



# Transformations



A quarterly update for University of Colorado Hospital Foundation's Supporters, Friends, Patients and their Families



Bruce Schreffel

## CeDAR Celebrates Milestone

**Five years after opening its doors, CeDAR an indispensable UCH resource**

By *Bruce Schreffel, President and CEO*

Congratulations to CeDAR on five years of excellence in serving the addiction community in Colorado and beyond. While the Center for Dependency, Addiction and Rehabilitation's low-slung buildings may not dominate the skyline like University of Colorado Hospital's towers, they are a key part of one of the nation's top academic medical centers.

CeDAR, a partnership between University of Colorado Hospital and the University of Colorado School of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry, is far from a hidden gem. Franklin Lisnow, its founding executive director, is a past president of the NAADAC – the Association for Addiction Professionals – and counts among the nation's most respected leaders in addiction recovery. Frank has been passionate about addiction recovery since the 1970s, when he got a job at a jail to make ends meet. He soon recognized that most of the prisoners had drug and alcohol issues, and he began dedicating his life to helping them. CeDAR faculty and staff share Frank's passion.

CeDAR embodies the lessons Frank and his key staff have learned in their decades of experience helping addicts stay clean and embark on lives of recovery. (These lessons are, as you will see in this issue of *Transformations*, very different.)

**CeDAR's low-slung buildings may not dominate the skyline like the UCH towers, but they are a key part of one of the nation's top academic medical centers.**

As Frank discusses in these pages, the roots of addiction are complicated. But its impacts are all too vivid. Addiction destroys families, friendships, careers and, ultimately, individuals from all walks of life. Alcoholism alone is estimated to cause 500 million lost work days annually in this country, with health care costs to U.S. employers of \$187 billion in 2007.

CeDAR's offerings include an assessment/detoxification unit staffed 24/7 by registered nurses, a comprehensive 30-day residential program addressing the physical, spiritual, psychological and social aspects of addiction, and a residential extended-care program where patients can transition safely to independent living for as long as six months. There's a vibrant family program, and CeDAR alumni enjoy broad support through a wealth of meetings, lectures, events and activities.

Through it all, CeDAR brings to its patients the resources of one of the nation's top academic medical centers, in particular UCH's psychiatry, pain management and integrative medicine expertise. At the same time, of course, UCH patients gain from having the region's top addiction-recovery center in easy reach. This symbiotic relationship sets both CeDAR and UCH apart, with our patients as the ultimate beneficiaries.



Frank Lisnow

## Understanding – and Treating – the Many Faces of Addiction

**CeDAR treats physical, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of the disease**

By *Franklin Lisnow, MEd, MAC, Executive Director, CeDAR*

Just over five years ago, we opened the doors of the Center for Dependency, Addiction and Rehabilitation (CeDAR). From what had been a blank slate of weedy land just west of University of Colorado Hospital, we would create the top addiction treatment and recovery center in the Rocky Mountain region.

Now, as we await Bon Jovi's January 21 concert to celebrate our five-year anniversary (see inside for more on this), let's reflect on what we have accomplished.

CeDAR has helped change the lives of more than 1,400 people suffering from alcoholism, drug addiction and co-occurring conditions such as bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety, trauma and compulsive gambling.

People are seeking our help in increasing numbers, to the point that we've opened a second cottage, boosting our 30-day residential program capacity to the 50-patient maximum we envisioned when we opened. We've become

recognized as a world-class facility, hands-down the best addiction treatment center in the Rocky Mountain region. But to comprehend what CeDAR has achieved in such a short time, one must understand

what addiction actually is, and how hard it is to treat.

Addiction is when you're hooked on something to the point you can't

*See Understanding continued on page 2*

**Recovery means changing how former addicts live, who they willingly associate with, how they give back to society, and how they treat the people they love.**



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imagine not having it. The drug becomes an infrastructure of existence, and when you don't have it, your body rebels. Quenching addiction without the drugs that fuel it is extremely difficult. There is a physical aspect, of course. But addiction is a disease with deep emotional, psycho-social and spiritual elements too. The challenge of addiction recovery – CeDAR's challenge – is to tackle all of these issues and put patients on the path of long-term recovery.

