the Milestone Minute

Meet Your Milestone, Make Your Mark

MAKING MILESTONES

This June, The Milestone House launched **Making Milestones**, a dynamic peer-to-peer fundraising campaign supporting recovery housing and rent scholarships. Participants are taking on personalized challenges, showing off their creativity, passion, and dedication to the Milestone mission. Our fundraisers are baking cookies, writing songs, learning instruments, and even teaching their dogs to paint! Every challenge is a celebration of recovery, resilience, and the power of community. Milestone residents will be completing the most important goal of all - giving back and doing service.

Dream Team: Ryan & Brian

Ryan Margotta and Brian Haskell, alumni and friends, have stepped up in a big way as the official Milestone maintenance team. From quick fixes to big renovations, their work keeps The Milestone House, The Good Bean, and Excel Treatment Center running safely, soundly, and smoothly.

But their story is more than maintenance; it's a reflection of the Milestone journey.

"Ryan, a former resident of Milestone and owner of Helping Hands Construction, showed me what recovery is about on a deep level," says Brian. "We used to talk about ongoing projects while I was still in IOP at Excel. When I mentioned it was time to get a job, he gave me small tasks around Milestone to prepare for inspections. After proving my work ethic, he brought me on full time."

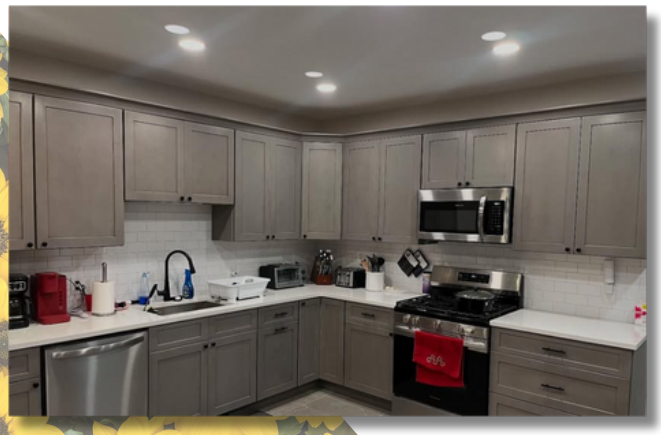
Those early conversations planted the seeds of a working bond that's now central to how Milestone keeps moving forward.

"Our mornings start at The Good Bean, with our favorite barista, Faraz," Brian shares. *(Keep reading to learn more about Faraz)*

As proud members of the Alumni Association, both men give back far beyond their job descriptions. Their dedication helps maintain not just our physical spaces, but the spirit of pride, responsibility, and community that defines Milestone

M3 Gets a Makeover!

We're excited to debut recent renovations over at M3! At The Milestone House, shared spaces are sacred. They're where morning coffee turns into mentorship, where dinner prep turns into deep conversations about recovery, hope, and resilience. Our spectacular new kitchen and living spaces serve as community hubs, where residents can cook, connect, and create lasting memories together.



Finding Purpose Through Sound: Michael "Skinny" Cavallo's Musical Journey in Recovery

Michael Cavallo—known to many as "Skinny"—has always carried music in his bones. But it wasn't until he found recovery, and a second chance at Milestone, that he began to reconnect with that part of himself in a new way.

Now, as part of this year's Making Milestones fundraiser, Michael is creating seven days of original music that reflect his story—past, present, and unfolding.

"Milestone is just one of those places that I owe a debt of gratitude that can't be repaid," Michael shared. "If I can show up for them when asked—or even when not asked—I want to do that."

The challenge grew out of a conversation with fellow alum Nikoleta, who encouraged Michael to lean into his creativity. That spark turned into something bigger: a commitment to finish and share a series of songs he's written over the past eight years in recovery.

"I have all these songs—just an idea or a verse or an instrumental or a guitar riff—and this is my push to finish seven of them," he said. "Finishing one song can be a challenge. Finishing seven… it's taken on a life of its own."

Some of the tracks will be recorded in collaboration with other alumni and recovery musicians. Others will be performed live, shared from his backyard, or posted as raw demos online.

"I told myself I couldn't make music without being high—but the universe kept proving me wrong."

"One way or another, I'm going to present them every day," he said. "It doesn't all have to be in a studio. I'm just going to go off the seat of my pants and see what happens."

