



# Introduction to Recovery Cafés: Peer-Focused Healing Communities

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**Recovery Café: A healing community supporting recovery from the traumas  
of substance use disorders, homelessness, and mental health challenges**

*Providing recovery support services since 2004*

## History of the Recovery Café

Recovery Café was founded in **2004** by Killian Noe, Ruby Takushi, and Mary Crow.

First location was opened in **Seattle** at 2nd Ave & Bell.

The Recovery Cafe Model is designed to help people **maintain** recovery, **reduce** relapse, and **fulfill** their potential.



**“The opposite of addiction is not sobriety.  
The opposite of addiction is connection.”**

—Johann Hari, author: *Chasing The Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs*, and keynote speaker at Recovery Café Network *Rendezvous 2020*



## Membership is Key to the Café Model

- Membership is free and open to all
- Member Commitments:
  - Be drug and alcohol free for 24 hours
  - Participate in a weekly *Recovery Circle*
  - Contribute to the Café community



## What is a *Recovery Circle*?

- Small *peer-led* groups: 8-10 members
  - A community within the Café community
  - Opportunity to be deeply known
- Check-in on current challenges & successes
- Build peer support between Circle members
- Opportunity for feedback
  - *Ask permission before offering*
- Not trying to “fix” or “cure” anybody
- Private: What’s said in Circle stays in Circle



## What is *School for Recovery*?

- 6-8 week classes in a variety of topics
- Recovery:
  - Wellness Recovery Action Plan - WRAP
  - Living With a Mental Health Diagnosis
- Healthy living:
  - Seed to Table (*growing healthy produce*)
  - Meditation, Yoga, and Mindfulness
- Job and life skills:
  - Barista Training, Kitchen Skills
  - Personal Financial Management
- Arts:
  - Self-Discovery Through Art
  - Ukulele for Beginners
- Members who complete classes receive recognition



## Other Program Offerings

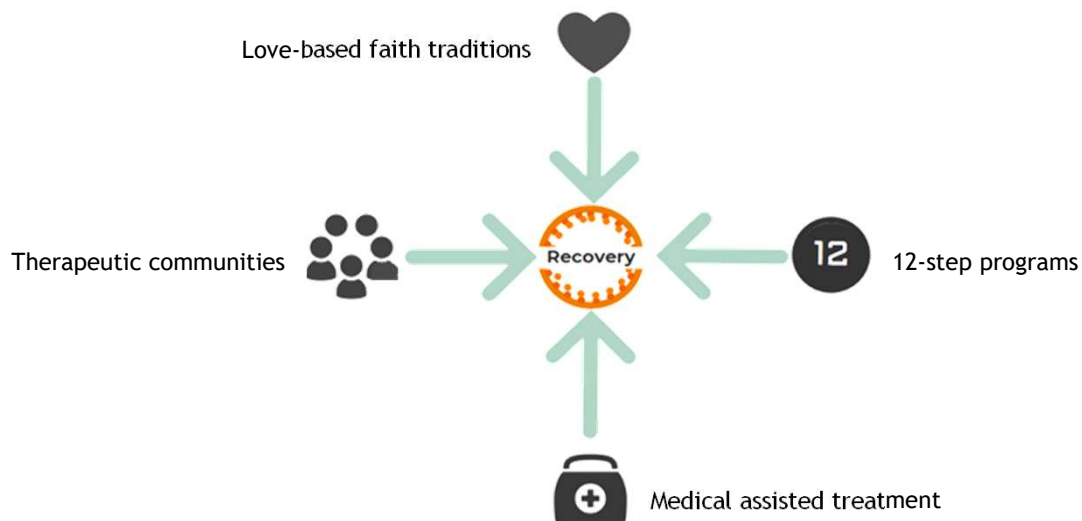
- Daily food and beverage service
- Peer navigators
- Social activities
  - Holiday Parties
  - Open Mic Nights
- Referral & Resources
- Guest speakers
- Health clinics
- Computer and phone access
- 12 Step and other support meetings



# A Typical Day at the Café



## The Recovery Café model honors multiple pathways of recovery, including



## The Café Role in a Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC)



Partnerships that flow two ways:

- Relationships that bring resources INTO the Café
- Relationships send Members OUT into the larger community.



