

## ***Alumni Spotlight: Walker S.***

### ***Madison campus and Reprieve campus graduate***

Growing up, Walker S. had a very fortunate life. His father was a doctor and his mother was very involved in his childhood. He was in the “popular crowd” growing up and was able to make friends very easily. He smoked weed for the first time in middle school and didn’t think much of it but later went on to abuse pain medication after getting his wisdom teeth taken out. It was after taking the pain pills that he truly felt “whole” and thought he needed that feeling the rest of his life. “I fit in everywhere but I never thought that was enough. This drug made me content with myself for the first time. It made me feel comfortable in my own skin. I seemed to think I was smarter on the drug and all my intentions going forward were to consume that drug,” Walker admitted.

However, it wasn’t until high school that his addiction took the turn for the worst where he experimented with Roxy, Xanax, Opanas, and Heroin. After getting a job at a pharmacy and making friends with many other drug users, his use continued to grow. He was hanging out with a lot of people older than him, some with children, and all of them seemed to love the same drugs he did. “I remember getting a phone call from a friend one day and not being able to call him back. I found out later that day that he had killed himself and I blamed myself. Senior year was no doubt the worst year of my life. I started dating a girl and we were on and off because she was in college. One day in October, she was coming back from college and was killed in a car accident. I remember going to the funeral and going through withdrawals because I hadn’t had any drugs that day and how horrible I felt but I just couldn’t think to stop using. I didn’t mean to continue to use drugs, but the drugs were always my solution. The very next month, I had another friend pass away in a motorcycle accident. I found myself at another funeral and my use just grew and grew. I was up to using \$400 worth of Opanas a day. Soon after, on my 18th birthday, I went with a drug dealer to see a friend at a hotel and we found him dead from an overdose on the floor. I remember I was so miserable with myself that I wished it was me. I was okay with dying but I didn’t want to die at the same time. I even tried to overdose but ended up waking up covered in bloody throw up at a friend’s house. The friend told me he didn’t want to hang out with me anymore,” Walker shared. It wasn’t until two drug dealers showed up at his parent’s house in a nice Nashville neighborhood at 11:00 PM at night that his drug addiction caught up to him and he could admit to his use.

Walker went through the adolescent program at the Madison facility for 21 days shortly after this incident. “Unfortunately, I left treatment with the mentality of ‘If I can just get off these drugs I will be fine. I am just unlucky (with all the deaths) and that is the reason I am the way I am. The drugs are the problem, not me.’ After leaving treatment I never used drugs again, thinking drugs were my problem, not alcohol. Then I started drinking. My drinking escalated after I graduated high school and entered college at Mississippi State. I would surround myself with others who would drink as much as me to make myself feel better about drinking so much. I was going to NA meetings at this time but I was sitting at the back of the room judging everyone and trying to separate myself from them” he said.

Walker found himself getting in trouble numerous times his first year of college but never ending up with any consequences so continued to heavily drink. He remembers thinking about how his fraternity brothers would drink heavily on the weekends but during the week they seemed to succeed in school, and he just couldn’t do that. “I remember sitting in my dorm room holding a beer and thinking to myself how my

## **RECHARGE YOUR RECOVERY!**

### ***“A Day in the Woods” with Sam Gulley***

Do you want to recharge your recovery? Are you feeling stagnant? Come join us on the challenge course! The goal of this recharge day is to develop team building amongst our alumni while learning about some crucial topics in recovery. For instance, how you interact in certain situations when the group is failing can say a lot about someone’s recovery. So, how do YOU respond? Do you get angry? Or do you get energized? We will be challenging our alumni in specific situations to help teach you some vital tools in relationship building, adjusting with life, and identifying boundaries.

This will be offered one Saturday every month from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the Warrior Facility. Cost is \$15 with lunch included. A t-shirt (\*optional) can be purchased for an additional \$10. Sign-ups begin April 28th via eventbrite. Search “A Day in the Woods” on [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com) to register your spot. \*Space is limited to only 15 participants at a time so register quick!

## **Toy Drive Summary**

Our second annual toy drive was a huge success this year benefitting over a hundred children from the local Birmingham and Huntsville homeless shelters. We were able to provide toys, toiletries, and food items to them this holiday season.

***Thank you for all of your support!***

whole life was a mess because of the one thing, the one small can that I was holding. My ego was too big. I didn't know how to stop," he said.

