is such a great environment to be in.I am currently about 9 months sober and i believe that without having a sober environment to live in recovery would look alot different for me..i am very amazed at way the sober house system operates its very effective for the newcomers when they see that recovery is possible because they have housemates with a substantial amount of clean time.Here at como area sober living i am blessed to have a house manager and housemates who are living examples of how effective the sober house system is in rehabilitating alcoholics and addicts.I have learned the effects that drugs and alcohol have on the human mind through countless meetings and just fellowshiping with my brothers and sisters in recovery..i believe the sober house system is highly beneficial to the success of the recovering addict but yeah i am super grateful that i have access to a system that motivates and educates me on why staying clean is the way to live thanks for the love and support yours truly Aubrey Williams.