



# WWEN Connection

Wisconsin Women's Education Network  
on Addiction, Recovery & Prevention

"Today it is my gratitude that moves me when I become emotional as I speak, no longer shame."

—Thuy Smith  
International Outreach  
Co-founder/  
Co-Producer Teen Radio,  
Western Wisconsin  
Recovery Advocates,  
Wisconsin Recovery  
Delegate, 2008,  
Proposed & advocate for  
Wisconsin Bill-  
Vietnam Veteran's Day

## Putting a Face to Recovery . . .

I will share with you how my life has come full circle and that recovery is possible. All stories are different. This is my story.

War takes its toll on many lives, including families, friends and not just the veterans who serve. My father is a Vietnam veteran who served three years in Vietnam. He married my mother and, after I was born, brought us to the United States in 1973. I was not a soldier as it's usually defined, but I too have fought my own "Vietnam" due to some of the negative experiences I have been confronted with in my life.

I became a deeply hurting person whose pain turned inward and became anger. Layers begin to build and the pain just went deeper. I left home when I was 15 and went to the West Coast. Things transitioned very quickly for me. I started using once-in-awhile, then abusing and, before I knew it, I was developing a dependency.

Along the way, I made mistakes, hurt people and, more than anything, I had a hard time forgiving myself. I was doing things that went against my true values and who I really was. What I was doing was just the symptom of what was really going on underneath.

Eventually a family, who were complete strangers, reached out to me. It only took one person to make a difference in my life, especially being a young person. This is why I so believe in prevention and early intervention. What happened to me, and sometimes happens to other kids, is that I was labeled after making a few mistakes and became the throw-away kid; thus the self-fulfilling prophecy begins!

However, this family told me that everything I went through could be used for a greater purpose. I didn't know what, how, or when. I just knew they gave me hope. Sometimes a little hope is all you need. That was the turning point in my life and, since then, I have not used drugs for over 17 years.

Don't get me wrong. It was hard work, especially in the beginning. There were many layers to work through already at a young age. But with the proper support and access to treatment, I was able to come through.

Since then I've been instrumental in helping others discover that same possibility. By telling my story it not only helped me to heal, but it inspired others on a path to healing and forgiveness. By telling my story, it also gave others hope that recovery is possible and to seek the help that is needed.

Every negative experience I went through in my life is now being used to serve a greater purpose. I have turned negatives into positives by starting my own non-profit organization relating to Vietnam, racial discrimination and drug addiction.

I am grateful everyday for another chance at life and have been active in advocating for people in recovery ever since. Although much progress has been made, I still see shame and stigma attached to people who suffer from addictions. I will continue to be the voice that helps change that. Today, I know I am not my mistakes. My life is significant and has a plan and purpose. We are not here to just work, eat, and sleep. We are here to discover our authentic selves and what our gifts and abilities are that will connect us to our world.



Thuy

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For more information about International Outreach go to: <http://thuysmithinternationaloutreach.org/>



## Study: Tobacco Carcinogens Are More Dangerous to Women

### Research Summary

May 8, 2009

The carcinogens in cigarettes appear to be more dangerous to women than men, according to new research from Switzerland.

Science Daily reported May 3 that researchers who studied lung-cancer patients found that women developed cancer at a younger age than men, even though female patients reported smoking fewer cigarettes on average than men.

The findings indicate that women may be more susceptible to the carcinogens in cigarettes than men, said researcher Martin Frueh and colleagues. The results add to previous research suggesting that smoking cigarettes is more harmful to women than men.

"Lung cancer is not only a man's disease, but women tend to be much more aware of other cancers, such as breast cancer," said Enriqueta Felip of Val d'Hebron University Hospital in Barcelona, Spain, who co-chaired the conference.

