



# ST. CHRISTOPHER'S INN

Temporary Shelter & Substance Use Disorder Treatment Center

## the INN sight

St. Christopher's Inn  
21 Franciscan Way  
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[www.stchristophersinn.org](http://www.stchristophersinn.org)

### Spotlight on the SCI Board: **ELAINE TAYLOR**



Elaine Taylor is an extremely busy woman! She has a full time career as the Executive Director of the House Staff Office in the Montefiore Health System, and has been working for Montefiore for nearly 35 years. She also runs Montefiore's Staff and Alumni Association, is an active grandmother to three grandchildren, and has a passion for golf. Elaine has another passion as well, and that is to educate parents and children about the dangers of drug abuse. This is just one reason why she has been donating her time and energy to St. Christopher's Inn for the past 16 years.

Elaine's involvement with St. Christopher's dates back to 2001 through her work with grief counseling for parents who lost children to addiction. Tragically, Elaine lost her own son, John Michael, to drug addiction when he was only 28 years old. She says that grieving for a lost child never gets any better, only different, and developing coping strategies is crucial to healing.

Elaine is grateful for the opportunity to help other parents deal with their tragedies, as it also brings comfort to her as she continues to heal.

Originally from the Bedford Park section of the Bronx, Elaine spent her early life with her parents, four brothers and a sister in a four and a half room apartment on Decatur Avenue. Her Dad had eclectic interests and was a musician, a businessman, and a pilot. Her Mom was her idol and raised six children with all the love she had in her heart. Elaine still makes her home in the Riverdale section of the Bronx.

Her daughter, Jeannette, has been married for 11 years, has two children, and lives close by. Elaine's grandson John Austin, lives in Los Angeles with his mom, Allison, but has spent every summer in NY with Elaine since he was a small child. While losing her son has never gotten easier, having John Austin and watching him grow up has been one of Elaine's greatest blessings.

Again, Elaine believes that the best way to overcome the drug crisis in America is to educate children early and often about the extreme danger of drugs and the power of addiction. Additionally, Elaine believes that parents must observe their children's habits, pay attention to changes in their life style and friends, and **must not be ashamed to seek help.**

Elaine has been serving on the SCI Board of Directors, as well as the Board Development Committee, since 2011. In her other volunteer work, she is involved with Compassionate Friends, an organization for parents who have lost children. She says there are many difficult meetings of that group but the objective is to bring grief to the surface and aid the healing process. Barely five months after losing her own son, Elaine reached out to help so many grieving families who lost loved ones on 9/11 with no warning at all.

St. Christopher's Inn is pleased and honored to have Elaine Taylor as a member of the Board of Directors, and to feature her in this issue's "Spotlight on the Board" section.

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### **UPCOMING EVENT: BOARD OF DIRECTORS FUNDRAISING DINNER**

The St. Christopher's Inn 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Board of Directors Fundraising Dinner will take place on Thursday, June 15, 2017 at the historic Gotham Hall in Manhattan.



We are so pleased to honor Elizabeth Vargas, co-anchor of ABC 20/20 and bestselling author of *Between Breaths: A Memoir of Panic and Addiction*. We will also recognize and honor Joseph D. Roberto, Chairman, President and CEO of PCSB Bank. Mr. Roberto is an influential and generous business leader who demonstrates a strong sense of community and service to the Hudson Valley area. The Board will also recognize New York-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital, who has been serving the Friars and the clients of the Inn with great care for many years.

For more information on how you can support and attend the dinner, please visit the SCI website at [www.stchristophersinn.org](http://www.stchristophersinn.org) and view upcoming events.

# EQUINE-ASSISTED THERAPY

by David Gerber, Director of Counseling and Shelter Services



Since 2014, St. Christopher's Inn has partnered with Topfield Equestrian Center in Cold Spring, NY to provide Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy through a Wounded Warriors veterans grant.