For the physical, there are pharmacological aids, as well as carefully constructed diets and exercise regimens (exercise, in addition to helping strengthen the body, stimulates the brain's pleasure centers, filling a gap for the recovering addict). For the spiritual, we have a full-time chaplain in our beautiful, nondenominational Marian Pfister Anschutz Spiritual and Family Center. Why? You have to take addicts out of their belief that they're at the center of the universe. They have to learn again that there's something bigger

than them, something more important, something to give back to.

As for the emotional and psycho-social, that's where our counselors, nurses, psychiatrists and other staff shine. They work individually, in group therapy, in addiction and recovery education sessions and through 12-Step instruction and meetings to help patients understand – and overcome – their complicated diseases.

We call those who overcome addiction as being "in recovery." Because ending addiction is about much more than not using drugs. There is no finish line. Recovery means changing how former addicts live, who they willingly associate with, how they give back to society, and how they treat the people they love. At CeDAR, we have spent five years helping people change their lives in these ways. We look forward to many more.

## Bon Jovi to Rock CeDAR Five-Year Fundraiser



Keyboardist David Bryan, lead singer Jon Bon Jovi, guitarist Richie Sambora, and drummer Tico Torres

CeDAR turned five in November 2010. To celebrate, the renowned addiction-recovery center is revving up for a fundraising bash that promises to go down as one serious "Blaze of Glory." University of Colorado Hospital is partnering with AEG Live Rocky Mountains to host a benefit concert featuring Bon Jovi, one of America's great rock bands. Proceeds from the event will support CeDAR programs.

The evening includes dinner, a silent auction and a concert to remember. Sponsorship opportunities for 10-seat tables range from the

\$50,000 "Blaze of Glory" premier sponsorship (which includes recognition in all press and event communications, prominent signage at the event, VIP passes for a pre-concert reception with Jon Bon Jovi, and a signed guitar, among other goodies) to the \$2,500 "I'll be There for You" sponsorship.

### Details:

- Date: Friday, January 21, 2011  
Time: The Mixing and Grazing – 6:30 p.m.  
The Dinner – 7:30 p.m.  
The Concert – 8:45 p.m.  
Place: Colorado Convention Center, Korbel Ballroom,  
700 14th St., Denver, CO  
Register at: <http://www.uch.edu/cedar5years>  
More info: Visit the above website or call (303) 321-6204.

## CeDAR's Impact, Letter by Letter

### Notes from patients are windows into changed lives

The olive-green hanging folder has fattened – letter by letter, card by card – for five years. An inch thick and growing, it contains dozens of examples of the profound change CeDAR has brought to its patients' lives.

"We can never explain to you what you have done to encourage, care and love us these past few weeks," begins one, a typed letter.

"You and your staff truly work miracles!" says another, sent via e-mail. "I have never been more at peace than I am now. Armed with the harsh truths of this disease, I continue to confidently proceed down the path of sobriety."

A third adds, "Gratitude is a challenge to express when I am filled to overflowing and want you to understand how much this time with CeDAR has meant to me."

Many others have written similar sentiments. It should probably get redundant, reading these missives. But the personal triumphs and turnarounds reflected in these cursive lines and laser printouts provide insights into steep climbs from addiction's darkest places. Each card, each sheet of paper elevates the reader's sense of elation. One can't help but feel good for these people, or see that CeDAR is a rare and special place.

These same letters also offer insight into the "why" of CeDAR's success.

"CeDAR provided me with good people that care and that remind me that the world isn't all cutthroat," said one. "It helped me rise above having a



negative attitude about others."

"CeDAR approaches the disease of addiction as a family disease, which is the best way to give us tools and increase the odds against falling back into unhealthy behavior patterns," added another. "So many questions were answered by an incredible staff at the Family Center."

The writer continues: "Learning how to dialogue gave me an amazing tool in relating to my husband. It sees us through tough situations and leaves us feeling that it's OK to disagree as long as we hear each other and respect one another."