<http://www.jointogether.org/news/research/summaries/2009/study-tobacco-carcinogens.html>

# Staying Current



## What Makes Laughter the Best Medicine?

Laughter has a real beneficial effect on your physical health, according to research. In the study, subjects were observed as they watched both serious movies and comedies. During the comedies, their arteries dilated and their blood pressure dropped, suggesting that laughter can in fact be a powerful medicine indeed.

The study looked at 20 healthy participants with an average age of 33. The results showed for the first time that laughter is linked to healthy function of blood vessels. It appears to cause the endothelium, which is the tissue that forms the inner lining of blood vessels, to dilate or expand in order to increase blood flow.

The study also showed that the opposite effect occurred when the subjects watched suspenseful films, suggesting a link between mental stress and the narrowing of blood vessels.

A separate study also found that viewing a humorous film may be helpful for the study and treatment of local IgE production and allergy in the reproductive tract.

**Journal Psychosomatic Research February 2009; 66(2):173-5**

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

*"A healthy life is a life full of laughter." —Teresa Marchese*

# Women's Services Network Highlights on the Annual Meeting

*Sue Gadacz, President*



The Women's Services Network (WSN) held its annual meeting on June 3-6, 2009, in Syracuse, New York. The WSN is an organization of State Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Agency Treatment representatives dedicated to the development and promotion of evidence-based practice that addresses the unique alcohol and other drug prevention, treatment, and recovery service needs of women and their families throughout their life span. The WSN is a component of the National Association of State Alcohol/Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD) and the National Treatment Network (NTN). During the meeting in June,

the WSN elected new officers and regional representatives. Sue Gadacz, Wisconsin's Substance Abuse Section Supervisor and Women's Treatment Coordinator was re-elected President of the WSN. Other officers elected were Starleen Scott Robbins, Vice President from North Carolina; Martha Kurgans, Secretary from Virginia; and Ruthie Dallas, Treasurer from Minnesota.

The WSN identified two priorities for the upcoming year:

- 1) Address the vulnerabilities of pregnant women with sensitivity to the treatment of women who use substances during pregnancy; and,
- 2) Increase awareness of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) and prevention of alcohol-exposed pregnancies as a collaborative goal through our partnership with the National Prevention Network.

**From left to right:**

Ruthie Dallas, MN—Treasurer

Martha Kurgans, VA—Secretary

Starleen Scott Robbins, NC—Vice President

Sue Gadacz, WI—President

<http://www.nasadad.org/>



**Focus on Treatment**

# Mark your Calendar!

## Growing in Spirit

An addiction and recovery conference designed expressly for women



### Mark your calendars ...

Seattle — October 9-10, 2009  
 New York — October 30-31, 2009  
 Chicago — December 4-5, 2009

**Women Healing®**  
 P.O. Box 11, BC13  
 Center City, MN 55012

888-257-7810  
 ext. 4429 or 4204

fax: 651-213-4344

[womenhealing@hazelden.org](mailto:womenhealing@hazelden.org)

#### For professionals

Day one of Women Healing offers inspiration and education to a broad range of professionals who work with women suffering from addictions.

#### For women in recovery

Day two of Women Healing offers a wonderful opportunity to celebrate recovery. It presents an inspiring, empowering, and educational experience for women from all walks of recovery.

<http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/womenhealing.page>



Presented by

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Bureau of Prevention, Treatment and Recovery

### Save this Date!

## 5th Annual Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services Training Conference

**Tues. & Wed. — October 27 - 28, 2009**

Radisson Paper Valley Inn — Appleton, WI

*Celebrating Strengths During Challenging Times*

### Who Should Attend

- Professionals, consumers, and families in the areas of substance abuse and mental health
- Clinicians in the criminal and juvenile justice systems
- Domestic violence service providers
- Adolescent treatment professional and educators
- Interested others

*For More Information, contact:*

UWSP Continuing Education at: **800-898-9472**

**[www.uwsp.edu/conted/conferences/](http://www.uwsp.edu/conted/conferences/)**

**Click on** "5th Annual Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Conference."



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 on Addiction, Recovery & Prevention

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