Each week any SCI client who is a veteran of the armed forces has the opportunity to go to Topfield and participate in equine-assisted psychotherapy. They work side by side with horses, while working through their personal challenges. What is incredible and beneficial about working with horses, is that they are not subject to human defense mechanisms. No matter how big or small you are; no matter how tough you may be in life, the horse will not respond unless you can find a way to connect with the horse.

The men have genuinely appreciated the experience, and likewise the staff at Topfield loves working with the men of St. Christopher's Inn. The program has been so successful that both organizations have been looking for ways to expand the program beyond veterans.

Earlier this year, a small grant became available to start researching the effectiveness of Equine Therapy with behavioral health clients. Both Topfield and St. Christopher's Inn matched the grant so that we can pilot a program to measure the effectiveness, while expanding our services.

Specifically, we are looking to measure the effect of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy on our 18-30 year old population to see if we have higher levels of treatment completion and longitudinal success. This population tends to have lower completion rates of treatment, and the hope is that the provision of this unique service experience will result in better treatment retention. We are very excited to announce that the expanded program will begin this month!

While we at St. Christopher's Inn recognize the value of traditional methods of treatment for behavioral health challenges, we are also happy to experiment with alternate treatment methods and expand opportunities for our men to grow in their recovery.



# SUGGESTIONS

*"The only suggestions you pay for are the ones you don't take."*

by Lisa E. Gladwell, Esq  
lisagladwell@newjerseyrecoveryadvocates.org



Someone shared those wise words with me years ago. Immediately I could identify, as it mirrored the many setbacks I had on my journey to recovery.

First and foremost, I am not an expert on sobriety, recovery, 12-Step or any other program or tool utilized in seeking sobriety or recovery from addiction. What I am qualified to share is my personal experience with active addiction, my climb out of the abyss and my fifteen plus years of sobriety, one day at a time. There is no cure for this disease and there is no one-size-fits all path to recovery. What has worked for me, and millions of others, is a simple 12-Step program, honed to the individual by those with experience, strength and hope.

Easiest for me to understand were the obvious suggestions: don't use; go to meetings; change people, places and things; get a sponsor; one day at a time...

What I would stumble on were those that seemed peripheral or unrelated to sobriety: get a home group; no new relationships for at least a year; KISS...keep it simple stupid and a bunch of others. Those suggestions, seemingly irrelevant, would test my commitment to sobriety.

Those discarded suggestions, that seemed irrelevant to sobriety, led me back to active addiction. Numerous "yes, buts" rejecting others' experience and wisdom were reservations in my commitment to sobriety: a chink in my armor, which was all my disease, needed to lead me to relapse. It was not the logs in my path that tripped me up. No, it was the seemingly small twigs, representing the reservations, which I took my will back on. This disease is cunning, baffling and powerful. My relapse experiences have taught me that I must remain open to the suggestions of others.



Today I remain sober thanks to those "suggestions" which I continue to take. Today, and I hope for the rest of my life, I remain a grateful student; open to the

wisdom of those who have come before me and those who follow behind.

## SCI IN THE NEWS!

Recently, Mary Murphy of PIX 11 News featured another story about the heroin crisis in New York, with a focus on Staten Island. Mary interviewed an Alumnus of St. Christopher's Inn, Marco Di Donna, and included information about the Inn and our unique model of treatment. You can view the piece on the PIX 11 website: <http://pix11.com/2017/04/25/one-time-painkiller-dealer-recalls-staten-island-as-the-wild-wild-west/>



David Gerber, Director of Counseling and Shelter Services at the Inn, was recently interviewed on a local Cable News Show called "Viewpoint." This is a great piece about the history of St. Christopher's Inn, along with a clear overview of our services, our unique model of treatment, and our success rates.

