THE FACES OF ADDICTION

Defying stereotypes, addicts come from all walks of life and are people we all recognize

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T

hey live in cardboard shelters, sleep up in

book alleys, steal from their mothers.

They are dirty, shaven, stumbling bums.

The most degrading, unsympathetic stereotypes

in the one so many of us have of the addict:

Don’t matter if it’s pills or pot or booze or

crack. We know what they look like. That’s what

Jan Scaglione thought.

Then nine years ago, the clinical toxicologist

from Cincinnati began interviewing addicts for

something called the Ohio Substance Abuse Moni-

toring project.

If the generous former model didn’t prove

Scaglione wrong, the pharmacist with the photo-

graphic memory did. On the young mom with three

kids. Less than a year into her work, Scaglione

knew what she wants all of us to know:

There is no typical addict.

It’s everybody; she says. It’s anybody. It’s the

kid next door. It’s your grandmother.

More than 39 million Americans need alcohol or

drug treatment according to the Substance Abuse

and Mental Health Services Administration.

Another 33 million adults—10 percent of Ameri-

cans 18 and over—are in recovery.

So, of course, Scaglione is right, says William

Detelich.

And what that face needs more than anything

is help.

Resources

Ohio Governor John Kasich’s Addiction Initiative

is a multi-agency, multi-strategy approach to

addressing the opioid crisis.

Resources include:

1. Call 216-513-STOP (7867) to

get immediate help.

2. Visit consumer.gov/ohioopioidresources

for information.


for more resources.

Be well: Addiction

“Don’t feel ashamed. Know you’re not alone.

And if you or someone you love is struggling,

it’s important to get help.”

William Detelich
Executive Director

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Subsidiary

Be well: Recovery

“One good way to make sure everyone gets

the help they need is to call 216-513-STOP (7867)

or visit consumer.gov/ohioopioidresources.

The goal is to help people get the help they need,”

Sue Shaw, Director of ODH’s Addiction Services,

said.

Shaw said it’s important to know you’re not

alone and that there are resources available to

help. She encourages people to call the help line

or visit the website to learn more about how to

help yourself or someone else.

FACETS OF ADDICTION

FACET 1: Addiction

Addiction is a disease of the brain that affects

the way people think, feel, and act.

FACET 2: Recovery

Recovery is a process of change through which

people change their thinking and behavior

to improve their health, wellness, and quality

of life.

FACET 3: Resilience

The ability to bounce back from stress,

trauma, and adversity is called resilience.

FACET 4: Treatment

Treatment is a process of lasting change that

involves a plan to address the root causes of

the addiction.

FACET 5: Support

Support is a vital part of the recovery process.

It includes family, friends, peer support,

and community members who provide

encouragement and understanding.

FACET 6: Hope

Hope is the belief that things will improve.

It helps people stay motivated and

focused on their recovery goals.

FACET 7: Independence

Independence refers to the ability to live

a full and satisfying life without relying

on others.

FACET 8: Purpose

Purpose is the feeling of meaning and

importance in one’s life.

FACET 9: Faith

Faith refers to a person’s belief in a higher

power or spiritual force.

FACET 10: Hopeful

Hopeful is a feeling of optimism and

expectation for the future.

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THE GRIP OF ADDICTION

Faces: Today’s addicts come from all walks of life
Carmen Angelo
3, Fairview Park, broadcast journalist

Carmen Angelo will never forget his first beer. It was a couple of days after Christmas, and Angelo was 14. He used to drink four or five times a week, Angelo says. Even though his parents didn’t drink, their Fairview Park home was the place where friends and neighbors gathered. And those gatherings always included alcohol. Other kids in the neighborhood drank, but not Angelo.

The day of his eighth-grade graduation, I found a bottle of Jim Beam and I started drinking about three hours before my graduation,” he says. “And I never had an alcohol until that point that I was sick.”

Angelo went on to St. Edward, where he played defensive back on a team that made it to the playoffs his junior year. He worked as a bat boy for the Indians, too. But he was a punk, a guy who didn’t study, who just wanted to party, who kept drinking whatever it could.

The only thing that got him through was the tough coaches and teachers — guys like Greg Driscoll and Tim Hayden — who could see he was misguided.