The uniqueness of CeDAR's staff often lands in these pages. "My time at CeDAR has brought my life a calm I had long forgotten, and a belief in miracles. Your tremendous, talented staff has been such an inspiration and tool of learning for me. You truly have a group of people working toward a common goal, and that is not always easy to accomplish."

Added another: "Your staff – the office people, nurses, counselors, doctors – have enriched our lives immensely. Truly, you all are life savers!!"

**"We can never explain to you what you have done to encourage, care and love us these past few weeks."**

# Successful Recovery a Family Affair



Al, Heather, and Mary Watson, outside the parents' Parker home.

Heather Watson's 30 days in CeDAR's residential program went by in a blur.

"You're detoxing, you're shaking, you're talking to people. It's a crash course about alcoholism," Heather remembers. "I cried a lot when I was there."

But her addiction was an obsession she was loath to leave behind, even as her time at CeDAR wound down. Just a few days from her program's end, she was contemplating ways to drink, but not drink and drive. She refused to admit she was an alcoholic, the fundamental basis of any recovery. Then one of the volunteers, a former alcoholic, told Heather she had been driving, crashed, and killed her 10-year-old son in an accident when driving drunk. "I have to live with that the rest of my life," she told Heather.

Heather spent five months in California after-care programs and never looked back – on alcohol, that is. CeDAR – in particular, its alumni program – is a fixture of Heather's new life.

Heather Watson was a University of Colorado senior when, at 8 a.m. on a Thursday in September 2007, she was arrested in Boulder on suspicion of drunk driving. For more than three years, Heather's drinking had been out of control, and the then-22-year-old's parents, Al and Mary Watson of Aurora, gave the ultimatum: either enroll in CeDAR or spend the night in jail. With Heather more than three years into her successful recovery, the Watsons share their stories from the CeDAR alumni and family perspectives.

## CeDAR a Way of Life for Alumni

Program focuses on connecting those in recovery

She volunteered at CeDAR for three months after her return, then finished up her degree at the University of Colorado at Boulder in December 2008. She plays on CeDAR's 12-Step softball team. She attends meetings at CeDAR three nights a week – on Thursdays, it's an Alcoholics Anonymous alumni meeting. Heather often carpools with her parents, Mary and Al Watson, who attend CeDAR's weekly family support meeting as well as the Alcoholics Anonymous alumni meeting.

Spending so much time at CeDAR is easy to do when your best friends are all there, she says. Plus it gives her a chance to help those just starting their new lives without addiction.

"Staying connected with others in recovery is vital," says Lorie Obernauer, CeDAR's Alumni Program coordinator. Obernauer, who is also in recovery, explained that "these connections are a huge part of what keeps us clean and

sober. By spending time with others in recovery, we receive the support we need. It also gives us the chance to help others who need some encouragement and assistance."

The CeDAR Alumni Program includes

weekly support-group meetings, where alumni can share their struggles and successes.

Obernauer also organizes social, recreational and educational

activities for alumni, such as potluck dinners, movie nights, softball games and ski trips, parenting workshops and spiritual retreats. In addition, CeDAR provides a free membership for all alumni to an online social networking community designed for people in recovery.

For Heather, recovery has become a big part of who she is. She even met her fiancé, Scott Lister, at CeDAR.

"For me, living in recovery just became a way of life," Heather says.

**"Keeping connections to other people who are in recovery is vital to the recovery process."**

## Hostages to Addiction No More

CeDAR helps family help addicts, themselves

Mary and Al Watson knew their daughter Heather's drinking had gone well beyond that of college partying.

"You'd make a dentist appointment for her and she couldn't go because she was drunk," remembers Mary Watson. "It got to the point where it was, 'Heather, just don't call me drunk anymore,' which would mean, 'Don't call me at all.'"

Recognizing that their daughter needed help, Mary and Al met with CeDAR admissions supervisor Jeanette Moss and others. But it was a complicated situation. Heather was two months shy of graduation. Mary, knowing her daughter wouldn't leave school so close to the prize, considered moving to Boulder to drive her to class and essentially keep her daughter going.

"I was fine with her drinking," Mary says. "What I wasn't fine with was that she could die. And there was a good probability that she would die."