## The Café Model is Evidence Informed

- Recovery Cafés help their Members build on all four dimensions of recovery, as identified by SAMHSA:
  - **Community, Purpose, Health, & Home**
- Other evidence-based practices that inform Recovery Cafés:
  - **Motivational Enhancement:** Reduces ambivalence about recovery
  - **Relapse Prevention:** Connecting thoughts to feelings and behavior
  - **Community Reinforcement & Contingency Management:** Providing incentives to participating in recovery
  - **Biopsychosocial-spiritual:** Recovery as a mind, body, and spirit journey
  - **Trauma-Informed Approach:** Recognizing that trauma is widespread and associated with mental health and substance use disorders



# How effective is this approach?



Findings from Member Surveys administered by Recovery Café Network Full Member Organizations

Members report that since joining their Recovery Café:

- 82%** experienced improved physical health
- 70%** experienced improved housing situation (among Members who report a need to improve their housing situation)

Members report that their Recovery Café...

- 97%** increased their desire to be in recovery
- 88%** helped them prevent alcohol relapse (among Members in recovery from alcohol use)
- 91%** helped them prevent drug relapse (among Members in recovery from drug use)
- 82%** helped them stabilize mental health (among Members who report a need to stabilize their mental health)



**DIANA WILDFLOWER**  
Recovery Café

My first memory is being raped by my grandfather at age 3. IN A BIG FAMILY OF 9 BOYS AND 2 GIRLS, I WAS ALONE. No one believed me. I learnt to NOT share my story. I was thrown out of the house at 13. I was trafficked at 14. Had 3 kids by 21 and was addicted for 18 years.

I have now been clean for 33 YEARS. I have a wonderful husband. WHEN I FOUND Recovery Café I started to REALLY HEAL.

I shared my story. I STOPPED FEELING DIRTY. I felt FREE. I felt LIGHT. I got my POWER BACK.

**ALAN WEST**

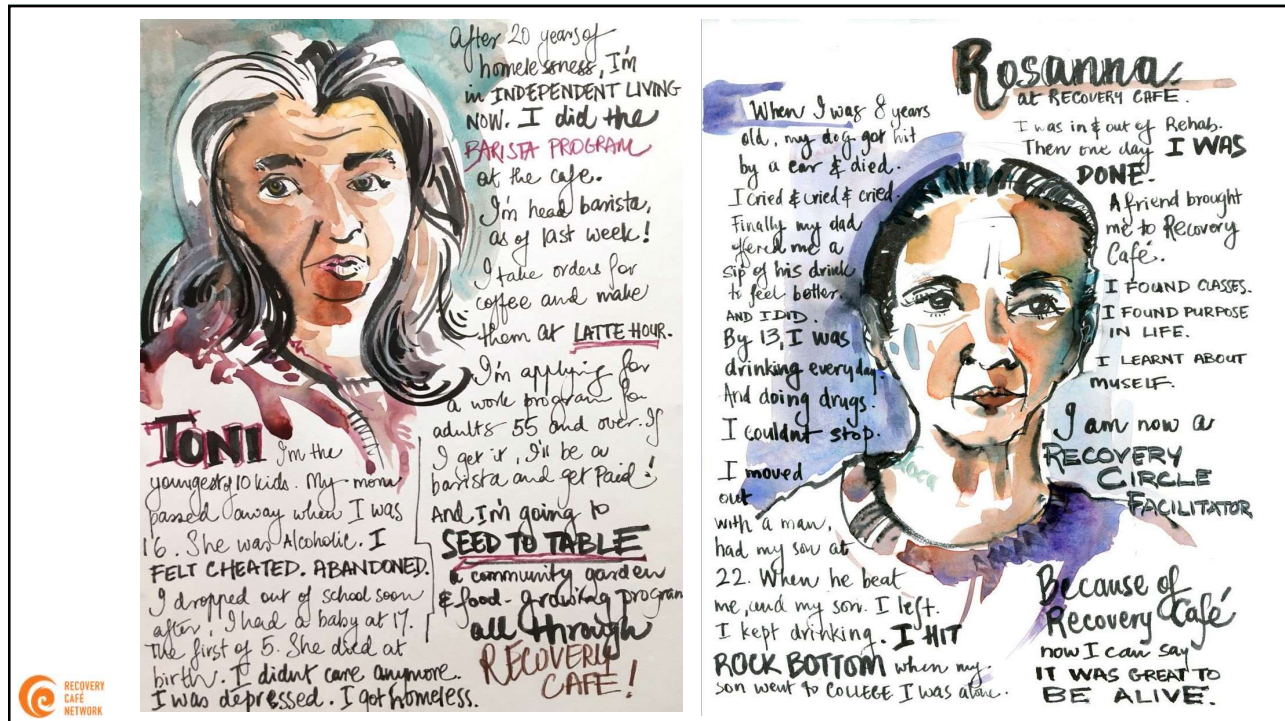
I'm 61 now. I lived on the streets for 30+ years. Drugs. Alcohol. Cigarettes. I did it all.

