



Remembering Jim Russell

Our friend, James T. Russell, passed away on March 5, 2014. His funeral was attended by hundreds of people whose lives he touched.

Jim was an active member of the Southwest Coalition for Substance Abuse Issues for many years. He helped grow the organization from a handful of providers to over 30 today.

Serving as the coalition's Treasurer and Membership Chairman, he managed our bank account, delivering flawless financial reports at each meeting; led the annual budgeting process; invoiced members when their dues were payable; and maintained membership records. His service went far beyond those titles, though. He managed the many applications for CEUs for our programs and made payment for the same and was also our in-house caterer - leading the preparation of food whenever we had an event or a conference. New members were welcomed by his quiet warmth and everyone appreciated his ready willingness to tackle any task.

The Southwest Coalition has named its scholarship fund the Jim Russell Scholarship Fund and welcomes memorial contributions. Checks may be made payable to the Southwest Coalition for Substance Abuse Issues and mailed to Robert Snipes, Treasurer, Stepping Stones, 1621 Theodore St., Joliet, IL 60435.

After 15 years working the securities exchange industry, Jim came to Stepping Stones in 1986 as Associate Alcoholism Counselor. In 1988 he became Program Coordinator in the Residential Unit; in 1992 he became Program Director in the Intensive Residential unit; and in 1998 he became Director of Residential Services.

At Stepping Stones, Jim coordinated efforts to offer self-help groups in the facility. He played a key role in developing and implementing practices which have become the standard for care including the ASAM model of care, Person Centered Recovery Planning, provision of concurrent care to address needs in all areas of an individual's life, and Continuing Recovery Planning.

Jim retired from Stepping Stones in 2009.

In 2009, Jim received statewide recognition for his work helping those with substance use disorders when he received the Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association's Keith Keesy Award. Named after Keith Keesey a pioneer in our field, this award goes to an individual who exemplifies a deep personal commitment to helping others, contributing long hours, and practicing the 12th Step of carrying the message to others.

Jim was also awarded "Professional of the Year 2010" by The Illinois Certification Board. Jim was very invested in the CADC credential and worked diligently to obtain it for himself and assisted many in obtaining theirs.

Jim served as an officer with the Illinois Association of Extended Care where he was instrumental in providing training on Recovery Support Services and offering the NCRS credential for individuals working in Extended Cares and Recovery Homes. During Jim's tenure in the IAEC, the number of Recovery Homes expanded from 40 to over 100.

Jim worked part-time for the Will County Drug Court as House Manager for the Miller Taylor House. As a drug court volunteer, Jim organized alumni activities and facilitated a relapse-prevention group for drug court participants. Deeply committed to the mission of Drug Court, Jim never missed a graduation.

And then there was Alcoholics Anonymous. Jim was Treasurer for the Mokena Fellowship and Plainfield Serendipity groups and always volunteered at picnics and Christmas parties. Jim also chaired an in-house AA meeting at the Stepping Stones Recovery Home. He volunteered for the Chicago Open (an AA meeting at the University of Illinois - Chicago pavilion, attended by ~4,000) and would volunteer his services at the Chicago AA bookstore.

Jim's car was a rolling AA meeting. He had coffee, sugar, creamer, cups, and the AA Big Books in his trunk. As he went about his many volunteer activities, he generally took an AA newcomer along. Along with Scott Miller, Jim provided transportation to Friday Serendipity meetings for people in the Intensive Residential Program at Stepping Stones.

James T. Russell lived a life of service to others; he will be greatly missed by all who were lucky enough to know him. The following lines in the St. Francis Prayer had special meaning for Jim and describe how he lived his life:

"Where there is despair I may bring hope.

"Grant that I may seek to comfort rather than be comforted."