



SalusCare

Recovery Begins Here

Featuring Scot D. Goldberg

by Sara Fitzpatrick Comito



I was in a place where alcohol was my serenity and pills were my happiness. A place where I always had a rope on my nightstand and a perfectly sharpened knife in my bathroom.

These are the words not of a down-and-out addict beaten down by decades of disappointment, loss and missteps. Rather, this person has accumulated enough trauma to arrive at rock bottom at the tender age of 15.

A history of domestic abuse, alienation by peers, early access to alcohol and a co-occurring depression set the stage for a precipitous fall. Could such a perfect storm be diverted? In this case, yes. Believe it or not, this story has a happy ending. The above excerpt is from an essay written as part of the “Healing Through Reading” event, where FGCU students worked with youth in recovery from substance abuse at the Vince Smith Center to help them express their feelings through artwork, poetry and song.



Vince Smith provides residential treatment and education for males and females ages 13 to 17. It’s one of many centers and services administered through SalusCare, which grew out of a merger between Lee Mental Health and Southwest



Lee County Schools’ teacher Barbara Knapp (second from left) and FGCU students worked with youth in recovery at the recent “Healing Through Reading” event.

Florida Addiction Services (SWFAS). According to attorney and SalusCare board member Scot Goldberg, the synergy created by the merger equals more than the sum of its parts. As a former SWFAS board member, he concedes it was a difficult process to unify the two large non-profits, but the results speak for themselves.

“You really can’t find any other place in the area that does what we do,” Goldberg said. Whether insured or not, patients will find care for a substance dependency or mental health condition at a SalusCare facility. Services are available on a sliding scale or at no charge, including outpatient, residential, emergency/crisis services, prevention programming and community-based services to help individuals living at home.

A founding partner at Goldberg, Racila, D’Alessandro & Noone, Goldberg focuses part of his practice on criminal law. As substance abuse issues are often an underlying factor in getting arrested, he is able to use SalusCare as a starting point for helping clients turn their lives around.

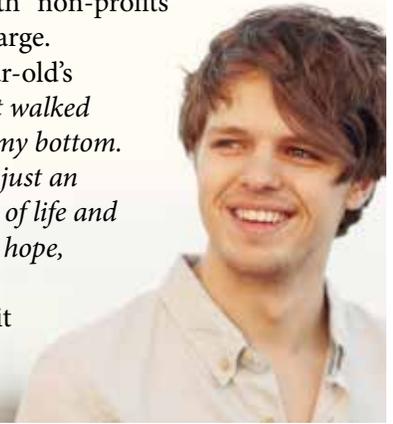
Addiction to pain medications is a major problem in society, which Goldberg sees in some personal injury cases. The rise of the pure synthetic opiate formulation known as Roxicodone represents an especially frightening trend. “It has the same amount of painkiller as six of the bigger pills you get from your dentist,” he said. The baby aspirin-sized pill can be crushed and consumed in any number of novel ways. But for as many ingenious methods there are for going off the rails, there are ways to get help.

When Goldberg gets a call from a family member of someone who's been arrested for possession of "roxies" or the like, he advises letting the person get clean in jail, go to SalusCare and then come see him. From a legal standpoint, a dedication to getting well can be demonstrated to a judge. From a personal standpoint, "I can show the person that has the addiction the kind of help that's out there if they want it," Goldberg explained. His dedication is indeed personal, having had close family members with addiction issues.

Most families are touched by a mental health or substance abuse issue at one time or another, and awareness that these conditions are medically based is reaching an all-time high,

according to Goldberg, with non-profits like SalusCare leading the charge.

Here is more of that 15-year-old's essay: *I remember when I first walked through these doors, I was at my bottom. I had no hope, no faith. I was just an empty soul. But now I am full of life and proud of who I am. I have the hope, faith and courage that I never had before.* To learn more visit saluscareflorida.org. RG



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