You can find the

link for the interview on YouTube on the SCI website under Latest News. <http://stchristophersinn-graymoor.org/news-events/news-press-releases>



## WITH GRATITUDE FROM MARIANNE TAYLOR-RHOADES



It is with a heavy heart that I announce my retirement from St. Christopher's Inn as Chief Operating Officer, where I have proudly served for the last 16 years—I will be retiring this year, effective June 30, 2017. I find that plans for retirement are bittersweet, as I am excited to start a new chapter in my life but sad to end another one. I will miss all of you deeply. I

will be working hard in the next 2 months to facilitate the transition process. I know that I will leave SCI in the best hands and with the most talented, dedicated and hardworking staff—I am in awe of the many miracles they perform every day.

May I take this opportunity to thank you most graciously for the help, support, and opportunities I have had in the wonderful and exciting years I have been with St. Christopher's Inn. It has been a remarkable journey and I have enjoyed all the time spent working with the Board of Directors, the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, the Benefactors and most of all the men that we serve. How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard! The mission of St. Christopher's Inn will remain near and dear to my heart always and I will continue to pass its message along no matter where I am.

## "BROTHER CLYDE"

There is something about the companionship of a dog. The unconditional love of a faithful animal to make you feel like you are worthy. You matter. This can be a powerful tool in finding your way back to loving yourself. Because of this, you can understand why Marianne Taylor-Rhoades, COO and David Gerber, Director of Counseling and Shelter Services, suggested that we get a permanent therapy dog here at St. Christopher's Inn.



After a great deal of research, Fr. Bill contacted a breeder in Pennsylvania, who raises Havanese. The Havanese was originally bred as the companion dog of the Cuban aristocracy in the 1800s, and is a very trainable and energetic breed. After a lengthy conversation about our ministry at the Inn, the breeder generously chose to donate "Clyde!"

Clyde has just completed his second session of obedience school, and will be trained as a therapy dog for the residents beginning in June. He celebrated his first birthday on March 21, 2017, enjoys his walks with the men here every day, and has just started to attend group therapy with the Brothers Christopher. Clyde has adjusted well, and is a friendly and loving companion. A member of the staff here at the Inn made Clyde his own Franciscan habit, and now he is fondly called "Brother Clyde."

- Fr. Bill Drobach, SA



www.stchristophersinn.org  
(845) 335-1000

If you do not wish to receive fundraising requests supporting St. Christopher's Inn, please contact the Development Office at 845-335-1005 or email us at [info@stchristophersinn-graymoor.org](mailto:info@stchristophersinn-graymoor.org) to have your name removed from our mailing list.

## FLORIDA ALUMNI REUNION PICNIC

Over the years, many St. Christopher's Inn graduates have moved to Florida for their aftercare, building a solid base of Brothers Christopher in the Delray Beach area. They formed a chapter of the SCI Alumni Association, and have been very active in helping each other remain clean and sober. Each year, the South Florida Alumni Association holds their own reunion and picnic, and this year I was fortunate enough to join them! The picnic and reunion for nearly 100 alumni, family and friends was held on March 4<sup>th</sup>, and I shared some thoughts with the men on the "Wounded Healer." Joining me at the reunion to encourage the men was the V. Rev. Brian Terry, SA, the Minister General of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement. The food was delicious, the setting was tranquil, and the celebration was spiritual. I am so proud of all our Brothers Christopher, in Florida and around the world!

Fr. Bill Drobach, SA  
President & CEO



## OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS & EXECUTIVE TEAM



### St. Christopher's Inn Board Members:

Fr. Bill Drobach, SA	Br. Joseph O'Gara, SA (not pictured)
Don Ehman	Robert Okulski
Mark Goldberg	Fr. Charles Sharon, SA
Patricia Lennon	Elaine Taylor
Valerie Mastronardi	John Torpey (not pictured)
Alan Meckler	Kevin Verronneau
Guy Novo (not pictured)	

### Executive Team:

Fr. Bill Drobach, SA, President & CEO  
Jim Mickler, CFO  
Marianne Taylor-Rhoades, COO