

EXCITING ALUMNI UPDATES

Meet Your Alumni Team

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Alumni Program Manager

ASHLEY EGELAND, CPSS

My journey in recovery has gifted me with an endless amount of strong, healthy connections; ones that I cannot even begin to describe in words. Many of those connections have unfolded by being a part of others' ups and downs as they trudge through the mud onto a solid path and others have come from those being a part of my own ups and downs. Some of these connections have turned into beautiful friendships that I will carry in my heart forever. I want to personally thank every person for allowing me to be a part of your journey after you have graduated. You have and will continue to inspire me. I am happy to announce that I will be moving on from an Alumni Coordinator role into the Alumni Program Manager role to continue to grow our alumni community.

I am excited to pass the torch to such compassionate, understanding, and supportive role models. Kelsey Mansfield and Dylan Filkohazi are your new contacts for the Alumni Program. Kelsey and Dylan, who are also alumni of our programs, will continue to provide support to past and future clients as they continue their own road in recovery.

Sending out a big welcome to Kelsey and Dylan!



"I am excited to pass the torch to such compassionate, understanding, and supportive role models."

ASHLEY

Alumni Coordinator - Red Oak

DYLAN FILKHAZI

I was born in New Brunswick, NJ. Due to my father's alcoholism and intimidating/violent behaviors, I lived with my mom starting at the age of three. My relationship with my father was on and off through state supervised visitations or when I could get out to visit him and his girlfriend. Around the age of ten, my mom went through her own spiritual awakening realizing she was an alcoholic herself. While she began her journey of recovery by attending Alcoholics Anonymous, my father was still drinking and using with no aspirations of getting sober.

The lack of relationship with my father played a huge role in my younger years. It left a hole in my heart that I did not know how to fill. By my adolescent years I was fighting to find that father figure role model by hanging out with a "tougher" crowd. I started abusing my ADHD medication, smoking weed, and even tried drinking here and there. My mom knew plenty about the world of addiction so it did not take long for her to catch on to my behaviors. I tried to get creative and move on to using substances that she would not be able to smell. As I write this out, I can see that my cleverness was just an extension of the insanity I went through to hide my addiction. I also now know that I was self medicating hoping to answer those hard questions; why am I not enough? Why am I so empty?

The next several years was an ongoing cycle of barely graduating from high school, going to different types of treatments, trying to go to college, and trying to hide my addiction from my mom. These years were filled with self-hatred, loneliness, and depression; I had no healthy friendships, no dreams, no goals, no reason to do anything positive in my life. My using continued to get worse and the only motivation I had was to go to work so that I could afford to keep up with my addiction.

My mom suggested that I go to AA, so I gave it a try. A few days after attending a couple of meetings, I crashed my car into a toll booth on the Garden State Parkway in a blackout. Three days later, I was on a plane to North Carolina to head to Red Oak Recovery®. I tried to convince everyone that I was fully aware of my problem and that I did not need help. On day ten, I tried to leave. I made it 0.1 miles up the hill, burst into tears, and headed back down. On day fourteen, I told myself I was going to complete this program, and I was going to do it for my mom. My therapist challenged my desire to get sober for my mom and not for myself. This challenge did not become a revelation until later in my recovery. I completed the program in 101 days and went to an aftercare program in Asheville. I enjoyed going to AA meetings, but I never had true aspirations to work the 12 steps. I never wanted recovery for me. It was always to make my mom happy and proud. After almost a year of sobriety, my addiction took over my life again. I called my mom and she let me fly back home where I stayed in a screened in porch/closet. The down spiral began again; days of using, hundreds of dollars lost, strains on whatever relationships I had left crumbled.

In a last desperate attempt I went back to AA and got a sponsor. I began working the steps, which I had never done before. The steps slowly began to repair the relationship with my mom. It opened up opportunities to see that I was worth recovery. The challenge from my Red Oak therapist finally clicked for me. Recovery was for me; not to make my mom happy. Five months later, I was offered a position as a house manager at a new sober living in New York. Working there showed me that I was on the right path to finding a career that was right for me. My love and appreciation for Red Oak pulled me back to Asheville, and I called my former therapist at Red Oak to ask her about working there. A couple months after that phone call, I found myself at the entrance of Red Oak with a radio and keys in hand, wanting to make a difference like all the staff had made a difference for me.



**"Red Oak is
where I
started to
rebuild self-
worth."**

DYLAN

Alumni Coordinator - The Willows

KELSEY MANSFIELD

My name is Kelsey Mansfield, and I was born in Greensboro, North Carolina to forever supportive parents. I am the youngest of three and what they say about being “the baby” as well as “the black sheep” is true in my family; I kept my family young, as well as on the edge of their seat. I had a well-rounded childhood, never lacking for love and encouragement.

Despite my best efforts, I was painfully shy growing up and suffered from constant self-criticism. Comparison, being the thief of joy, became my middle name quickly and aggressively. A lot of these insecurities were chalked up to typical growing pains, but that has always been a part of my problem- feeling and believing that “I am the only one who feels this way.” When I was 14, “life in a glass house” struck a whole new meaning when my family endured a life changing trauma.

The next three years were a purgatory of caretaking and trying to make up for what I felt my family had lost. The summer before my senior year of high school, at age 17, I blew the hinges off every safety I had ever kept. With a vengeance, I dove down the rabbit hole of what would become a ten year hurricane of negative coping skills. Along the way I traded countless relationships, jobs, and self- identity for a love affair with substance abuse and an eating disorder.

The Willows at Red Oak Recovery® found me at 27 years old, a depleted soul that was void of solace or emotion. I had completely lost my will to live, being in a survival state for so long. This first step was the sole best decision I have ever made in my life, and it gave me the power to save myself.

The Willows reminded me who I was all along; a gentle, humorous, compassionate spirit that sought love and safety.

After my year of sobriety, I came back to my second home and began working as a Clinical Technician. I can only hope to give back half of what I received while I was at The Willows. It is an honor and a privilege to witness the vulnerability and courage of other women that are recovering from trauma, substance abuse, and mental health.

I am beyond grateful to take on this new role as Alumni Coordinator and am available as a resource to keep you connected to our beautiful Alumni Program. The road of recovery is winding and changing, as is life itself, but as cliché as it sounds... it is ever so worth it.



"I can only hope to give back half of what I received while I was at The Willows."

KELSEY

Alumni Coast to Coast Meeting

JOIN US FOR A VIRTUAL AA/NA MEETING!

DATE/TIME

- Monday, November 2 at 7:00 pm ET

CONNECTING

- In order to use video, you must use Chrome. No need to download anything prior to the meeting!
- Copy and paste this link for video:
 - <https://bit.ly/3dPISsf>
- In order to audio in:
 - Dial: 828-318-0245
 - PIN: 679144

QUESTIONS

Reach out to our Alumni Program Team with any questions:

- Dylan, 828-412-2728
Dylanf@redoakrecovery.com
- Kelsey, 828-412-1346
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**We can't
wait to
connect
with all of
you!**