Michael's relationship with music has evolved dramatically since he first arrived at Milestone. "I had told myself this story that I couldn't make music anymore—that I needed to be drunk or high to create," he reflected. "But the universe kept introducing ways for me to get involved in music again. Now, when I'm creating, I feel the same kind of presence that I feel in meetings. I'm not stuck in the past or the future. I'm just here."

His musical style is hard to pin down—and that's the way he likes it. "There's a song I did with my wife that's just acoustic guitar and no percussion. Another one is like a dark hip-hop track. One sounds like a Kid Rock song," he said. "I can't really put a label on it. It's just… passion meeting purpose."

Michael has already reached more than 60% of his fundraising goal. As his challenge unfolds, he hopes others will join him—by listening, sharing, or showing up with their own creative voice.

"It's not just my creative experience," he said. "It's all of ours."

Creativity in Recovery: From Surviving to Creating

In May, Milestone House celebrated the transformative power of creativity with two special events: an open mic night and a visual art exhibition, both spotlighting resident talent. These gatherings weren't just showcases—they were reminders that recovery can be a gateway to rediscovery, purpose, and expression.

For me, this truth is deeply personal.

Before I became the Director of Philanthropy at Milestone in 2022, I was a resident myself—living at Milestone from 2019 to 2020. And before that, I had spent eight years in Brooklyn immersed in New York's music scene. I played in two different bands, one of which I founded, and we regularly performed in local venues. But as my addiction deepened, music slowly disappeared from my life. For five years, I didn't write a single song. **The creative part of me went quiet.**

It wasn't until I moved into Milestone—specifically, a third-floor apartment in M1—that I picked up my guitar again. That space became my sanctuary. I started writing songs—songs that would become part of my first solo album, released in 2023. In many ways, that album was born at Milestone. **Recovery gave me back my voice. It gave me the clarity and energy to create, to connect, and to imagine a future beyond the fog.**

Music has remained a cornerstone of my recovery. It helped me channel the energy I once spent on substances and chaos into something restorative and meaningful. It reintroduced me to emotions I had long numbed, offering a safe way to process and share my story. And it brought me community—my husband, who played drums on my album, was one of those connections. I now call New Jersey home, and my creative life is fuller than it's ever been.

This spring, I've been especially moved to see creativity continue to thrive across our community. As part of *Making Milestones*, our spring peer-to-peer fundraiser, some members of the Milestone community have launched music-inspired challenges, using songwriting, performance, and creative expression to share their stories and raise funds for Milestone. **It's another powerful example of how recovery doesn't just restore lives—it ignites them.**

I often say: if every alcoholic and addict could repurpose the energy they once spent on using into something creative or productive, we would absolutely change the world. At Milestone, I see that energy transformed every day. Recovery isn't just about abstaining—it's about rediscovering who we are and what we're capable of. This spring's open mic, art show, and Making Milestones challenges have been beautiful reminders that healing and creativity go hand in hand.

Annika Franklin
Director of Philanthropy

Making Milestones & Giving Back

At the heart of **Making Milestones** is the Milestone House Volunteer Challenge, a unique way for our residents to give back and for our donors to double their impact, extending beyond Milestone to our beloved community of Morris County.

During Challenge Week (June 23–30), residents will turn **every $20 raised into one hour of community service.** From park clean-ups, to food pantry support, to helping at local events, residents will step up to serve the neighborhoods they call home. Each hour volunteered represents both a personal milestone and a way to pay it forward.

The Volunteer Challenge reflects the Milestone philosophy: **recovery is a community effort.** More than a place to live, Milestone House is a network of care, accountability, and purpose. In acts of service, residents begin to reconnect with the world around them and embrace their own ability to create positive change. Volunteerism is a powerful tool in recovery, allowing an individual to find peace, identity, and health in service to others.

Your donation to Making Milestones will fund recovery housing, empower residents, and enrich the community. Through volunteerism and peer connection, we are building lives rooted in purpose and paying it forward.

Building Community One Cup at a Time: Faraz Butte at The Good Bean

Since arriving at Milestone in November, Faraz Butte has become a familiar face behind the counter at The Good Bean, Milestone's recovery-run coffee shop located just below M1. A former biomedical sciences student and barista, Faraz brings a thoughtful approach to both his work and his recovery.

Originally from the Boston area, Faraz's path to Milestone was anything but linear. After experiencing homelessness, addiction, and legal issues, he found a turning point during a treatment stay in California. When it came time to return to New Jersey, a well-timed referral from a family contact led him to Milestone. "It's the longest I've been in one place since college," he shared. "Even before addiction, I was always running. Being able to stay put here has meant a lot."

