the Milestone Minute

Jersey Mike's Month of Giving

Jersey Mike's in Bloomfield, NJ will sponsor the Milestone House for the annual **Month of Giving**, raising funds and awareness throughout March. Jersey Mike's stores nationwide highlight nonprofits each year, and we are honored to have the support of the Bloomfield location, owned by Milestone board member and alumna, Lisa Margotta (pictured).

On the Day of Giving, March 26, 100% of sales will be donated to The Milestone House!

Jersey Mike's
224 Bloomfield Ave
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

National Reading Month

March 2025 is National Reading Month, and the Milestone team is ready to celebrate! Find bookmarks throughout the newsletter showcasing recommendations and staff favorites. Featuring endearing classics, inspirational guides, and exciting adventures, the Milestone Minute's Spring library has it all!

Annika's Pick:
The Giving Tree
by Shel Silverstein

Staff Spotlight

At Milestone House, our mission is not just about recovery—it's about building a community that fosters healing, growth, and support. A key member of our development team, Danika Frank brings both personal and professional dedication to this mission. As the daughter of Milestone House founder Mike Frank, Danika's connection to this work runs deep, and throughout the past several months, she has played a vital role in helping Milestone grow its fundraising efforts and expand its impact.

Danika holds an MA from UCLA in Cinema Media Studies and a BA from Emerson Collegein Writing, Literature, & Publishing, with minors in Health Communication and Comedy—a unique combination that reflects her creativity and passion for storytelling. Before joining Milestone, she built an impressive career in communications and fundraising, working with major non-profits such as NARAL, the ACLU, and Lambda Legal. Her dedication to mental health and social justice has been a driving force throughout her career, making her a perfect fit for Milestone's mission.

Officially joining the Milestone team in 2024, Danika has brought her expertise, warmth, and humor to the development department, strengthening Milestone's ability to secure resources and support for those in recovery. Outside of work, she is a published creative writer, an enthusiast of fashion and art, and a proud pit bull lover. We are grateful for Danika's continued contributions and the passion she brings to our community every day!

Danika's Pick:
The Prophet
by Khalil Gibran

Breaking Bread, Building Bonds: The Role of Shared Meals in Recovery

For many, the journey to recovery begins with a single step—or, in some cases, a single meal. At **Milestone House**, shared meals are more than just sustenance; they are an opportunity to **foster connection, build trust, and create a sense of belonging**.

I arrived at Milestone House just before Thanksgiving in 2019. My first experience with the community was the Thanksgiving meal, where I immediately felt the warmth of a family built on shared experiences and mutual support. Sitting at that table, surrounded by people who understood what I was going through, **I realized that I wasn't alone**. That meal introduced me to the people who would become my lifeline—residents who welcomed me, supported me, and ultimately led me to my first twelve-step meeting in Dover. There, I was embraced by three Milestone alums, one of whom would later become my sponsor.

In the months that followe**d, the communal kitchen in M1 became a cornerstone of my recovery**. Cooking alongside fellow residents wasn't just about preparing food—it was about checking in with each other, laughing, and forming the kind of friendships that carried us through the challenges of early sobriety. In those moments, I learned that recovery isn't just about personal transformation—**it's about building a community of support**.

Over time, even the simplest food-related outings became significant moments of connection. A casual "Want to go to Burger King?" often held deeper meaning—**it became a quiet way of asking, "Do you need to get out and talk?"** What started as a trip for fast food frequently evolved into in-depth **conversations about life, struggles, and personal growth**. These spontaneous moments became opportunities for self-reflection, healing, and the kind of honest, vulnerable dialogue that is **essential in recovery**.

Shared meals offer more than just nourishment; they provide **ritual, structure, and stability**—all of which are crucial for individuals navigating the uncertainties of early sobriety. Gathering around a table fosters a sense of normalcy, a chance to reset and reconnect with oneself and others. It reminds us that we are not alone in our struggles and that there are people who genuinely care about our well-being.

Recognizing the importance of access to meals, **the Milestone House partners with Interfaith Food Pantry** to help stock the M1 pantry, ensuring that residents have the ingredients they need to cook together, even when financial resources are limited. Along with other donations, this collaboration allows residents to experience the joy of preparing and sharing meals, reinforcing the bonds of community and support.

Additionally, Milestone provides **annual Thanksgiving and Christmas meals** for residents who, for any reason, are unable to travel to see family during the holidays. These gatherings offer a comforting and festive space where no one feels alone, reinforcing **the sense of belonging and connection that is so vital to recovery**.