Those guys took me under their wing,” Angelo says. “I learned from them, and you know what? They never left me. They saw something in me that I apparently didn’t see.”

One night during his sophomore year, after drinking until five in the morning, he crawled into bed and cried himself to sleep.

“Lord, help me,” he pleaded. “I can’t continue to live like this.”

He told himself that he was a drunk. And he promised to quit drinking. Two months later, he was drunk again.

Then came college.

“By the time I was 18, I was probably hitting the bottle four or five times a week,” he says. “My alcoholism spilled over into control.”

Things changed, he says, on June 26, 1999.

Angelo was working in radio and hosting a buddy’s wedding. He had a couple of beers before the ceremony, 10 more afterward. At the reception, he showed up in a barn and coke.

He woke up the next morning with his hand bruised purple, the middle fingers swollen. When he got back from the hospital, he picked up the phone and called a friend who knew he was in Alcoholics Anonymous.

The friend agreed to sponsor Angelo, brought him a little Big Book and worked with Angelo to start the 12 steps.

He was 26 and all of his buddies were out drinking, going to bowling games, having a good time. And he was at meetings.

The first two years were fairly difficult, but after that, there was an evangelism,” he says. “What I was teaching, bumping into a lot of these old-timers was that you could have fun and laugh and never have a drink.”

Angelo, now the news anchor for the “WGN 7 News in the Morning” show on WGN radio, has five children. His daughter looks like it’s going to work out. She’s been 19 months, two years and 20 days since she had anything with alcohol in it.

“I don’t miss it,” he says. “If I was drinking, I wouldn’t have had the good things in my life.”

Richard Folbert
51, Lakewood, speaker and volunteer for Living Miracles and other organizations

When Richard Folbert was a kid, he’d make up games for his friends to play, watch them lose, then order them to pay him a nickel or dime.

In high school shop class, he and his buddies kid behind the wood room and played blackjack instead of making jewelry boxes or ashtrays.

By early 1990s, he was addicted to cardboard crack.

He’d walk to the neighborhood grocery store or gas station every day and spend $10, $15, $20 — whatever he had — on lottery tickets.

He bought so many, clerks knew him by name.

“I really, honestly believed that I was going to win. I would sit on the curb in front of the gas station and sometimes o would because I didn’t want to get too far away from the place, in case I had a win.”

And if he did?

He’d walk to the nearest store and buy more tickets, figuring he’d milked the first place of the luck.

On top of his addiction, he developed paranoid schizophrenia. The disability forced him to live on Social Security and income from the old age he picked up.

A lot of months he ran out of money before his check arrived. And he’d wake up until 5 or 6 in the morning wondering who he was going to be able to, or rob to get money for more lottery tickets.

On April 18, 2010, he went to his first 12-step meeting.

That day he placed his last bet.

Since then, Folbert has been going to meetings at least three times a week.

He has a book on schizophrenia, is working on a horror novel and has found support and encouragement at Living Miracles, a peer support and empowerment center for people with mental illness.

“My own whole orchestra of support,” Folbert says. “When I decided to clean up, everyone was happy and supportive. It was life-changing. I couldn’t be myself, I wasn’t judged. It felt secure.”

The thing that helped most with his gambling addiction, he says, was deciding to get help for his mental illness.

Now that he’s done that, he feels free. And he’s happy.

“Even though I did drink, I felt like I was inside there was good. But I didn’t know how to tap into it.”

Folbert doesn’t change anything in the past because it turned me into the person I am today. And when I look in the mirror, I can honestly say, ‘I like people.}
Advice to those struggling with addiction: Don’t be afraid to ask for help. We recover better together. We have to overlook our pride and ego and just allow people to love us until we learn to love ourselves.

Advice to those living with someone struggling with addiction: People who live with addicts are just as sick as the addicts because they’re addicted to us. They need help. They need therapy. They need to talk just like we do.

Rita Dawson, 52, Rock Creek, licensed chemical dependency counselor

Dawson has never touched drugs in high school.

There were schemehens in her family and she wasn’t going to become one of them. "Gangplagued alcoholics," Dawson says.

After a year at Cayugahoga Community College, she started the pre-law program at Selma University, a Christian Bible college in Alabama.

The student body voted her Miss Selma, a scholar for her family, whose roots in that town go back generations.

