



the Milestone Minute

Recovery in Action

April is Alcohol Awareness Month, a time to deepen our understanding of alcohol use disorder and the pathways to recovery. This month reminds us that prevention works, treatment is effective, and recovery is possible.

Nikoleta Danicic, Executive Director, says, “The phrase spiritus contra spiritum, as written by Carl Jung, literally means ‘spirit against spirit.’ Healing comes not just from removing alcohol, but from replacing it with something greater. Where alcohol may have once filled a spiritual void, recovery provides sufficient substitutes such as connection, purpose, and personal spiritual growth.”

At The Milestone House, this transformation happens every day. Early recovery can be a time of uncertainty, but it is also a time of possibility. By reducing stigma and increasing access to support, we can help more individuals take the first steps toward lasting change.

**ALCOHOL
AWARENESS
MONTH**

Finding Breath, Finding Purpose: An Interview with Dean Cramp

Dean Cramp, longtime friend of Milestone, spoke to us on how turned his recovery journey into a path of healing, connection, and service.

For Dean Cramp, recovery is a journey marked by persistence, surrender, and transformation. Before finding long-term sobriety, Dean had been through multiple treatment programs, each time committed but feeling like something was missing. “I would do all the right things, meetings, sponsorship, but there was always a piece I couldn’t access,” he shares. That missing piece revealed itself in an unexpected way, while living in Southern California: breathwork.

At first, he was skeptical. “I was the guy from New Jersey thinking, ‘What is this breathing stuff? I already know how to breathe,’” he says. But when he gave it a chance, the experience was immediately profound. “In that first session, I had a full-on spiritual experience, and everything shifted for me. In that moment, I just let go of everything I had been holding onto.”

Through guided sessions, Dean helps individuals regulate their nervous systems, process difficult emotions, and reconnect with themselves in a safe, supportive environment. For many, breathwork becomes a meaningful complement to traditional recovery practices, helping them access feelings and insights that are difficult to reach otherwise. “People think it’s just breathing, but when you actually experience it, you can access emotions, clarity, and connection in a way you didn’t know was possible.” Dean now leads a Breathwork Certification program, training others to facilitate powerful, trauma-informed breathwork experiences.

Sober living played a critical role in Dean’s own journey, building accountability and supporting others. “I had to do it like my life depended on it, because it did,” he says.



*Scan here for free guided
breathwork meditations and more
information on Dean's work*



That experience continues to shape the way he shows up today. His connection to Milestone grew naturally through the recovery community. “There’s something special about Milestone, you can feel it,” he says.

In addition to leading powerful breathwork sessions for residents and speaking at meetings, Dean gives back by bringing gifts and hosting a Christmas lunch at Milestone. “That first year I was away from my son on Christmas, it completely changed the way I saw the holiday,” he says. “Now every year, I make it a point to give back to people who are in recovery and away from their families.”

For Dean, the work is deeply personal. “Every time I show up at Milestone, I’m really just trying to help the version of myself I used to be.” Through his story and his work, Dean offers a powerful reminder that recovery is not just about sobriety, it’s about building something new. And sometimes, that transformation begins with a single breath.

Development Beyond Dollars

A Conversation Between Development Directors

Annika Franklin (Milestone House): How would you define the official role of a development director or development department?

Pam Capaci (Hope Sheds Light): “A development director oversees the whole department, and that person’s responsibility includes developing a strategic plan for the department tied to agency goals and missions, and then helping create strategies for those goals... and overseeing the general flow of progress with meeting targets and things like that.”

Annika: So it’s almost like you’re a liaison— less rooted in day-to-day operations and more focused on how the organization interacts with the broader community?

Pam: “Yep... It’s volunteer roles and the philanthropist down the street wanting to be involved at every level... Oftentimes in small organizations, the CEO is doing all of that... or if you’re lucky enough to have a development director, then that person is kind of doing all of that... and then little by little, you start to create enough revenue to bring in support staff.”

Annika: What are some of the unofficial roles that fall under development?

Pam: “I think what falls on the lap of the development director is being a jack of all trades in the world of communication... It’s sales work for a mission.”

Annika: What’s something you’ve changed your mind about over the course of your career?

Pam: “I think there’s a mistake... in measuring the success of a development director based only on the amount of money they bring into an organization. I really look at development very globally... it’s developing relationships, infrastructure, communications, and strategies that all lead to your ability to raise more money.”

At The Milestone House, development plays a central role in how organizations grow and sustain their mission. Milestone House Director of Development Annika Franklin spoke with Pam Capaci, CEO of Hope Sheds Light, for a conversation about what the role really entails.

Annika: That’s especially meaningful for us— we do a lot of engagement with alumni, and we don’t want their connection to Milestone to feel contingent on financial giving.

Pam: “Especially in our field.”

Annika: What about making “the ask”? That can be intimidating.

Pam: “You never know who might support your mission... I got better at not being uncomfortable or afraid to make the ask.”

Annika: Both of our organizations are very family-centered. How does that play into development work?

