



Time Flies When You Are Having Fun

Celebrating Our 10th Anniversary

By M. Deborah Corley, Ph.D.

On December 16, 2006, we celebrated ten years of ownership of Santé Center for Healing. Ten Years! How can that be? Where did the time go? It just doesn't seem possible that ten years have flown by. I still have vivid memories of our beginnings.

Brother Rip and I, along with a couple of psychiatrists and two part time therapists, had been working hard to provide the best services possible to a large group of addicts with problematic sexual behavior. Some were sex offenders; others were professionals with boundary problems; most were survivors of sexual or other severe traumatic events and many had a severe psychiatric disorder in addition to their addictive or problematic sexual behavior. At the time, these were the folks that most other treatment facilities did not want or feel qualified to treat. We were considered experts in treating this hard to treat group and we were champions of the cause -- committed to seeing that these patients receive care and not just punishment.

The program was growing nicely so we were very surprised when the psychiatric hospital was sold and the new owners informed us they no longer wanted the program housed in their facility. In a moment mixed with inspiration and some desperation, Rip and I decided we could run a treatment center and help those that touched our hearts the most - addicts. I had no idea how hard it would be.

The 14 acres of hillside property on which Santé is housed seemed perfect for us. The facility had been empty for three years – well not exactly empty. There had been a ton of nature's critters, a guard of sorts doing a bit more partying than guarding the grounds and a wonderful gray and white tabby cat that we called Sammy. Sammy stayed and has become our campus cat, offering nurturing and good listening skills for any patient interested. Several former staff with whom we had worked in other psychiatric hospitals in the past left their jobs for an opportunity to join in our dream. Everyone split their time between scrubbing, painting, organizing, and planting, with writing policies and procedures and preparing marketing materials.

We managed to squeeze in some team building and strategic planning with the total group. This is where we created the beginning of what is now our mission and the principles by which we operate. Everyone agreed we aimed to be the treatment center of choice for persons who suffered from the disease of addiction, with an emphasis towards working with professionals. It was important to the entire team to give up on no one, accepting the toughest cases. Our own clinical experiences and research consistently indicated that for addicts who had not been able to maintain their recovery despite previous efforts, length of stay was important and we wanted to encourage patients to stay as long as possible if it would help their outcome for a successful recovery. We expected much from ourselves and equally as much from the patients.

Now I look around and see how much Santé has grown and how many people have been helped who have come to Santé for treatment. Even though in those early days everyone did their clinical job, they also pitched in with meal preparation, cleaning and even planting the sod during the first spring, we still had a great time -- a day did not go by that someone would do something that would have us all rolling in laughter. We laughed a lot, cried a fair amount too. In lean times everyone did without so that no one would have to be laid off. We became a family, patients and staff alike, and continue to have a solid relationship even after all these years.

I have such pride in what everyone has accomplished and believe that our mission remains important and vital. Thanks to all the staff and patients with us now, and those who have contributed to our journey in the past – everyone has made a difference. Rip and I have gotten much in return in the quest of a dream, more than we ever expected. For every wounded soul that walks out of Santé healed as a result of our efforts combined their own – it is an absolute gift.

Dr. Corley is Co-Owner and Executive Director of Santé Center for Healing. She is a two time recipient, 1999 and 2002, of the Carnes Award, for outstanding achievement in the field of sex addiction, and the Clinician's Most Valuable Article, award by the American Foundation of Addiction Research for her work on disclosure for. Dr. Corley is recognized as a national presenter and co-author of "Disclosing Secrets – When, to Whom, and How Much to Reveal" and "Embracing Recovery from Chemical Dependency – A Personal Recovery Plan". She has over 20 years experience working with and conducting research on addictive disorders and high risk families. For additional information regarding Dr. Corley or Santé Center for Healing, please call 800.258.4250 Ext 267, or visit the Santé website at www.santecenter.com.