

APRIL/MAY 2021, ISSUE IV

PENIEL

RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



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BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY

Greetings Peniel Alumni and Community! Welcome to the fourth issue of the Peniel monthly newsletter. This issue is a combined edition that features content for the months of April and May. We want to thank you again for your decision to be a part of the Peniel mailing list, and we encourage any feedback or suggestions you may have to offer for the monthly newsletter. We are always happy to receive updates from Peniel graduates, so we have featured the various ways you can stay connected with us here at Peniel on the final page of this newsletter. Please know that your continued support is invaluable to us, whether it be through prayers, donations, or volunteering. As sons and daughters of the ministry, remember that you are always welcome here at Peniel.

Newsletter Written and Edited by Whitney N. Botts, B.S.

The background of the page is a collage of Easter-themed images. On the left, there are several colorful Easter eggs (yellow, green, pink, orange) and a small basket of twigs. On the right, there are white flowers, possibly baby's breath, and green foliage. The overall tone is bright and celebratory.

CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3, NASB

I don't think we make a big enough deal about Easter. I have been thinking about how we spend weeks, even months, preparing for Christmas. We are busy decorating, cooking, taking part in festivities, buying gifts, and singing songs of praise for the birth of Christ. And do not misunderstand, of course we should make a big deal about the birth of our Savior, but my question is, why does it seem like Easter does not get quite the same level of anticipation and excitement as Christmas?

The resurrection of Christ is one of the chief foundational beliefs of the Christian faith. Without the resurrection, God's promise of salvation through Jesus Christ would not be complete. The resurrection *confirms*, not only that Jesus Christ is in fact the Son of God, but it also confirms that through Him, we too are able to overcome death and are able to be resurrected into the promise of an eternal life.

If you ask me, the resurrection is an event that calls for boisterous celebration! This is an event that we must share with *everyone*. This is a time for us to dance and rejoice and lift our praises to God for not only sending His son, but for *sacrificing His* son and *resurrecting His* son that we too may have the everlasting promise of eternal life. We need to be making a lot of noise about this every single day of the year.

One of the greatest ways you can celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ is to share the good news with others. This is good news to be shared *any* day at *any* time, not just once a year. In fact, as we read in the resurrection story in Matthew 28: 18-20, Christ tells His disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

So, I challenge you to get excited about the resurrection and to share your excitement with someone who may not know the good news and the amazing promise that is theirs through Christ Jesus!

A decorative border featuring various colored Easter eggs (yellow, green, pink, orange, blue) and white flowers (tulips, daisies) on a green background, framing the text.

There is Hope: A Testimony

Charlynn's addiction story begins the same way many others do--using substances to cope with and manage the stresses and struggles that life brings. But, the turn her story would take is one that no one could have ever anticipated. This especially unique testimony is being courageously shared for the first time, because, as Charlynn says, "It was difficult for me to comprehend early in my treatment why I deserved to be loved and helped and made to feel special, when in reality I should be in prison. But, I learned that I am not alone. There are others like me who suffer the same, and more importantly, there could be plenty of more people who suffer in silence--afraid of what people would think knowing that they have an addiction in bondage to something like an over-the-counter medication or some other unusual substance addiction."

While Charlynn's drug history spans primarily from 2007-2019 and involves various substances, such as Xanax and opiates, the focus of her testimony will be on the turn her addiction took once she attempted to get clean from opiates on her own. In the spring of 2017, Char discovered an unusual remedy to help with withdrawal symptoms while searching the internet that was supposed to help make detoxing an easier process. Charlynn discovered that many opiate addicts used anti-diarrhea medications, such as Imodium-AD, to help with the detox process, because this medication created a similar affect as opiates when taken in excessive quantities. The reason this medication worked is because it contained a chemical known as Loperamide which attaches to certain receptors of the brain in much the same way Morphine does. This was the beginning of an addiction that trapped Charlynn in silence and in shame for two years. By December of 2019, Char was consuming 150 pills a day in order to produce the same effect as opiates. What made this drug addiction even more dangerous is that it did not show up in drug screens, so she was able to elude detection whenever necessary.

Due to the shame and the secretive nature of the addiction, rather than purchasing the Imodium-AD out-of-pocket, Charlynn began shoplifting the medication from local retailers. Charlynn states, "Eventually, I would tire of spending money on anti-diarrhea pills and was embarrassed from going to store cashiers purchasing large amounts of this medication on a daily basis. So I began to support my habit by shoplifting the pills rather than purchasing. My days involved planning my daily routine of which store I would visit for the day to steal my daily dosage. I could not think about planning my day and focus on work and/or parental responsibilities until I had my 'fix'."

Eventually, Charlynn's theft caught up with her, and she was caught red handed at one local retailer, who also had video evidence of Charlynn's theft at several other store locations on numerous occasions. Ultimately, this led to her being sentenced to 2-4 years in state prison. Charlynn says that, "The 2-4 year sentence was God finally saying, 'enough is enough...if you refuse to help yourself, then I'll get your attention this way and give you a final shot of admitting and seeking help. 2-4 years of imprisonment means your secret is no longer a secret. It's time to come clean and get help or spend the next 2-4 years in prison still in denial."