I've never met my mom or dad. I still wonder "Was she beautiful? Was he handsome?"

I have always loved people. I love my life. I DECIDED YOU OWE YOURSELF A BETTER LIFE. I'm clean now. And I'm a PEER FACILITATOR in a circle.



I have an apartment now. I WANT A DOG. A dog to talk to. A dog to love. A dog to play with. A dog to fill a spot in my heart. I WAS ADOPTED. I'll adopt my dog.





## The Recovery Café Network

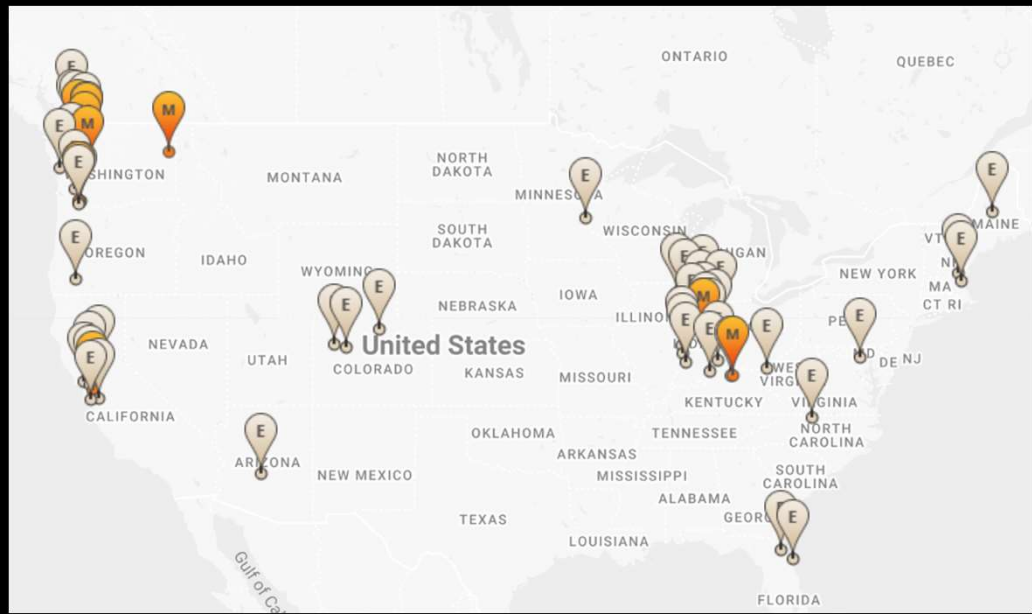
- Launched in June 2016, Recovery Café Network (RCN) nurtures life-transforming communities of people committed to recovery from homelessness, substance use disorders, and other mental health challenges.
- RCN has trained and assisted with the implementation of Recovery Cafés across the US and now Canada.
- Each Café an independent, local 501(c)(3).



## Our Locations

Now 57  
Recovery  
Cafés  
across the  
U.S. &  
Canada



RECOVERY  
CAFÉ  
NETWORK

## Core Commitments of all Cafés in the Recovery Café Network

- Create a community space that is drug and alcohol free, embracing, and healing
- Nurture structures of loving accountability called Recovery Circles
- **Empower every Member to be a contributor**
- **Raise up Member leaders**
- Ensure responsible stewardship
- Work to end systemic racism and socioeconomic inequality so every person can thrive



RECOVERY  
CAFÉ  
NETWORK

## RCN Resources and Support



- A proven model that provides all the elements of transformational space
- Cohort Learning, Training, and Support
- RCN Manuals & Online Content Library
- Affiliation credibility and support
- Funder confidence and opportunities
- Access to Program Database



## How are Recovery Cafés funded?

- Each Recovery Café has a unique and diversified funding mix from a variety of sources, including individuals, foundation and corporate grants, and government
- Emerging Members participate in “Fundraising Triads” trainings, plus additional RCN support

**Our goal is for each Recovery Café to find what works for them while teaching fundraising best practices.**



## Bringing Recovery Café to Your Community



- Free webinars for more information
- Network Catalyst Team available to assist you in discernment and getting started
- New cohorts launch twice each year (spring & fall)



## Questions?

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