Then she got caught with a boy, in her dorm room, having sex.

"They took my crown away," she says.

The disappointment of letting her father down filled Dawson with guilt and shame. She moved back to Cleveland, enrolled in a paralegal program and started dating a guy her family didn’t approve of. And she started experimenting.

She drank so much the first time she tried alcohol she blacked out. When she woke up, she felt like she fit in for the first time in her life.

"That hole in my soul," Dawson says, "started to close."

Then she found out she was pregnant. Dawson and her boyfriend moved up their wedding date, but a few weeks later she lost the baby.

"I really wanted to be a mom, I thought that was the one thing I was going to do well. After my mother dying (when I was 15), I wanted to have my own kids and never leave them."

But life got deeper and darker.

One night, when her husband went to bed, Dawson stayed up and rolled a joint laced with PCP.

One hit and she felt insensible. "I felt like I could pull a piece of the sky." Soon she was smoking every day. Family members rushed her to help at Glenbeigh addiction treatment center in Rock Creek, in Ashland County.

Dawson was sure she didn’t need it. But when she left Glenbeigh, she went back to PCP and began frequenting motels, too. At first it was every six months. Then it was every three weeks. And, finally every day. By 1986, she was using PCP, too.

"It got to the point where I was selling things out of the house, stealing things from my husband," she says. "I just kind of sold my soul." She went into another 30-day treatment program and stayed clean for almost a year. But she couldn’t stay away from crack.

In 1996 everything fell apart. "I lost my home, I lost my job, I lost my car. I got money from the sale of the house and every dime went to crack."

She went back into treatment the next day, presenting herself it would work.

Ten months later she was using again.

Then, on Sept. 14, 1997, a cousin invited Daw- son to church. Inside was a prayer board with a list of names, and after each one, the disease the person wanted to be cured of.

Dawson’s name, someone had written "Complete Overhaul."

When church members told her they’ve been praying for her for a year, her life changed. "For a long time, I felt like nobody cared, but that day, I felt people cared about me. I surrendered, I realized that I wanted to live."

That trip into treatment in 1997 wasn’t easy. She stayed 30 days at Glenbeigh, then moved to a residential treatment center for six months, then into transitional housing, to help her ease back into society drug-free, for two more years.

In 2001, she went back to Cayugahoga Community College, then Cleveland State University. And in 2008, she had a degree in social work. The radiant treatment center hired her as a counselor.

The following year she went back to Glenbeigh. This time as a counselor.

Today, Dawson says, she has found the blessing in all of it.

"The relationship I have with my dad, I couldn’t give it up for a drink or drugs. I don’t have all that chaos. I just have God and good friends and good people in my life — and that’s all I need."
Advice to those struggling with addiction: You can do it. There's no one on this Earth that can tell me they can't do it. Don't do it for anyone. Do it for yourself. There's no excuse to use.

Advice to those living with someone struggling with addiction: The only way that people can help anyone who has an addiction problem is to learn about the addiction, to learn about the disease. That way they'll be able to understand what's going on with the person. And don't judge.

"I was a cheater," Rodriguez says about those days. "I needed to use to function. I wanted to get back and meet the David I knew when I was 15." So in May 20, 1994, Rodriguez took a week's vacation and checked himself into a detox center again, then started 12-step meetings.

"This time he was sure he'd recover. His addiction had caused his divorce and he didn't want it to ruin his second marriage or his relationship with his three children.

"So he kept going to meetings. He went back to school to earn a second associate degree, this one in community mental health with a concentration in chemical dependency from Cuyahoga Community College. He started riding his bike again and joined Bike Cleveland, a group that works to make Cleveland more bicycle-friendly now he teaches Bible study classes—along with addiction prevention—at the youth at First Spanish Baptist Church on Dennis Avenue.

Not in his final year of classes at the Emmanuel Bible Institute in Cleveland and his 12th year of working with Catholic Charities, providing group and individual counseling to men struggling with anger and addiction.

On Sept. 7, the organization honored Rodriguez with an Advocacy Award for giving help and hope to thousands of people living with addiction.

"It's a sign of what a 12-step program can do for someone," Rodriguez says.

"The biggest reward is to stay clean one day at a time, to recognize that recovery is the main focus and to help others get to where I am today. Today I am happy."