At **Milestone House**, we recognize that recovery isn't just about abstaining from substances—it's about **rebuilding a life filled with meaningful connections, purpose, and self-discovery**. And sometimes, the first step toward that transformation begins with something **as simple as a shared meal.**

- Annika Franklin

To support Milestone's meal initiatives, including pantry stocking and holiday gatherings, please consider making a donation. For more information, **visit https://themilestonehouse.org/donate or contact afranklin@themilestonehouse.org.**

Attention All Artists!

What's your medium?

The Milestone Minute is seeking art by alumni and residents to feature in our forthcoming issues. Digital, painting, illustration, collage - we want it all and more!
Send your work to dfrank@themilestonehouse.org and be on the look out for our next newsletter!

Additionally, the Rebirth Exhibition, a collaboration between Excel Treatment Center and The Milestone House, is open for submissions until May 1st. The event will showcase original artwork and celebrate our inspirational, diverse communities. **Contact rlozano@exceltreatmentcenter.com for more information on how to submit.**

Nikoleta's Pick:
The Big Book
by Bill W.

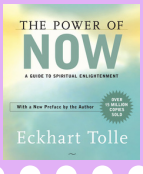
A Grand Opening

We're happy to announce the opening of Excel Behavioral Health! An expansion of the services offered by Excel Treatment Center, the new program is designed to allow clients to address their co-occurring disorders and care for their mental health, while in recovery. "Establishing Excel Behavioral Health is important to me to on a personal level," Mike Frank, founder and CEO, shared. "The Milestone House and Excel Treatment Center were conceived out of my own experience with substance abuse and the need to help others struggling with SUD. My mother battled with psychiatric disorders throughout her life, and I wanted to expand our mental health services in honor of her, and all others on their own wellness journeys."

Excel Behavioral Health will celebrate its launch with an open house in early April, ushering in a new era of care and community growth.

To make a donation to Milestone, visit our website, or scan this QR code! All donations are tax deductible.

Tim's Pick:
The Power of Now
by Eckhart Tolle

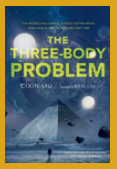


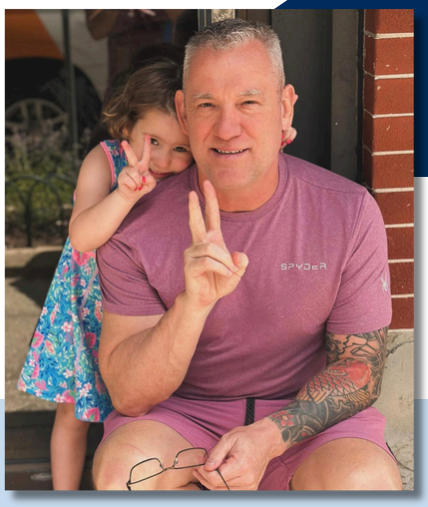
2025 Wellness Kickstarter

The Milestone House has kicked off our 2025 wellness initiative with our first indoor rock climbing workshop at the Randolph Climbing Center. Professional facilitators introduced climbing safety and techniques to our community members, providing a fun program for all experience levels and abilities.

The 2025 Wellness Kickstarter will feature several recovery fitness classes, meet-ups, and more. Spearheaded by volunteer and Excel intern Laura Walters, the rock climbing program promotes wellness in recovery, community, and the interconnectedness of physical and mental health All Milestone residents, Excel clients, staff, and alumni are welcome to attend!

Steve's Pick:
The Three-Body Problem
by Cixin Liu





Finding Freedom Through Service: An Interview with Shannon B.

*We sat down with Milestone House friend-of-the-family **Shannon B.** to discuss his journey in recovery, his deep connection to Milestone, spiritual growth, and the role of service in maintaining sobriety.*

What's your connection to Milestone? How did you become part of the family?

Shannon: I got sober in New York City in 2012, and after moving to North Jersey, I was introduced to Milestone by Nikoleta. I've been involved in service here, run workshops, and sponsor guys who've been at Milestone. I also have a close friendship with Mike, the owner. It's a place where I always feel at home—anytime I walk in, it's smiles and warmth.

What differences do you notice when sponsoring people in recovery residences like Milestone versus those living on their own?

