



Healing Is Possible!

Reflecting the glow of recovery from Starlight at Tamassee

By Jon Holland, CEO of Tamassee DAR School



“Once an addict, always an addict.” Over the years, I’ve heard that phrase countless times, usually by those exasperated with a person struggling with addiction in their family or workplace. We’ve seen how addiction is so often a progressive and degenerative disease. Our hearts have been broken by a loved one who goes to treatment, seems to make progress, and then relapses. We’ve worried about the impact of a parent’s addictive behavior on their children, fearing the cycle may repeat in kids’ lives. It’s easy to see and feel all of this, give into hopelessness, and let these words slip from our lips, “Once an addict, always an addict.”

But that’s not the last word. I know because I’ve seen hope take root, spout, grow, and then shade lives and families. I’ve known women and men with twenty, thirty, and forty years of sobriety – and not just white knuckled abstinence but real life transformation. I know good souls who got sick and tired of living enslaved to their habit and broke free. They fought

and fought to get there, but they did. Women and men who not only left bottles and needles behind but experienced a renovation of their character – a true spiritual rebirth. People who became loving spouses and parents, who restored broken relationships, who set right the damage they had done, who became model employees, who served in their churches, and who were exemplary citizens in their community.

When we give into the hopelessness of “Once an addict, always an addict,” we accept addiction as a permanent condition and accept harm reduction as the best we can do. Now, I’m all for harm reduction. I wear my seat belt while I drive and use a pot holder when I cook. I support any wise step we can offer to reduce the harm to folks struggling with addiction until and while they take the often long road of recovery. Yet I also know we can do more than minimize pain. We can offer hope! Healing is in fact possible.

Recovery from addiction is hard work. We must face the trauma (often from childhood) at the root of destructive behavior. We learn to trust and bond with healthy, caring people who will support us. We get fearlessly honest about our history and our triggers. We make amends for our wrongs. We learn new, life-giving ways to cope with life’s challenges. We embrace the glorious experience of God’s love, forgiveness, presence, and guidance. And much, much more. This work isn’t done in 28 or 90 days. It’s a life-long process of learning to be a healthy adult. But it can be done. Hope is real, and healing is possible.



This conviction drives Tamassee DAR School’s new Starlight community for children and mothers in recovery. To learn more about Starlight at Tamassee, visit www.starlight.tdarschool.org or contact us at starlight@tdarschool.org or 864-944-1390. If you or your group would be interested in a presentation on recovery, contact Jon Holland at jholland@tdarschool.org.