

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF SERVICE TO DAYTON METROPOLITAN COMMUNITES

THE BIRTH, EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE
OF THE DAYTON FELLOWSHIP CLUB Inc.

August 1990 to September 2020



Dayton Fellowship Club

A Light of Hope for Recovery from Drug Addiction

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OF THE DAYTON FELLOWSHIP CLUB

Founding Members

The Late Troy Bass

The Late Terrell Thomas

The Late Reggie Allen

Marvin Starks

Alan Walder

Our Mission and Purpose of the Dayton Fellowship Club is to:

Provide a facility for 12-Step meetings, and
Encourage the growth and development of recovery activities and programs within the
Club and for the benefit of the broader community.
(Dayton Fellowship Club By-Laws, Revised July 2017)

Dreams of A Worthwhile Journey

In the summer of 1990 various members of the recovering community felt that there was a need for more 12- Step meetings in West Dayton to accommodate the increased number of people who were trying to stop using drugs. In August, this group of recovering addicts approached Troy Bass with their concerns because he had significant clean time and experience starting Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and other types of 12-Step meetings. His compassion and identification with the struggles of those seeking what he had already found, led him to give support, including access to a former gas station building he owned at the corner of Riverview and Philadelphia Avenues. He gave the keys to Marvin Starks and Alan Walder that provided a foundation to begin their journey. The group established a schedule of daily meetings at 10 PM and proposed that a second meeting be held each day at noon.

These founders thought deeply about an appropriate name for what they were trying to do. There were other recovery clubs in the area. Those facilities, however, were focused on recovery from one substance. Thus, from the outset, the NA approach was adopted for recovery meetings that would be offered within the facility. In our first external collaboration, The West Dayton Club gave us copies of their Articles of Incorporation which helped us begin the process of recruiting members who could serve on a Board of Directors.

Calling the building the “*Fellowship Club*” seemed to stick with the members. And with unfailing help and support from Troy Bass we wrote and filed the necessary papers with State of Ohio and Internal Revenue authorities to be granted a nonprofit registration. We became legally incorporated as The Dayton Fellowship Club in the Fall of 1991.

The Early Days: From New Born To Toddler

These arrangements led to quick lessons about the difference between 12-Step programming and the practical matters of running a recovery club. There was a lot of confusion in the early days. We were nonetheless determined to keep meetings going and the building open for support activities at least twelve to eighteen hours a day. Reggie Allen played a big part in keeping the building open and clean as well as welcoming newcomers because his job had him on furlough. With the building so accessible, and more and more addicts using it for meetings and a safe place, it was not long before we increased up to three meetings on some days of the week.

If you talk to anyone who were members at that time, you will hear them talk about the *desire* we had to stay clean; like meeting in the heart of winter in a building that had no heat except a kerosene heater in the middle of the room. It was simply a converted gas station on the outside, but on the inside, it was the place where we found hope and a place to build something out of unconditional love, commitment, and sacrifice. We kept the lights on and to the delight of many, eventually turned on the heat.

Lessons In Perseverance

We were standing but walking brought another set of challenges. Raising the money for ongoing expenses became a huge challenge after the initial thrill of starting a new program. Selling pop and potato chips, collecting donations from meetings and individual members was the core of our fundraising at that time. We had to grow in trying new fundraising programs. Dances and Food sales were a help, especially after we got the heat on.

Growing Pains

Growing out of toddler clothes did not take long. Within our first eighteen months we realized that a larger building would be needed. The Board of Directors responded with positive action. They sought to ensure our readiness for an eventual move by establishing a building fund under the management of James Neely, one of our past presidents. We also had a cadre of members who began looking for potential meeting places. We ramped up other income generating programs such as dues for members, and food sales between meetings and at social events.

One of the most successful programs in terms of our financial goals was the “*Big Boy and Big Girl Bar-B-Que*”. Various members would volunteer to put on a weekend fundraising grill-fest with chicken, ribs, sausage, and sides. We also began to write small grant proposals and took

individual pledges for special gifts matched to the Club's special needs. Some of these activities are still part of the current fundraising procedures for the Club today.