Shannon: There's definitely a shift. In a place like Milestone, you're still sheltered from the real world. When guys transition out, reality hits—no structured schedule, no built-in support system. That's where I focus on preparing them spiritually, getting them involved in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and emphasizing the importance of finding a tribe. Without help, life can feel overwhelming.

How do you guide people through that transition?

Shannon: My biggest advice is to stay connected. I tell my guys, "Find your tribe." We have a group text where we check in every morning, share prayers, and support each other. I also push them to get into service—it keeps them engaged and gives them purpose. Boredom is a big issue post-treatment, so I encourage them to bring meetings into places like Milestone, get involved in H&I, or even find creative outlets. If you're bored in AA, you're missing the boat.

What would you say to someone who struggles with the spiritual aspect of recovery?

Shannon: I had a woman ask me once, "How do I get in touch with the spiritual side of the program?" I told her, "That's like asking how to get in touch with the wet side of the ocean—it's all spiritual." When I sponsor someone, I don't take a managerial role or punish them for struggling. I just love them. Some guys will follow 19 out of 20 suggestions, others will follow three, and some won't follow any. My job is to lay the tools at their feet—what they do with them is up to them.

Do you ever feel drained by the amount of sponsorship and service you do?

Shannon: Honestly, no. Years ago, I asked a spiritual teacher how he managed everything, and he said, "Once you enter the world of the spirit, clocks and watches disappear." It's true—when you're doing what you're meant to do, time just works itself out. If you put it on paper, my schedule wouldn't make sense, but it fits.

What's a key lesson people in recovery should take away from Milestone?

Shannon: Don't do it alone. The kindness of strangers saved my life, and it can save yours. I always tell the guys here—don't just sit in your room with your headphones in. Get plugged in. Find your road dogs. It's monkey see, monkey do—just make sure you're following the right monkey.

Any final thoughts?

Shannon: If you want to find freedom, help others find theirs. It doesn't make sense to the mind—we think we need to focus on ourselves first. But the truth is, if you want to find God, help someone else find theirs. If you want to find happiness, help others find happiness. The more you get out of yourself, the more you find exactly what you've been looking for.

Alumni Corner

Reflections from Milestone alumnus Alexander Lakatos

I was lost, struggling, and had no idea how to turn my life around. I had spent years on the streets homeless. I had been to numerous detoxes, jails and short/long term programs. My days were filled with uncertainty, and I felt like there was no way out. I had known of Milestone through several friends who had rebuilt their lives here. Taking a leap of faith, I reached out in 2015 in search of hope and a fresh start. From the moment I arrived, I was welcomed with open arms. I found a supportive community of people who understood my struggles and encouraged me every step of the way. They held me accountable and gave me the structured environment I needed.

Milestone gave me the foundation to build a life I am proud of today. Now, with over 9 years clean, I focus on giving back—helping others the way I was once helped. I have been able to write a book in this process called ***Use Once and Destroy***, which shows the journey of addiction to the process and steps needed to find recovery. This place gave me more than just a second chance; it gave me a purpose and a future. I will always be grateful to be part of this incredible community.

—Alexander Lakatos

Alex's new book,
***Use Once and Destroy*,**
is now available online!

NEW

NEW TIME!

THE MILESTONE HOUSE AND EXCEL TREATMENT CENTER

FAMILY & FRIENDS

SUPPORT GROUP OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

If you have a loved one who struggles with mental health or substance use disorder, you are welcome to attend.

