



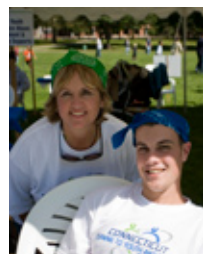
Joins in CCAR's Recovery Walks!



*Saturday, September 20, 2008
Bushnell Park, Hartford, CT*



**Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families:
Joins in CCAR's Recovery Walks! 2008
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Every year Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR) hosts a Recovery Walks! Event in Bushnell Park, in downtown Hartford in late September which has been officially proclaimed Recovery Month. This year Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families (CTYF) gave families and youth with alcohol and drug recovery issues a group to walk with. A place to turn for information, and support from people, "who have been there." A passionate group full of hope that youth and family quality prevention, treatment and recovery can be accessible and possible.

The day was a beautiful, sunny, breezy autumn New England Day, some of us remembered that it was just like the first Recovery walk nine years ago, and the second walk too come to think of it, and many, many others. Below the glistening golden dome of the States' Capital, the swaying balloon arch and grass still wet with dew at 7a.m., we set up our new Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families booth. Brand new provocative signs, tent, tables, and popcorn maker ready we noted we should have brought dry sneakers, hot coffee and more plastic bags.



Lessons learned from old timers, with their smiles of sweetness and joy, they tell us to keep coming, and never lose heart. While embracing the enthusiasm and passion of the youth and whole families who are pleading for access to recovery as families, we are the next generation that they now share the baton with. Recovery elders with purple sashes that display 14, 24, and 34 years of recovery; teaching us how to deal with everything from covering our extension cords, to setting up our hand washing station, to the importance of using the right language next time on our signs and posters, ("We do not think of ourselves as consumers of anything or substance abusers.") We will take their teasing because throughout this advocacy process they have been an inspiration to us about how to cultivate recovery capital, when, how and with whom. We come with appeals about barriers, good old boys and girls, politics, and they always listen, smile and understand. They taught us that our presence at this walk can help transform conditions and lives, bringing peace and harmony.



Thank you everyone, collectively working together we did it again. Given the relatively short time that CTYF has been around and how close this event was to our other events, we had a wonderful turnout. It was a very positive, successful day for all of us. Our new four color T-Shirts advertising our new website, stickers with our mission, color handouts and materials all looked so cool. The day really got us out there and helped to create the kind of public and political awareness and visibility we are aiming for. Commissioner Kirk spent lots of time at our booth talking with our youth and families. CEO's and provider staff from treatment centers gave us their cards to connect and support us. Over 2,000 people participated in the walk, 12 Connecticut Turning to Families members helped out at our booth. Our CTYF mailing list grew with lots of new names. We gave out lots and lots of recovery video's so our stories will be seen and our voices heard over and over again in many groups, meetings, homes, schools, churches and treatment programs. Last but not least we made \$350.00 in popcorn sales, covering our costs and leaving us money to invest for more youth and family recovery advocacy.

Ashley and Tiffany were an inspiration to the rest of us all day, ever ready to make that popcorn, and to serve, serve and serve some more. Greg, Steve, Vinny, Max, Chris and Jen, treated everyone with warmth and gentleness. Tenaciously, Sue and Cindy kept walking and talking, making their second and third loop around the park; unstoppable moms on a crusade!

Our tent became the place to hang out, enjoy some popcorn, share stories and information, including DVD's and handouts.

We met all guests with an outstretched hand, listening to their pleas and stories about trying to reclaim their families. Our encouragement, surveys and calls to join us in taking action were part of our promise that something can be done. We seemed to ease anger, fear and impatience, with words of hope and recovery calm. Everyone left smiling and there were lots of hugs. There was an extraordinary sense of not being alone and our group being part of a community. A community that transcends all barriers, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, religion, type of addiction, diagnosis or path to recovery. Our young people matter, and our families own recovery matters also.



For many of us CCAR has been the pioneer we look to, and its walks and guidance in establishing Connecticut's peer recovery support system are our inspiration. Seeing youth and families join their event and walking together with them to spread our shared message was a day of great joy for all of us. Family members, youth and friends, across the life-span with hope and unity, saying "we want changes in Connecticut for our youth so they can know about how good life can be in recovery - happy, joyous and free!"



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