



Media Release

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People in Recovery Share Stories, Encourage Others to Seek Treatment

Celebration held as part of National Recovery Month

Arkansans in recovery from substance abuse and mental illness shared their stories during a National Recovery Month kickoff event in Little Rock on Friday in an effort to let others know that treatment is effective and people do recover.

The event, held outside the Clinton Presidential Center, was sponsored by the Department of Human Services Division of Behavioral Health Services (DBHS). National Recovery Month is celebrated each September to raise awareness of recovery and encourage the voices of those who are recovering from behavioral health issues.

Blaine Kalb, who spoke at the event, has been sober from alcohol and drugs for almost 14 years. He works in social services, and he and his wife are raising their two grandchildren. He said sobriety changed his life.

“Working with DBHS was instrumental in my recovery. They gave me a safe place to get clean and taught me how to live clean,” Kalb said. “Coming back here to speak is such an honor. It made me reflect a bit and realize how blessed I am.”

In Arkansas, 32.2% of adults report “poor mental health,” higher than the national average of 30.9%. Among adults ages 18-26, 18% report they are addicted to alcohol.

Joy Figarsky, director of DBHS, says the main message is that recovery is possible for everyone.

“It may be an uphill battle, and it may be tough, but the rewards on the other side are worth the fight,” Figarsky said.

Lonnie Phillips, who was acquitted of a felony for mental health reasons, told of his experience with the state’s Conditional Release Program, which monitors people acquitted of crimes because of mental

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disease or defect. The program was founded by Governor Bill Clinton in 1989. It is designed to monitor the treatment and progress of people acquitted of crimes after they are released conditionally from the Arkansas State Hospital. Phillips was monitored for five years. He graduated from the program last month.

“I am so fortunate that the State gave me a second chance and got me into this program,” he said. “It means a lot to me to be able to stand before these people today and talk about being healthy.”

Recovery Month began in 1989. Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. If you or someone you know is in need of services, call 1-501-686-9164.