Faraz started working at The Good Bean just weeks after moving in. "I'd worked as a barista before, so the coffee part wasn't hard," he said. "But being the only one in the shop at times—that took some getting used to."

> "I don't know what the future holds, but I feel confident it's going to be better than before."

Still, it's the community aspect that keeps him grounded. "It's amazing that this café exists—for Milestone and for the town. There aren't many places like it. You see the same people every day, you learn their orders. It creates these weak ties that actually give you a stronger sense of belonging."

He credits the job with helping him rebuild structure and accountability in his life. "It's helped me get used to showing up again—on time, with responsibilities. I'm not rushing toward anything. I'm just trying to find what I like, what I want to do. I don't know yet—and that's okay."

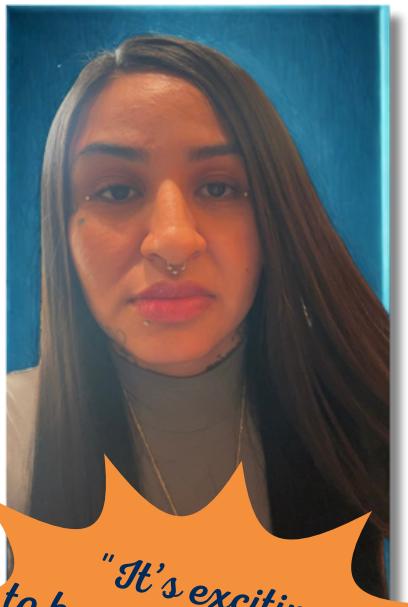
That clarity extends to family, too. After a long period of disconnection, Faraz has reestablished close relationships with his parents and siblings. "I was able to go home for a holiday recently and be present. It wasn't perfect, but it was peaceful. It felt good to reconnect."

When asked if he has a favorite customer at The Good Bean, Faraz didn't hesitate: "The two guys from maintenance who come in every morning. I open the shop for them." (That would be Brian and Ryan—see above!)

Looking ahead, Faraz says he's hopeful. "I don't know what the future holds, but I feel confident it's going to be better than before. Milestone gave me the space to start figuring that out."

Staff Spotlight: Clara Amaya

Milestone is proud to welcome Clara Amaya to the team as the newest member of the Morris ARCH initiative—Accessible Recovery Community Housing. The program brings expanded outreach and case management services to Dover and communities across Morris County, connecting individuals with care and resources. With a focus on culturally responsive communication, the program's launch included a priority hire: a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist fluent in both English and Spanish.



"It's exciting to be part of a program that really wants to include everyone."

Clara brings both professional training and lived experience to her work. Born in the U.S. and raised in a Peruvian household, she describes her background as a blend of traditional values and bicultural perspective. "I was born here, but I was raised in a very cultural environment," she shared. "It means a lot to be the first bilingual person in this role."

As Morris ARCH moves through its early outreach phase, Clara is meeting with local organizations to introduce the program and build new bridges. She's found that many partners are eager to collaborate, especially with the added capacity for Spanish-speaking communication. "It's exciting to be part of a program that really wants to include everyone," she said. "Even just helping translate or connect with someone in Spanish—it goes a long way."

Clara also shared her early impressions of the Milestone House community: "It's very team-oriented. Everyone works together and wants to help. It feels like a friendly environment where no question is too small." Her energy, empathy, and cultural insight are already helping shape the direction of the program. As Morris ARCH continues to grow, Clara is laying the foundation for a more connected, inclusive future—one conversation at a time.

Stay tuned for more updates on our new programming!

