



# WWEN Connection

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

"You can't move forward until you let go of where you are."  
—Unknown

## Putting a Face to Recovery . . .



Patricia, son Brian & puppy Duke

Hello, my name is Patricia Burgess and I am proud to share my recovery story.

I started using drugs when I was 12. I used to forget, to be invisible, to hide the pain. My Mom gave me up when I was 12 to family who I knew nothing about. The first night at my Grandmother's house, my uncle raped me. This continued every night for two years. Even though I told my family about the abuse, they didn't believe me so I was called a liar and a bad person.

I started drinking on a regular basis to numb the pain. This led to me getting involved with bad people such as pimps and drug dealers. I would run away to avoid the sexual and physical abuse I was facing at home, until the police would arrest me and take me back. I was raped on my way to school one day and left for dead in an alley. I could do nothing but pick myself up and go to school.

I went from drinking, to smoking cocaine, freebasing, shooting up, popping pills—whatever I could do to *not* think about my life. This became such a vicious habit I could not stop. The first time I did manage to stop was when I learned I was pregnant with my daughter. I realized I had a life inside me, and had to do whatever I could not to hurt her.

I stayed sober until my daughter was born, but it wasn't long before I resumed drinking. Before I could get into taking drugs again, I realized I was pregnant with my son. Once again, the drinking stopped until my son was five months old. I was unable to cope with my trauma and bring up two small children, so I gave them to their father. Soon after this, there was a shootout in my house between drug dealers and one of them was murdered.

This was too much for me to cope with. I found myself living on the streets, prostituting myself, in and out of jail. I was lost. I missed my kids and wanted them back. So, I put myself into a detox program, where they referred me to Meta House. I was scared and really didn't want to be there, but I had to do whatever I could to get my kids back. I did the bare minimum to get through and avoided talking about any of my abuse or trauma. I got my kids back and stayed sober for five years.

Then I started seeing my family again. Their behavior brought back all the bad memories I had buried. I couldn't cope so I relapsed and started using again. Then, one day, I felt like I was outside of my body looking down on myself and I didn't like what I saw. This was not the life I wanted.

I called Meta House and asked for help, entering Meta House for the second time with a very different attitude. This time I wanted to deal with my trauma and learn the skills to cope without the use of drugs and alcohol.

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## Introducing the New Bureau of Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Women's Treatment Coordinator



Bernestine Jeffers

The WWEN project recently interviewed Bernestine Jeffers, the new Bureau of Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Women's Treatment Coordinator.

**WWEN: We're excited to have you on board as the new Women's Treatment Coordinator. Could you tell us a little about your background?**

My background covers 25 years in healthcare administration in multi-specialty medical centers, urgent care centers, social services agencies, outpatient mental health and substance abuse clinics and hospital settings in the areas of primary care, ob/gyn, perinatology, cardiology, and mental health and substance abuse where I designed, developed, implemented, and ensured maintenance of various programs, policies and procedures.

**WWEN: What made you interested in this particular position?**

This position provides the opportunity to affect the direction of gender-responsive services in Wisconsin.

**WWEN: Helping support the idea of women receiving gender-responsive treatment has been the goal of the WWEN project since its inception. What essential goals do you perceive for your work with women's treatment around the state?**

- ◆ Develop gender-responsive educational and awareness activities addressing the effects of substance use for the public, ie: FASD, FAS, binge drinking, prescription drug (heavily medicated female), dangers of using substances while pregnant.
- ◆ Work with Prairieland and Great Lakes Addiction Technology Transfer Centers (ATTC) to develop a revised women-specific treatment curriculum.
- ◆ To provide technical assistance and consultation about substance abuse services to programs providing women-specific services.
- ◆ Provide consultation on integrated services models and the development of these models.
- ◆ Work with health policy groups to ensure gender-responsive programs, policies and standards are recognized in healthcare reform.
- ◆ Design, develop, implement and ensure maintenance of policies and standards relating to research-based women-specific substance use treatment.