After receiving this sentence, Charlynn came clean to her attorney about her addiction. Due to this, Charlynn's attorney filed a petition for a sentence modification, and ultimately, Charlynn was court ordered to Peniel for treatment. Charlynn says, "Peniel would be where I would be saved and taught that as a daughter of God, I had no reason to be ashamed and hide anymore. Peniel helped break down walls and barriers that I had built over the course of my life trying to do things my way and pretend to have it all together. I learned that it is okay to not be okay. I learned that I am not alone. There are others like me who suffer the same and more importantly there could be plenty of more people who suffer in silence--afraid of what people would think knowing that they have an addiction, in bondage to something like an over-the-counter medication or some other unusual substance addiction."

Charlynn goes on to say that looking back over her life she is able to see God's hand working in a way she wasn't able to see before. God saved, redeemed, and restored Charlynn at Peniel and now she "looks forward to giving back to God by serving Him and using [her] testimony to help others become whole again and not be ashamed."

A decorative border surrounds the text area, featuring various Easter eggs in shades of yellow, green, pink, and blue, along with white and purple flowers and green foliage.

GOD HAS A PLAN

A STAFF SPOTLIGHT

When Emily Cooper initially stepped through the doors of Peniel as a client, she had no idea what God had in store for her. Emily states, "The day that my parents brought me to treatment, I remember driving past the one railroad track down the road, and I remember hearing the Lord say, 'This is your new home.' And I thought, 'okay, yeah, for 13 months.' But I didn't know it was going to be forever."

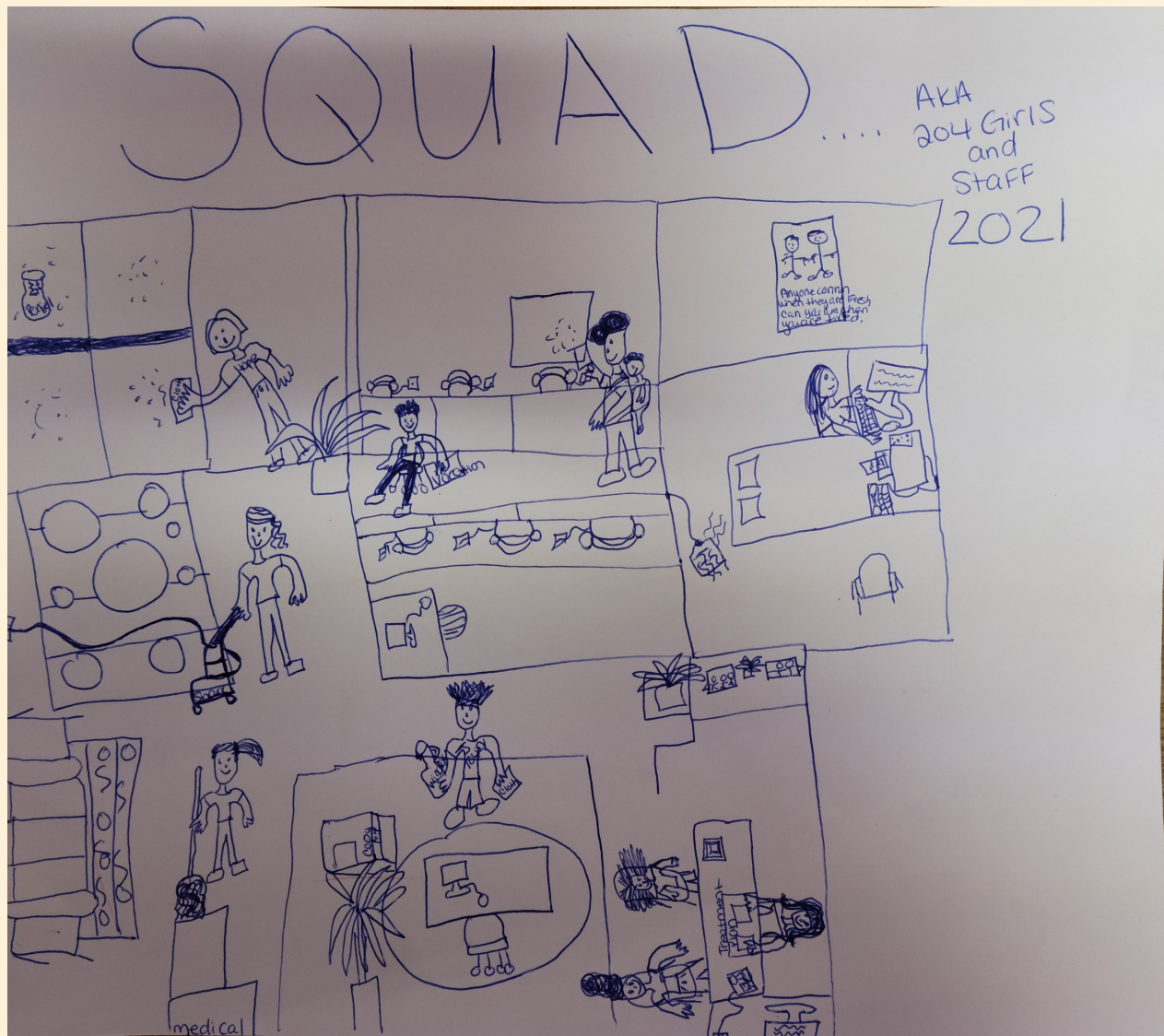
Shortly after Emily completed the program at Peniel, she became a volunteer staff member who worked in reception while also serving as staff on the ladies' dorm one weekend a month. During this time, she was simultaneously going to school full time to obtain her degree in Human Services at Penn Highland. While she was finishing up her degree at Penn Highland, Emily became able to serve as a counselor's assistant, which meant that she could serve as a counselor and be supervised by the clinical supervisor at that time. After doing two years of supervised counseling, Emily became a primary counselor, but God didn't stop there. He had even more in store for her.