Morris ARCH

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

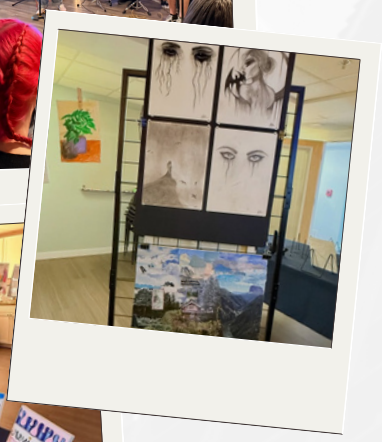
FACILITATED BY NATIONALLY CERTIFIED FAMILY RECOVERY COACH,

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

excel treatment center

the Milestone House

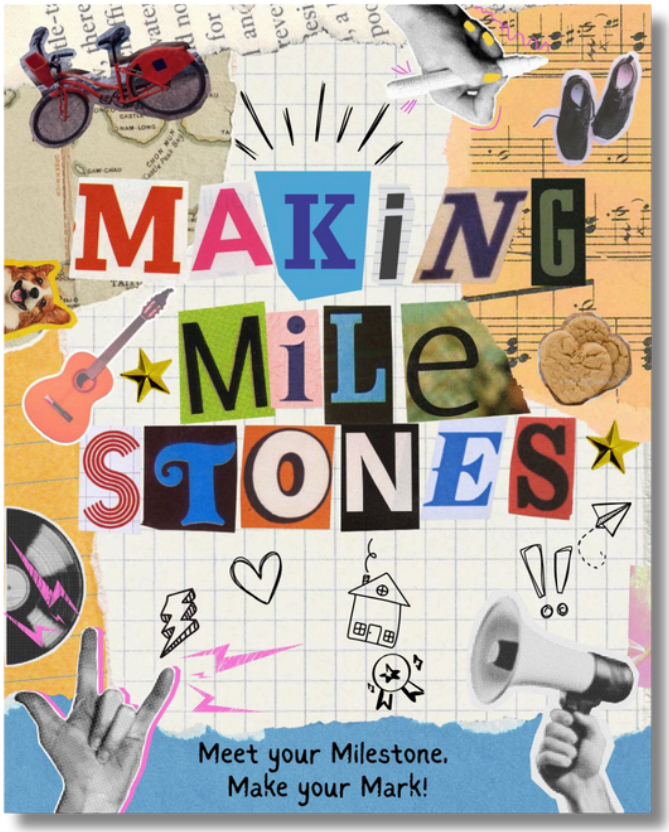
Arts in Action!



This spring, Milestone House and Excel Treatment Center hosted two inspiring artistic events that brought our community together through passion, empowerment, and creativity. The Open Mic Night on Saturday, May 3 gave residents, alumni, and staff a chance to share their voices and showcase their talents. A beloved recurring event, our open mics are community favorite and an opportunity to foster reconnection, mentorship, and friendship.

Our very first art show, the Rebirth Art Exhibition on Friday, May 16, was a wonderful night and a great success! Milestone and Excel are proud to celebrate the intrinsic relationship between recovery and expression. Coordinator Tim Gulick says, “It was amazing to see the artists’ eyes light up when they walked into the room. So many of us don’t honor our creativity enough to display it or give it the attention it deserves.”

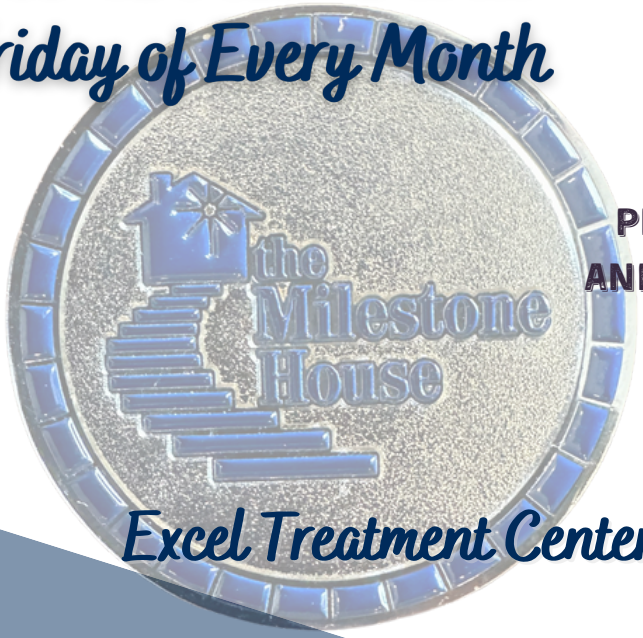
Upcoming Events



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: JUNE 27, 2025

Calling All Milestone Alumni!

Looking to get involved?
Join the Milestone Alumni Association!
Contact dfrank@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, June 27** Anniversary Celebration Meeting
- **Making Milestones Challenge Week** June 23-30
- **Alumni Barbecue, 2pm, July 20** Brundage Park in Randolph, NJ
- **Speaker Jam** Date to come! Stay tuned!

Visit The Good Bean for new trending menu specials!

Can you guess the Nikoleta-ism?

"I ate it like I stole it!"

"She has her legs in everything"

Ride it like you stole it!

She has her hands in everything.

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