The DUI arrest changed the Watsons' plans. Heather was admitted to CeDAR's 30-day residential program. Toward the end of her stay, Mary and Al enrolled in CeDAR's Family Week, a five-day program devoted to educating families about addiction and their role in it.

"What you find with families is that they are being held hostage by the addict," says Franklin Lisnow, CeDAR's executive director. "A healthy family doesn't let the addict hold them hostage."

Among many other things, CeDAR teaches the "Three Cs."

"You didn't cause it, you can't control it and you can't cure it," Lisnow says.

Yet families are both burdened by addiction and key to a patient's overcoming it, says Deb Zuniga, who leads CeDAR's Family Program.

Addicts with family members in her program have a 50 percent better chance of success with long-term recovery, she says.

**"A healthy family doesn't let the addict hold them hostage."**

The focus is on education. Family members learn about the biological and psychological foundations of addiction, about the 12 Steps, and about spirituality's role.

"It gave us a vocabulary so we can talk with the alcoholic or drug addict and speak the same language," Al Watson says.

Coping skills were a big part of it.

"Family members are just so used to reacting to their addict or alcoholic because they're always putting out fires," Zuniga says.

The Watsons learned "dialoging" skills, which focus on communication without finger-pointing. They still use it with Heather.

"It was a life-changing week for me," Mary says.

Three years later, the Watsons are at CeDAR most Thursday evenings. They learn, but they also teach and act as role models for families years behind them in the recovery process.

"They have that common language, that common ground, that bond with Heather. What used to be a burden – this person's addiction – is now a bond because of recovery," Zuniga says. "I've seen a lot of miracles happen."

# Transformations

A Newsletter from the UCH Foundation

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## It's the People

**Counselors, physicians and staff are the intangibles that set CeDAR apart**

CeDAR has a lot of things going for it. Its program is based on time-tested addiction-recovery techniques. Its campus is gorgeous, spacious, and soothing. It is part of a powerhouse academic medical center. But ask CeDAR's patients and alumni what makes the place special and the answer is always the same. It's the people.

One can tell a lot about an organization by the way it runs

its meetings. On Thursdays at 1 p.m., two dozen CeDAR physicians, nurses and counselors meet to talk over some of their toughest cases. They're careful about patient confidentiality even behind the conference room's closed doors – last names are never mentioned.

At one recent gathering led by Michael Dinneen, CeDAR's clinical coordinator, the group talked about a heroin addict they suspected was holding back about the true nature of his drug use. They



Michael Dinneen

***"You can teach the skills to do an IV or calculate a medical dose. You can't teach people how to relate to somebody."***

worried about his distrustfulness and his lack of willingness to open up. Facing the truth about one's addiction and the damage it has caused is the foundation of the recovery process.

With another patient, an alcoholic, they discussed the possibility of an underlying personality disorder. A third patient had broken down in a counseling session the day before, admitting that she was "jonesing for cocaine," as the counselor put it.

The assembled group asked pointed questions: Is there any suicidality in their history? Is there a trauma history? Another co-occurring disorder? Is there possible cognitive impairment? How is the family support?

These were serious queries about serious topics – and the answers could turn someone's life around. But while the meeting was tightly organized – it started at 1 p.m. and ended at 2 p.m., with the occasional witty comment being the only detours from the agenda's path – the group's collegiality and compassion were unmistakable. It is clear that CeDAR's staff are very sharp, very caring, and very good listeners.

That's no accident, says Anne Felton, RN, PhD, CeDAR's associate director. Many who work at CeDAR are former addicts themselves. Most feel



Anne Felton, RN, PhD

that, in helping others achieve lasting recovery, they've found their true calling.

In hiring at CeDAR, "We're looking for someone who has that spiritual grounding within themselves," Felton said. "You can teach the skills to do an IV or calculate a medical dose. You can't teach people how to relate to somebody."

Having caregivers with such gifts translates into non-judging, compassionate care, Felton says, and productive relationships with patients who are accustomed to being discounted because they are seeking treatment as an alcoholic or addict.

"Most patients haven't had that experience before when seeking care," Felton said.



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Addiction and Rehabilitation

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## Transformations

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