Even though it would seem that Emily already had a full work load between serving on the ladies' dorm, as well as serving as a primary counselor, God decided she was ready for another challenge. Within a year of becoming a full time staff member, she was also appointed to be the ladies' dorm supervisor, and then later on in 2017 she was asked to take over the intake department and oversee the admissions of new clients.

Emily, recalling her time as a client at Peniel and as a counselee of Ms. Larmond, says, "The interesting thing is that my office now, was her office. So, when I say to my clients, 'I know where you've been. I've sat in your chair. I've *literally* sat in those chairs. These were the same chairs. When I was going through the program, I didn't know God was preparing me. As I was sitting in this office getting help, I didn't know God was preparing me to then sit on the other side of the desk to give help."

Speaking about how Peniel has transformed her life Emily goes on to say, "Peniel really helped me to just be honest about myself. About where I was at, what I was going through, and how I felt. It really helped me get to some of the core issues that were driving my addiction. Then being on staff, I feel like I was given the grace to be able to tackle all of the jobs that the Lord presented me with. I feel like those times when I have had to step in and fill in the gap, God was raising up other people to help in other areas. I feel like God is always raising someone up, so I don't stress about it, because I know that it is going to get taken care of. God has always been faithful in supplying and providing what is needed. I have grown so much as a person in the different roles I've served. I just count it a privilege to be able to work here, and to be able to be effective. From Peniel, there's a deeper maturity in my relationship with God. I think there's more of hearing God's voice and obeying when God says to do something. It's also just establishing a history with God. From the time I've been in the program until now, I've built a history with God. That has deepened my faith in him."

2021 LADIES DORM COMIC



The ladies of the 2021 class at Peniel recognize that being in treatment does not mean that there is no fun allowed. This is a comic done by one of our current female residents, Rebekah. This comic depicts the ladies program doing vocational chores in "C" building, also known as the family services wing.

COVID-19 VACCINE

FACTS AND GENERAL INFORMATION

- There are currently 3 different COVID-19 vaccines available
 - Pfizer-BioNTech (2 doses)
 - Moderna (2 doses)
 - Johnson & Johnsons (1 dose)
- COVID-19 vaccines teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19
- The formula for the vaccine had been developed using previous vaccines for similar viruses. This is why scientists were able to quickly formulate the vaccine.
- It takes 2 weeks after your last vaccine for you to be fully protected from the virus.
- The COVID-19 vaccine cannot cause you to contract the virus and have a positive test. The vaccine DOES NOT contain the live virus of COVID-19. You can, however, contract the virus if you have not had all the necessary doses of the vaccine and made it through the two week waiting period for the vaccine to be fully effective.
- Getting the COVID-19 vaccine allows you to be around other individuals who are also fully vaccinated without the need to wear masks or social distance. This means a slow return to normalcy when it comes to family gatherings and other similar events.

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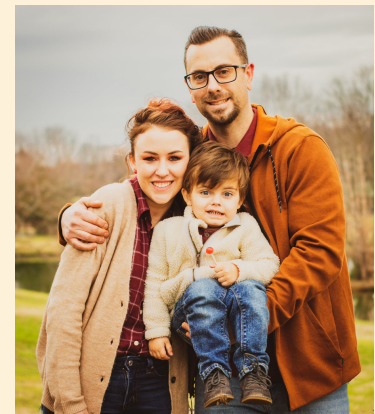
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Hello readers! Pictured here is myself, Whitney Botts (writer and editor of the newsletter), along with my 4 year old son, Atlas Botts, and my husband, Zachary Botts. We all moved to Pennsylvania to work at Peniel last August, and we love being apart of this ministry. I work in the intake aftercare departments, and my husband serves at the culinary director.