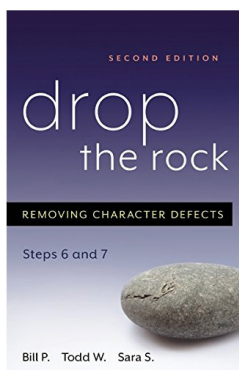
Walker's alcohol abuse continued to escalate until Christmas break when his father smelled alcohol on him one morning. "I remember telling my father yes I had been drinking, my mother bursting into tears, and then everyone yelling. I ran to the top of the stairs in our house when my mind suddenly went back to the big book and I realized that this was my opportunity to ask for help," he said.

Walker went back through the Madison program three days after Christmas. His parents told him he wasn't allowed to go back to school or to come home after his treatment stay, so he needed to come up with a plan. "It was the first time I had ever prayed for anything. I remember thinking that maybe I should do something that I didn't want to do," Walker said. After working with Brett Young, he was admitted to The Reprieve where he celebrated his 19th birthday just two days after his stay began. He was one of the first graduates of the Reprieve to complete the full year long program, also celebrating his 20th birthday there too. "I remember everyone was so welcoming. I had never had so many people be so nice to me and that was just so different than what I was used to. The Reprieve taught me how to live life on life's terms. You learn about the 12 steps but they taught me how to apply them to my life, which is the most important thing. It pointed me in the right direction and showed me what steps to take and helped me realize that no matter what happens I will be okay. My biggest problem was accepting life for what it was. I was able to realize none of the deaths were my fault and I didn't have to let them affect me. I met so many people who were on the same level as me and same place in life. We could come together and learn how to work through everything. CRC (Collegiate Recovery Community) is a huge part of my recovery as well. My best friends today are in the CRC. It's a group of students who know and understand each other, work together, go to meetings together, etc. We can be accountable to each other. Relapse doesn't have to be apart of your story BUT it can be a valuable part if it does happen because it was my relapse that taught me where I went wrong so that I could change it the next time. God led me to recovery and recovery led me to God. I remember trying to always put a face on God until my counselor asked me when the last time I had a drug or drink was. It had been an entire year and my counselor told me that God's doing for me what I couldn't do for myself. I realized then that it really didn't matter what God looked like."

Walker graduated the Reprieve in January 2016 and is currently enrolled in the CRC and college classes back at Mississippi State. He just picked up his three year chip.

## ***Bradford Ambassadors Needed!***

Want to help be of service to a newcomer but not sure how? We need you! We are currently searching for Bradford Alumni Ambassadors who can help serve the recovery community in a variety of ways. Volunteer opportunities include: Warrior and Madison Lobby Volunteers to help welcome new families and patients, temporary sponsorships to other new alumni, speaker meetings, meeting current patients at outside meetings, and helping with different local recovery events. If you are interested, please email [alumni@bradfordhealth.net](mailto:alumni@bradfordhealth.net) to receive the volunteer application. All applicants must have a minimum of 6 months of sobriety.



## **Drop the Rock** **by Sara S., Bill P., and Todd W.**

The resources here will guide you along a pathway of self-assessment, discovery, and fulfillment. Focusing on Steps Six and Seven, it shows readers how to confront their character defects and let go of self-defeating behaviors by combining personal stories, practical advice, and powerful insights to help readers move forward in recovery.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Warrior Birthday Chip Nights:**

#### **\*ECP Building**

1/26/18 at 7:00 PM

6/29/18 at 7:00 PM

10/26/18 at 7:00 PM

### **Madison Birthday Chip Nights:**

#### **\*Madison Facility**

2/16/18 at 7:00 PM

5/18/18 at 7:00 PM

8/17/18 at 7:00 PM

11/9/18 at 7:00 PM

### **The Addicted Brain Workshop Huntsville, Al**

with speaker Tim Hilton

3/1/18 from 6:00-8:00 PM

Doors open at 5:30 PM

\*Reservations required

[www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com)

Search for "The Addicted Brain"

### **End Heroin Walk**

2/24/18 at 10:00 AM

### **Annual Alumni Friends and Family BBQ**

4/28/18 from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Food, fun, and fellowship at the

Extended Care Facility

## **Podcasts**

The alumni program will be launching their first podcast this month featuring Dr. Joseph Schumacher, chief psychologist at Bradford's Extended Care Program, who will be answering commonly asked questions. Podcasts will be featured on iTunes and YouTube. Our next podcast will be presented by Leigh Belcher, the clinical director at Bradford's Reprieve for Women. Leigh will be discussing the dilemma of emotional sobriety. Please send in any questions you might have about this topic so she can hopefully help answer them! Please email [alumni@bradfordhealth.net](mailto:alumni@bradfordhealth.net) any ideas you might have about podcast topics you are interested in hearing about!

**Stream  
today!**