We also began to develop clean recovery events such as workshops that focused on recovery from all drugs and monthly dances. There were special recovery events held on holidays that included food and fellowship as well as 24-hour "marathon" meetings. We developed a mixed men and women softball team coached by Reggie Allen. It became part of a regional Sober League that included teams from other recovery organizations in Dayton as well as from other cities. Between 1991 until 1994 the team had weekly practices, and a game schedule including tournaments with overnight trips. People who supported the team but did not play had the title of "Boosters". Needless to say, *"Our Team Was The BOMB!"*

Growing Up Fast

In 1995, Troy's announcement that the Riverview building was going to be sold signaled that we had to move. Thank God for our years of foundation. Leadership again sprang into action. The 12-step meetings were directed to find a temporary place to meet until a permanent home for all the Club's holdings and activities could be found. After a pain-steaking search by a small group of members and with the assistance of a long-time ally, Ms. Annie Bonapart, we found an interim location at an old boat house on James Magee Blvd. The search for a permanent location went on non-stop. After only a few months an opportunity for a permanent home came from Rhine Mclin, who rented us our current facility, at 1124 Germantown Ave. The new facility had twice the space of the old building and thus it brought new financial challenges and new opportunities for growing the fellowship.

Thank God for community support, but more critically, for the willingness of addicts who once gave all their time, money, and energy to drug use, were now showing their gratitude by supporting their own recovery in ever creative ways. In 1997, at the insistence of Willey Flucas our Treasurer, James Neely, Michael Kyle, and James Dobbins were given the task of forming another Fundraising Committee to help us meet that challenge. Out of that initiative came several grants that were funded.

We also witnessed the formation of an enduring legacy, which is the founding of *"The Voices of Fellowship Choir"*. Under the musical direction of Michael Kyle, the Choir held their first concert at Tabernacle Baptist Church raising over \$1000.00 to benefit the Club. The Voices of Fellowship are still doing their work of empowering addicts to use their God given talents to provide uplift, hope, and gratitude through gospel music. They have also been featured on television and in newsprint helping to not only heal broken spirits but to make public that the lie is dead about "once an addict always an addict".

Between 1998 and 1999 membership dues were kept low, but we were able to keep afloat by increasing the number of paid memberships to over one hundred addicts. We also recruited additional members who joined with the fundraising team. William Roberts, Alan Walder,

Madonna Marable, and Maria Rultherford developed a successful proposal to get the Club recognized as eligible to receive *Combined Federal Campaign* donations. The success of this program proved that the Club had a message and services that the broader community was willing to support.

Learning To Lean Into The Challenges

Between 2000 and 2007, the club was further affected by the downturn of the United States economy. And like most other organizations at that time, the Club experienced a period of slow growth and great challenge. To some it seemed that the Club had lost its spirit and direction. To others it simply needed to be led out of its dark moment into its brightest future.

We were being crushed by the sheer weight of a tight national economy; the Club's rapid growth in the numbers addicts seeking recovery because of decreases in 30 day treatment options; and the ongoing responsibility to maintain the activities, building, utilities, and increased rent. Now into its late adolescent years of operation, many of the early leaders had more complex jobs and family obligations, as well as having to cope with their own economic issues.

Despite these challenges there were always members who wanted the Club to survive. Because we knew our strength lay in holding on to our membership and showing appreciation, we developed stronger membership meetings and started new membership traditions like the monthly free membership breakfast. We made it through this difficult period by relying on our belief and faith in a collective Power. We were convinced that the Club could prevail simply by doing "the next right thing". We would be remiss if we did not give Rhine McLin a second acknowledgement here. Rhine was very understanding of what we were trying to do. She worked with us when we fell short, but we always made our agreements whole with her.

Ready For Self Sufficiency By Expanding Community Connections

In this new phase of our development, it had become clear that we could not keep our Club to ourselves for ourselves. This lesson included an understanding of the difference between the Club as a public organization as different from the 12-Step meetings taking place at the Club. The Fellowship Club as a business organization that had to expand its Mission to be inclusive of more than personal recovery. For sure the Club is involved in life and death work, but as a public entity, there is no anonymity for the Fellowship Club which includes a community face as well as accountability to federal and state regulations.

As a business, we are in the community and need dynamic visible relationship with individuals and other organizations in the community. This awakening required a broader vision of leadership that would work to develop a public image and a public understanding of the Mission of the Dayton Fellowship Club. This new direction in leadership began with Board of Directors training and the simultaneous formation of a new *Ad Hoc Community Action* Committee. The purpose of this committee was to provide aide, awareness, and assistance to

those in need, inside and outside of the membership of the Club. The Club was taking a stance of looking at community need more broadly to include issues like hunger, housing, childcare, education, and of course, drug education and relapse prevention.