TUESDAY'S AT 6:30PM
IN PERSON & VIRTUAL

60D N Sussex St. Dover, NJ 07801

Zoom ID: 978 2327 8477
Zoom Password: 973913

FACILITATED BY NATIONALLY CERTIFIED FAMILY RECOVERY COACH,

TIMOTHY GULICK
908-838-6506,
TGULICK@EXCELTREATMENTCENTER.COM

excel treatment center

the Milestone House

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Mark Yager

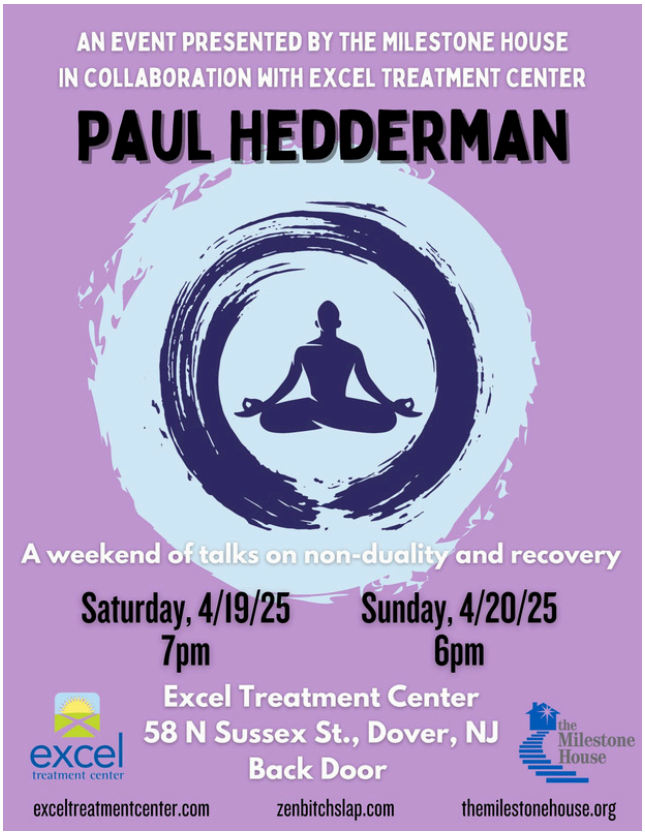
Facts From the Founder

Milestone House Founder Mike Frank (pictured left) shares:

"In the late 1800s, the first Milestone House building was a headquarters for the Temperance Movement, and historic Dover was a notable hub of the cause."

Mike's Pick:
Ender's Game
by Orson Scott Card

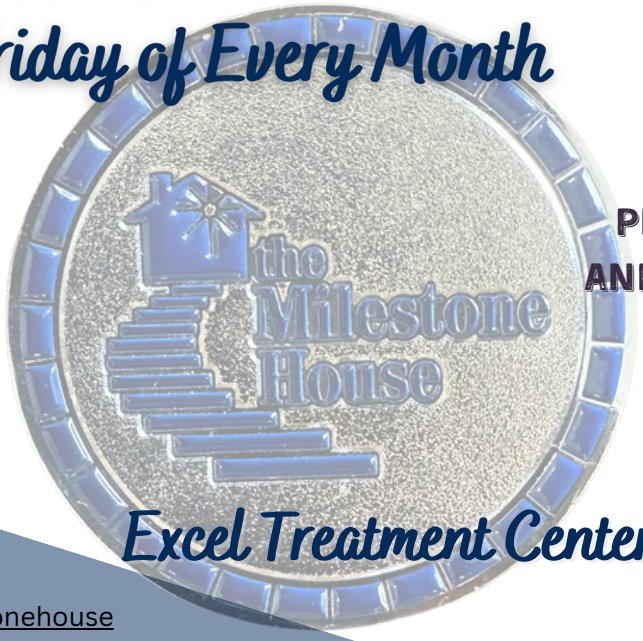
Upcoming Events



Milestone Alumni...

Final Friday of Every Month

COME CELEBRATE YOUR ANNIVERSARY WITH US!



PIZZA, COFFEE, AND FELLLOWSHIP AT 7PM

CELEBRATION, COINS, AND SPEAKERS AT 8PM

Excel Treatment Center, 58 N. Sussex St., Dover

NEXT CELEBRATION: MARCH 28, 2025

@themilestonehouse

facebook.com/themilestonehouse

themilestonehouse.org

Calling All Milestone Alumni!

Looking to get involved?
Join the Milestone Alumni Committee!
Contact alumni@themilestonehouse.org to sign up!

Upcoming Events

- **Every Tuesday, 6:30pm** Family support group, open to all loved ones seeking support
- **Last Friday of Every Month, 7pm, March 28** Anniversary Celebration Meeting
- **April 5, 9:30am - 4:30pm** Speaker Jam: 12 Step Workshop
- **April 19, 7pm + April 20, 6pm** Featured guest: Paul Hedderman
- **May 16, 5-7pm** Rebirth: Art Exhibition @ Excel

For more information, visit themilestonehouse.org/upcoming-events

Visit The Good Bean for new Spring menu specials!

Can you guess the Nikoleta-ism?

“He’s the to-go guy!”

“It's on the top of my head.”

He’s the go-to guy!

It’s on the tip of my tongue.

If you have a favorite Nikoleta-ism send it to alumni@themilestonehouse.org to be featured in our next newsletter!