Pam: “For me, it’s a perfect fit... I learned that I don’t separate my passion and the personal connection from my professional setting, and it’s helped me be a good ‘salesperson,’ because I stay personally connected to it. I have family members in recovery... I lost a family member... so this whole theme of working hard and being a strong advocate for something that benefits families... that’s what drives me.”

Annika: Any final thoughts for someone considering a role in development?

Pam: “Don’t just focus on the bottom line. Understand that you become an essential part of enabling the organization to grow. And if you’re looking at opportunities and the only thing they’re talking about is how much money they brought in last year... move away from that space. Find a place that understands your value as an essential piece of the puzzle in terms of long-term sustainability.”

A Night to Remember: Hearts in Harmony

On Saturday, February 21, 2026, The Milestone House hosted its inaugural gala, Hearts in Harmony, a night of creativity, community, and connection.

Staged at the beautifully designed PonderRosa Recording Studios in Lafayette, New Jersey, the evening featured a line-up of soulful musicians, all alumni: Michael "Skinny" Cavallo, Snake leg (featuring Annika Franklin), Ash Sanders, and Mel Judge.

Hearts in Harmony celebrated the spirit of Milestone, and funds raised will directly support recovery programming and rental assistance for low-income residents. We are deeply grateful to the sponsors of this unforgettable night, and all who donated, attended, and volunteered. Annika Franklin, Director of Development, wrote, "As Milestone continues to grow and evolve, your generosity helps ensure that others will find the same opportunity to begin again— to heal, to create, and to build a life beyond what once felt possible."

Thank you to Our Sponors!

Excel Treatment Center
The Killian Firm, P.C.
Community in Crisis
Recover Revolution
Berk's Furniture
Mamas Play
Telyas Chabad Jewish Center



PonderRosa Studios
Enlightened Recovery
Fox Architectual Design
HOPE Sheds Light
Nirvana Recovery
TK Electrical
Sacks Paint

Trip to RECO2026

The Milestone House team had an incredible experience attending the 6th Annual Recovery Ecosystems Conference on March 5th! The day was filled with meaningful conversations, powerful insights, and opportunities for learning that continue to shape how we think about recovery support and community care. Hosted by the New Jersey Coalition for Addiction Recovery Support, the conference brought together recovery support providers, system leaders, advocates, and community partners from across the state.

We are grateful to have been part of such an inspiring and collaborative space. The insights gained will continue to inform and enhance the work we do every day at Milestone. We look forward to building on these connections and bringing new ideas back to the community we serve!



Staff Spotlight: Faraz



At The Milestone House, growth often comes full circle, and Faraz Butte's journey is a powerful example of that transformation. "Beyond saving my life, Milestone has taught me how to live," Faraz shares. "I finally understood that being ready is an action, so I got to work."

Faraz set to rebuild his life with intention and purpose. Along the way, he developed meaningful friendships, reconnected with his faith and family, and learned how to show up for himself and others in new ways. "It's 100% true that no one can do the work for you, but having a safe, supportive space to do that work makes a world of difference."

Faraz began as a barista at the Good Bean, and today, he serves as a Case Manager & CPRS. He supports residents with non-clinical needs such as documentation, court letters, and navigating systems like OTA. In this role, he helps others set goals and take meaningful steps toward achieving them. "As beautiful and inspiring as recovery can be, it can also be full of frustrations and roadblocks. I hope to be a resource and buddy to the Milestone community to help navigate and get through the annoying, but necessary steps in this process."

Sober Myth Busters: What Recovery Really Looks Like

There are a lot of myths out there about sobriety, some that I believed down to my core when I got here. These ideas may come from movies, or from those who don't really understand addiction, and some come from the fear that engulfs us when we first get sober. These myths can make recovery seem terrifying or even impossible. The truth is that sobriety often looks very different from what we could ever imagine.

One of the biggest myths is that sobriety is boring. A lot of us worry that without drugs or alcohol there will be nothing left to enjoy, but many of us in recovery end up discovering more about ourselves than ever before. Hobbies, fitness, careers, creative outlets, and genuine friendships start to take the place of the things that once filled our time. Life doesn't smaller in sobriety, it usually gets bigger and more exciting.

A myth that I truly believed in early recovery was that I would never be able to work again or rebuild a career. Addiction can damage our confidence and leave us feeling like we've burned every bridge. Some of us have gaps in employment, legal issues, or a past that makes us feel like no one will give them another chance.

But recovery tells a different story. Sobriety allows us to rebuild responsibility, reliability, and self-respect. Many in recovery go back to school, learn new skills, start new careers, or even work in the recovery field helping others. Employers value honesty, hard work, and growth, and many of us become some of the most dedicated and dependable employees because they understand the value of a second chance. Many of us in recovery are built differently. When we take on values and roles, the way we did drugs and alcohol, we become unstoppable.

Another myth is that relapse means failure. Recovery is not always a linear path. For some, relapses become part of the process that strengthens our commitment to sobriety. What matters most is getting back up, asking for help, and continuing the work.

