

Column: Treatment services ultimately help everyone

September 2011 will mark the 22nd celebration of National Recovery Month. The theme this year is "Recovery Benefits Everyone."

By: **Joanne Pohl**, The Republican Eagle

September 2011 will mark the 22nd celebration of National Recovery Month. The theme this year is "Recovery Benefits Everyone."

The purpose of this annual observance is to educate the public about addiction treatment and how it allows individuals to reclaim their lives and move on to achieve health and productivity. As expressed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Recovery Month spreads the important message that "behavioral health is essential to overall health, that prevention works, treatment is effective and people can and do recover."

Millions of Americans have transformed their lives and freed themselves from destructive addictions. Today, more than 75 percent of citizens believe that people can fully recover from drug and alcohol addiction.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, along with several other federal agencies and committees, created a consensus statement of experts regarding the fundamental components of recovery. In celebrating Recovery Month and raising public awareness about recovery, it is important to note that the recovery process involves both internal and external requirements.

Individuals must be allowed to determine their own path to recovery and be empowered to take control over important structural pieces of their lives. Recovery also requires peer support, community acceptance and protection against bias and discrimination.

Recovery is not a linear process, nor a step-by-step recipe. Rather, it is a process of continual growth over time that can include set-backs and relapse experiences.

Most importantly, recovery requires hope. Family members, friends and recovery service providers play a key role in making hope the catalyst of the recovery process.

The success and accomplishments of recovery service providers and individuals in recovery are deserving of recognition and acclaim.

Approximately half of all people in the United States know someone who is in recovery from addiction to alcohol or drugs. The positive feelings Americans have toward treatment and recovery are based on their own life experiences and relationships. From the heartbreak and desperation of a life controlled by chemical substances can come restoration of health and happiness.

Americans have confidence in the treatment strategies and processes of our behavioral health service providers.

The Recovery Month observance allows us to re-affirm the American spirit that honors the notion of personal redemption and transformation.

President Lincoln was one of the earliest American leaders who recognized the social implications of effective addiction treatment. In 1842, local politician Abraham Lincoln was asked to give the Washington Day remarks to the Springfield, Ill., Washington Temperance Society on the 110th anniversary of George Washington's birth. Expecting to hear an emotional denunciation of drink and persons incapable of resisting liquor, the crowd was stunned to hear young Lincoln extol the virtues of a benevolent and charitable approach to persons addicted to drink.

While some political leaders of the day pointed to the incorrigible and morally inferior class of habitual drunkards, Lincoln observed "their heads and their hearts will be an advantageous comparison with those of any other class." Lincoln rejected the notion that drunkenness was a crime or a personal disgrace.

"In my judgment," said Lincoln, "such of us as have never fallen victims, have been spared more by the absence of appetite than from any mental or moral superiority over those who have."

Indeed, Lincoln told the Washingtonians that the fight to eradicate the "great amount of human misery" inflicted by bondage to alcohol would be a "glorious and noble victory."

Lincoln's abiding faith in the potential for human reformation and renewal underlies the purpose of National Recovery Month. As Lincoln advised the Washington Temperance Society in 1842, the benefits of recovery inure to all.

As citizens of Goodhue County, we all must do our part to ensure that the pathway to recovery remains open and accessible to everyone, because recovery benefits everyone.

The Affordable Health Care Act of 2010 is one vehicle that will increase citizen access to quality substance use disorder assessment and treatment. Research indicates that for every \$1 invested in treatment, over \$7 is saved in costs to society. Nevertheless, it is estimated that only 10 percent of people with substance use disorders receive treatment.

Each life reclaimed through the healing process of recovery is indeed a glorious and noble victory. The Chemical Health Initiative of Goodhue County will be highlighting recovery stories during September to deepen our citizens' sense of hope in the reality of human transformation.

If you would like to share a story of success and hope, please contact CHI via its website at www.chi-goodhue.org. If you are looking for information about substance use assessments or treatment/relapse service providers, go to

www.chi-goodhue.org/interventiondirectory.php.