In the process of training the leadership, we developed Operations Manuals and prepared a written Annual Statement for the purpose of providing information to the public about our purpose, program services, assets, and financial standing. These elements were needed to attract a broader capacity for community collaborations. From this humble beginning, our first connections were with the Wright State University School of Professional Psychology, Dayton Urban League, Wesley Community Center, City of Dayton, and Levin Foundation. As will be discussed, these early outreach efforts have led to other individual and organizational collaborations that strengthened our ability to save lives, change communities and fulfill our Mission.

2008 was the year of explosive growth and development. In that year, we reached out to colleges and churches, Wright State University School of Professional Psychology, the Levin Foundation, the City of Dayton, Dayton Public Schools, Youth Works, and the Urban League to help us host an eight-week Youth Development Summer Camp for twenty children 9 to 17 whose parents were in recovery. This collaboration was led by James Dobbins and Alan Walder. The camp ran successfully for four years at the current facility. The Summer Camp has an elaborated 12 week curriculum, that included daily drug prevention education, recreation, arts and crafts, community development activities, a weekly swim, and free lunches to our campers or any youth in the community in need of food. Collaboration with Youth Works provided a camp within a camp as we were able to train four to six youth 14 to 17 in the role of junior mentors to the younger campers.

That same year, 2008, the club took advantage of an opportunity to reverse the negative effects of the economy on our bottom line by becoming a broker for helping low income persons buy homes at no interest and affordable five year terms. With help from Leland Woods, who owned a housing business, we applied for a grant to receive foreclosed homes from Wells Fargo Bank as a gift, and then sold them in most cases with minor renovations to low income persons. This was a critical income source that supported the Club when many of our members were out of work themselves and had little to spare for dues or extra donations. Most important was the fact that the Fellowship Club was fulfilling its primary purpose and building organizational capacity through outreach. The housing program completed 2014.

In 2010 we celebrated our Twentieth Anniversary. The twenty year "one-day-at-a-time" struggle had carried us into young adult maturity. We celebrated that work and the contributions that members made, big and small, to keep open these doors of hope. We celebrated because each person's efforts to help the Club was a "*Labor of Love*" that paid off for thousands of addicts. We held a banquet to celebrate the fact that when we started few of us had more than a year clean, much less the many people who were recognized for over

twenty at the banquet. We celebrated because the Club had become established as a community recovery resource.

The members never gave up on the Club. We prayed to God for strength and courage and the answer was to “get busy. We did not stop our efforts to be self-sustaining and a beacon of hope for addicts, families, and other elements of the community. As an outreach organization, we added more programs by becoming involved in more collaborations. Our *annual Picnic and School Supply Give Away* supports over 300 youth. The Caterpillar Corp has been a champion for that event under the strong advocacy of Michelle Scales. Other collaborations for that event included Meijers and the City of Dayton.

The establishment of the *National Recovery Month Roundtable Discussions* linked us with a national program sponsored by the *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*. It is an annual public information forum that often utilizes professionals and lay persons as speakers to promote recovery for persons recovering from drugs and/or the effects of mental illness. This forum, now in its thirteenth year, helps addicts to see a bigger service and advocacy role for the addict. It likewise helps the public to see that there is a broader role for the non-addict in the fight against addiction and the stigma of mental illness. The Round Table also attempts to help addicts and the community better understand how recovery is related to current events such as the legalization of drugs, the comorbid impact of addiction, mental health and other diseases like COVID-19, and the importance of voting as a way of advocating for recovery.

The economy had recovered by 2016, but one of the residual effects of the economic nuclear blast was the rampant use of opioids in the United States. Twelve Step rooms were beginning to overflow like when the crack addiction crisis filled the rooms in 1990-2007. By 2016 Dayton Ohio had become known as ground zero for opioid deaths nationally.

Reinventing The Organization To Better Meet The Mission

In 2017 because of our frontline work with addicts in need, we reached another level of organizational development. We joined a city-wide Community Overdose Action Team (COAT). The formation of this group was spear headed by the Montgomery Co. Dept of Public Health and the Alcohol Drug Abuse and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS). The significance of this invitation was that after years of being observers to the inner workings of governing agencies. We were now at the table helping to make policy decisions about the implementation of community-based addiction services.

The Dayton Fellowship Club bonded with four other service organizations to provide coordinated grassroots peer-to-peer services on behalf of addicts who may or may not have made it to treatment. The West Side Club, Alco-Aides, Families of Addicts, and the Therapy Café are strong partners in this effort who became known as *Recovery Alliance of Montgomery*

County (RAMCO). We called ourselves “first responder” in the war against opioid deaths. RAMCO actively collaborates with ADAMHS and Public Health offices.