Finally, there is the myth that recovery can't be fun. Many alumni discover that they enjoy life more in sobriety than they ever did while using. Whether it's concerts, hiking, or just going to get cheesesteaks at 2:00 a.m., these moments become opportunities to connect and create real memories.

The truth is that sobriety is not about losing a life. It is about gaining one beyond our wildest dreams. It allows us to rebuild trust, rediscover who we are, and pursue goals that once felt impossible. The path may not always be easy, but it is real, meaningful, and filled with love. Sobriety is not the end of the story, for many of us it is where the best chapter begins.

Nico Rossi, Alumni Coordinator

Alumni Corner

Reflections from Milestone alumnus Jessica G.



When I came to Milestone, I had nothing together. I didn't have custody of my son, I had nowhere to live, I wasn't allowed at my mom's house, and I didn't even have my driver's license. I was broken, embarrassed, and tired of living the way I was living. Milestone forced me to look at myself and take responsibility for my life. It wasn't easy, and there were days I wanted to quit. But I stayed, I listened, and I did the work.

When I left, my life looked completely different. I had custody of my son, my driver's license, working full time. I wasn't just surviving, I was showing up. Today I am a mother my children can depend on, a loving wife, a sister, and a daughter who isn't running anymore.

I'm so grateful Milestone gave me a chance.



*Jess's testimony was
featured on our gala's
Wall of Hope,
highlighting Milestone
alumni stories of
recovery!*



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



Family & Friends Support Group

The Family & Friends Support Group, hosted in partnership with The Milestone House and Excel Treatment Center, continues to provide a meaningful space for connection, reflection, and healing. The group brings together loved ones of individuals facing substance use and mental health challenges, encouraging participants to focus on their own growth and well-being while navigating how to support others.

“This is an amazing group of resilient people who not only care for their loved ones, but are also deeply committed to understanding their role in the overall recovery of the family,” says Megan Bouchard, the group’s facilitator. Members include individuals supporting both current participants and alumni of Milestone and Excel. The group’s hybrid format allows for consistent participation, regardless of schedule or location. Meetings are flexible and participant-driven, evolving to meet the needs of those present. Looking ahead, the group is planning opportunities for in-person connection alongside its ongoing hybrid format. With the leadership of new Clinical Director Jodi Weston, Milestone and Excel are also preparing to expand family support offerings in the months ahead.



Growing Together with Drew Assini



Supporting our residents begins with supporting our staff. We are excited to expand staff development opportunities through workshops and one-on-one sessions with returning friend of the Milestone House, Drew Assini!

Drew has led interactive workshops on topics like de-escalation and boundaries, creating space for staff to come together, share experiences, and strengthen the skills they use every day. These sessions are designed to be practical, engaging, and rooted in real-life situations, helping staff feel more confident and equipped in their roles. “They hopefully help staff feel more equipped and confident to serve, and also add to the team and family dynamic that makes Milestone so special,” he shares.

By investing in our staff, Milestone invests in the heart of its mission, enhancing the care, connection, and support we provide to every individual who walks through our doors.

THE MILESTONE HOUSE & EXCEL TREATMENT CENTER

Family & Friends

SUPPORT GROUP

TUESDAYS @ 6:30 PM
IN PERSON & VIRTUAL

**60D N Sussex Street
Dover, NJ 07801**

**Zoom ID: 978 2327 8477
Passcode: 973913**



A welcoming space for families to share, learn, and find strength as they support loved ones navigating recovery and mental health challenges.

Megan Bouchard
862-366-1288
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Upcoming Events



The Milestone House + 2026

Breaking News

NEW MILESTONE HOUSE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION!

THE MILESTONE HOUSE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION IS OFFICIALLY INVITING ALUMNI TO RECONNECT, STAY INVOLVED, AND CONTINUE BUILDING RECOVERY IN COMMUNITY.

- Stay connected to the Milestone community
- Attend alumni & community events
- Give back and mentor current residents
- Strengthen your recovery network
- Be part of something bigger than yourself



QUESTIONS?

CONTACT NICO ROSSI AT
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STAY IN TOUCH! +

Milestone Alumni... Final Friday of Every Month



**COME CELEBRATE
YOUR ANNIVERSARY
WITH US!**

**PIZZA, COFFEE,
AND FELLOWSHIP
AT 7PM**

**CELEBRATION,
COINS, AND SPEAKERS
AT 8PM**

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

**NEXT CELEBRATION:
APRIL 24TH, 2026**

 @themilestonehouse

 facebook.com/themilestonehouse
themilestonehouse.org

Calling All Milestone Alumni!



Looking to get involved?
Join the Milestone Alumni Association!
Contact nrossi@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, April 24 Anniversary Celebration Meeting**
- **Memorial Day Parade, May 25** Come walk with us in Dover's Memorial Day parade!

For more information, visit
[themilestonehouse.org/
upcoming-events](http://themilestonehouse.org/upcoming-events)



Visit The Good Bean for new trending menu specials!



Can you guess the Nikoleta-ism?

“Squeaky wheel gets the moving!”

“I have a photogenic memory.”

*The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
I have a photographic memory.*

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