

Palmetto Provides a Safe and Tranquil Treatment Environment



Our 70-acre campus is almost completely surrounded by beautiful Lake Lafourche.

Palmetto Addiction Recovery Center • 86 Palmetto Road, Rayville, LA 71269
Ph: 1-800-203-6612 • Fax 318-728-2272 • www.palmettocenter.com • e-mail: info@palmettocenter.com

86 Palmetto Road
Rayville, LA 71269



Winter 2015

PALMETTO ADDICTION RECOVERY CENTER NEWS

My Hazy Shade of Winter at Palmetto Addiction Recovery Center

– K, Alumnus

Before I got to Palmetto in December of 2013, I'd wanted help for months, but couldn't seem to administer it myself. I would down bottle after bottle of MD 20/20, wondering when in the world this whole alcoholism thing was going to resolve itself so I could get my life together. My family, tired of watching me slowly kill myself, told me that I could either go to rehab or never speak to them again. That was it. No discussion. No intervention. I was about to lose my mom and my brother, the two most important people in my life. I was about to lose my dog, Max, possibly the closest thing I'd had to a family of my own. That was rock bottom for me.

Until I got there. Everywhere I looked, someone was smiling. Everyone had cute nicknames for each other, and some idiot fist-bumped me when I told him my drink of choice. Where I expected to find cellmates, I found people who actually wanted to be my

friends. And it ticked me right off. Where was the anger? Where was the depression? Where were the tattooed buff guys who were supposed to beat me up and steal my lunch money? If I wasn't going to be victimized in some horrible mash-up of high school and prison clichés, what was the point? That night, I had a long chat with about half a dozen guys. I learned that the happiness wasn't a front, but it also wasn't immediate. Most of the people who I had met at that point were people who had been there for a while. They were people who had taken a good, long look at their lives and decided they wanted to live differently. That ticked me off even more. I was irritated at the prospect of experiencing positive emotions, so why on earth would I want to play around with the negative ones? Hadn't I been drinking to avoid doing just that? This place was supposed to teach me how to avoid my emotions in a healthy and well-adjusted manner.

Continued Inside

Coming
Soon...

Intensive
Outpatient
Program in
New Orleans!



Look for more
information to come
on our website:

palmettocenter.com

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF SERVICE

My Hazy Shade of Winter at Palmetto Addiction Recovery Center

Continued from Front

It wasn't long before "sticking it out" turned into caring about my life and what had happened to it. At first, I thought of the assignments as schoolwork. I did my Drug History, and it went smoothly. "Great, good. Nailed it. On to the next one." The next assignment was easy as well, or so I thought. I wrote out every example of powerlessness and unmanageability, listing in detail some of the worst consequences I'd suffered as a result of my alcoholism. I did this with full knowledge that I would be reading this list to a room of strangers, but I was able to remain optimistic until I finally sat down in small group the next day. I opened my mouth to speak, and nothing came out.

I stumbled my way through it, crying so hard I just about dislocated my shoulder as I tensed my body to stop from shaking. As hard as it was to share my darkest secrets with a room of strangers, leaving group afterward was phenomenally worse. I'd finished crying, but it was all over my face. Everyone who spoke to me afterward was immediately able to guess which paper I had just presented. They hadn't even been in the room with me when I read my paper, yet my emotions were on display for all to see. I felt more vulnerable than I had in some time, and I seriously considered leaving to try my odds at life on the streets of Rayville. Still, they had dogs at Palmetto, so I decided to stick it out.

But over time, a funny thing happened. I actually grew used to that feeling. I presented more papers, some of which made me wonder why I thought the examples on my first one had been so bad. I uncovered more painful memories that alcohol had successfully erased. And every time, I would walk out of the admin building to a crowd of fifty people who knew exactly what I had just been doing. Sometimes they would ask if I was okay. Other times they would give me a knowing look, and then spark a conversation on more delightful topics. Either way, it became clear to me that I didn't have to keep doing this alone.

It still took me some time to fully understand the notion of recovery. I understood why we talked about my former drunk driving, although I didn't always see it as a problem that needed to be addressed. I and my rolling death machine had survived all of our adventures together, and we'd somehow managed not to kill anyone else.

Other things we talked about seemed even more off-base. I'd told my alcoholic father that I didn't want to see him anymore when I was 8, some jerk broke my left femur at the growth plate when I was 12 and screwed up my knee in the process, a couple of friends died, etc. These things all happened before I

started drinking, so who cared? It wasn't until I wrote my Wall that I began to see a pattern that started as early as 4 years of age, and I realized that alcohol wasn't to blame for most of my problems. Alcohol had fanned the flames, but it would take a great deal of effort to put out the fires that my own maladjustment had created.

That realization brought me full-circle. I was going to have to feel something. There were things that had hurt me more than they should have, and things that hadn't hurt me enough. I had to process that, or I was never going to move forward. That realization was one of the greatest gifts Palmetto gave me.

A great deal of Palmetto is a blur, though I can remember certain key moments. I completed Step One after my mother accidentally sent me a box of chocolates with alcohol in them, and I started crying because I realized that I had no idea how many triggers were going to be waiting for me when I went back into the world. I realized that I wasn't doing great. I wasn't even good, and I definitely hadn't nailed it.

I then completed Steps Two and Three around the same time, when my counselor made me ask several people about their concept of a Higher Power. One

counselor in particular said "I don't know," and explained that it was more about giving up self-will and having faith in the universe than it was about putting a name and face to things we can't possibly understand. The rest of the steps took a great deal more effort, but those first three were crucial to understanding of AA and life in general. The fact that the first arose from sheer coincidence gave me a lot of faith in the possibility that things might work out in the long run as long as I'm able to keep my eyes open to the blinding neon signs that the universe tends to hurl in my direction. Sometimes, I still struggle. I have moments of resentment and self-pity. I have moments when I cry without reason, followed by moments when I need to cry, yet vehemently refuse. I tell myself that a rock feels no pain. I won't talk of love because I've heard the word before, and I refuse to disturb the slumber of feelings that have died.

In other words, there are days when I model my life after some of the most depressing

songs by Simon and Garfunkel (and not enough days when those songs include "At the Zoo").

But I haven't forgotten the tools I've learned at Palmetto. Sometimes I find myself browsing my old pictures on Facebook, thinking that I wasn't such a bad person and wondering why I hated myself so much. I look at my former self and think "man, I would have gotten on great with that guy if I'd given him a chance." And when I feel myself getting depressed over this, thinking that I've made a right mess of things, I simply seek out a fellow addict or alcoholic and tell them how I'm feeling. Because ultimately, doing that is exactly the same as looking in the mirror and saying "I still have a chance with this guy."

And if all else fails, I take a hike back up to Palmetto. I talk to my counselor, meet some new addicts and, for the love of the gods, I pet myself a freakin' dog. Because when it comes right down to it, life just isn't that difficult to enjoy. It won't always

be great, it won't always be good, and you'll most likely never have it nailed. But it can still be manageable, and you can still be content or even happy with what you have. It took me three months and a few quarts of tears to see it, but it's the truth. I now follow the words of The Doctor: "Never run when you're scared." Facing my problems head-on has led me to a new freedom, and even something resembling a new happiness.

I don't know if there's anything I could give to Palmetto, to my counselor, or even to those freakin' dogs that would repay them for the invaluable life lessons they have taught me. The lessons that had been right in front of me for years, but that I was determined not to learn on my own. If I wanted to, I'm sure I could find a way to give them everything I've ever earned in life (which is an easy promise when you've only been self-sufficient for about a year). Instead, I might just start by living the damned thing.

Glimpses of Palmetto's Peaceful Campus...