**WWEN: If people reading this right now would like to reach you how might they do that?**

- ◆ By telephone: 608-261-0651 or 414-227-4613 or 414-313-0167
- ◆ Email: [bernestine.jeffers@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:bernestine.jeffers@dhs.wisconsin.gov)

(Patricia, Putting a Face-continued from page 1)

I dealt with my Mother issues, my abandonment, my abuse, and all the feelings I had shut away. They were very hard days because it was like reliving the trauma of my childhood. But with the help of Meta House and its staff I made it through. I am pleased to say I have been sober since August 20, 2006.



I still deal with my issues on a daily basis, but Meta House has given me the tools I need to believe in myself and have the strength to get through. I am so proud of my daughter, Shinae, 19, and son Brian, 17, who inspire me to keep fighting the good fight. I am thankful for the unique structure of Meta House, and I attribute the success of family therapy for the open relationship I now have with my children.

Our family also includes two birds, Will and Grace, and we just added puppy Duke. I have already passed four of the five tests required for my General Educational Development (GED) credential, and am studying hard to reach this goal. I wouldn't change anything about my life because overcoming my trauma made me the person I am today—and I am proud of myself.

Focus on Treatment



**M**eta House is a nationally-recognized treatment center that provides alcohol and other drug abuse treatment services designed specifically for women. Opened in 1963, it has been providing unique, gender-responsive treatment in Milwaukee for 47 years. In addition to being the first residential facility in the country for women, it was among the first to also include children in their residential setting.

Meta House uses best practices, and evidence-based interventions, and recovery support services based on theories proposing that relationships are central to the lives of women. This understanding naturally leads to a family-centered program. The team approach at Meta House recognizes how improving parenting abilities, preserving and reunifying families are not only good for society, but is vital to the maintenance of sobriety for the mother. All the women are considered partners in the development and implementation of their own treatment plans and the plans for their children and families.

Core approaches support the philosophy and practices that are implemented at Meta House.

- ♥ Motivational Interviewing and the formal use of Stages of Change define the way in which interactions take place between the women, their families and the team of people at Meta House. The Strength-Based approach assesses the inherent strengths of the women and their families and then builds upon them. These personal strengths are then used to aid in recovery and healing for the whole family.
- ♥ Given the association between substance abuse and trauma in women, all Meta House staff is trauma-informed. This helps to avoid triggering trauma reactions and/or re-traumatizing women and support each individual's coping capacity. The women can then manage their trauma symptoms successfully so that they are able to access, remain in, and benefit from the services at Meta House.

To meet the needs of families, Meta House provides a continuum of care that includes a Residential Women and Children's Treatment Program; Meta Housing for women and their children who have completed a treatment program and are homeless; and an Outpatient Services Program.

Meta House's multitude of unique services leads for the very successful outcomes of the family-centered model at Meta House.

In 2009, Meta House served 298 women and 326 children with over 2,000 supervised visits with children not in their mother's care. Of residential clients, 81% completed treatment, (national average is 39%). 12 months later, 84% were still abstinent from alcohol and drugs and 97% had no criminal justice involvement.

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Reclaiming Women's Lives, Rebuilding Families

Visit us at: [www.metahouse.org](http://www.metahouse.org)  
 Facebook: [www.facebook.com/MetaHouse](http://www.facebook.com/MetaHouse)  
 Twitter: [@MetaHouse](https://twitter.com/MetaHouse)

# Mark your Calendar!



*Presented by*

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Bureau of Prevention, Treatment and Recovery

*Save this Date!*

## 6th Annual Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services Training Conference

**Tues. & Wed. — October 26 - 27, 2010**

**Kalahari Resort — Wisconsin Dells, WI**

*Journey to Wholeness in Body, Mind, and Spirit*

### *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 professionals 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** "6th Annual Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Conference."



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

<http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/pda/wwen/index.html>

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