RAMCO and the Public Health and ADAMHS on several projects, the largest being two citywide recovery events in Dayton Metro Parks, with free bus rides on RTA to the events. The June event celebrates the importance of recreation in recovery during the months of June and September. We emphasize that wellness and recovery are family issues and so these are family events. We have free food, speakers, literature, display tables, live and recorded music as well as a “Back To School” supplies giveaways and prizes. Food is supplied by the House of Bread.

The Fellowship Club hosted community dialogues associated with the “Conversations for Change” and the Montgomery County Sheriff’s “Grow Blitz” project. The Club was featured in a New York Times article (November 25, 2018) giving us a national visibility for the first time in our history. By 2019 the RAMCO and COAT initiatives celebrated the fact that Opioid Deaths in Montgomery County had decreased fifty percent (50%) in one year. This incredibly significant reversal pointed to Dayton having one of the leading collaborations nationally, in the fight against opioid deaths.

“Lost Dreams Awakened and New Possibilities Arise”

Because of our increasing public presence, there were many more community persons who understood our mission and they stepped up to help us meet the need. This was indeed the precise kind of help that allowed us to take the final step toward self-sufficiency in terms of our Club facility when one member of an addict who found hope at the Club offered to help us complete our purchase of the building.

In 2018 the membership paid off its mortgage and became owners of the facility located at 1124 Germantown Ave. The building is historic in that it belonged to the McLin family known for their strong political representation of the west side and mayoral leadership of Dayton. Prior to the Club taking residence the Inner West Priority Board used the building for its offices. We are also proud to have the magnificent Mural message painted done by Morris Howard that adorns the exterior of our building. We are resolved to continue to maintain the Club as a beacon of hope for our current members and future generations.

So here we are thirty years later, on the brink of having survived our personal and organizational challenges, only to be confronted with a type of crisis that not only affected the individual addict, but indeed us as an organization and the world. COVID-19 has tested our creativity, resolve and grit in ways that reminds us of addiction. It is especially challenging because it threatens one of the most sacred elements of what makes recovery work, i.e. the peer-to-peer connection that occurs in our meetings. We are persevering despite the invisibility and cunning this deadly menace. The Club follows the rules of the State of Ohio Public Health. We were able to get the designation of an essential service provider. Our dedicated members use technology and the updates on scientific advisories to maintain online as well as safe

distancing in live meetings. We have learned how to be *Dayton Fellowship Strong*. We know this too shall pass.

Could Not Have Made It Without God and You

Collaborations have become an indispensable part of the history of the Club. Another important aspect of our relative success has been the capacity to apply ourselves to service while working on multiple fronts. We provide peer to peer support and intervention, host recovery meetings and provide clean recreation for addicts and their families, do community outreach and advocacy, pay bills, make repairs, find new leadership, and raise funds. Keeping the door open is probably best described as a project fueled by the prayers of a concerned membership and compassion of a caring community. We are grateful to be able to serve.



A LIGHT OF HOPE FOR RECOVERY FROM DRUG ADDICTION

THANK YOU!

The Dayton Fellowship Club is a not for profit service organization. We appreciate the many people who have contributed to our efforts to support the recovering addict and their families. We sincerely hope that we have not overlooked anyone who played a part in this effort and acknowledge that this account would never allow us to recount every name. Please continue to support the Club with your time and talents. Donations can be made in person or by going to our GoFundMe Webpage Located <https://daytonfellowshipclub.org/what-can-i-do/>

Past Presidents

Alan Walder, Terrell Thomas, James Neely, James Dobbins., Greg Beasley, Marilyn Braggs, Bill Roberts, Johnny Fields, Leland Woods, Dwaine Smith, Evan Robinson, Eugene Lackings, Joe Hainey, Bobbie Crimes, Terry Littlejohn, Eric Belle

The 2020 Dayton Fellowship Board and Ad Hoc Committee Personnel

Vice President	Waldo LittleJohn
Treasurer	Ken Richardson
Membership Chair	Redina Counce
Fellowship Chair	Ada Mitchell
Rules Chair	Ava Brassfield
Seargent At Arms	Toni Dudley
Community Action Committee	Shirley Quinn, Alan Walder
Fiduciary Agent	James Dobbins
Web/Media Managers	David White, Raymond Howard

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