

HISTORY OF RECOVERY WALKS ACROSS THE WORLD

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly where Recovery Walking really began. We have to give a nod to the mental health recovery movement, who led the way on much of this activism. This paper is intended as a discussion piece rather than an academic account.

We know that the idea and example for walking came primarily from the USA, where there happens to be a different context and culture towards addiction and recovery.

Connecticut

CCAR (Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery) began hosting the Annual Recovery Walks! in 2000. In their 16th year this year, their Recovery Walks! Just keeps getting bigger and bigger. It takes place one week after our Scottish Walk – if you can make it, it's on September 24, 2016, Bushnell Park, Hartford, Connecticut.

In conversation with William White about its beginnings

(<http://www.williamwhitepapers.com/pr/2014%20Bob%20Savage%2C%20Birth%20of%20CCAR%20Interview.pdf>), Bob Savage of CCAR remembers:

“Walks had been used before to publicize particular issues, such as cancer and diabetes. And this suggestion was brought up in one of our regularly scheduled staff meetings. We started discussing the possibility of holding a recovery walk in Bushnell Park in the city of Hartford, which is located directly in front of the capital. The purpose of the walk would be to publicize addiction recovery and to put a face on recovery. We brought the topic to one of our monthly member meetings and with their blessing, we decided to go ahead to do the necessary planning to hold one during the month of September. We assigned Phil Valentine to the project and he readily took on the responsibility. Doing the many things necessary to organize the walk was quite an undertaking.

The big issue was how many people in recovery and their families would show - even with the considerable amount of publicity that was planned. A month and a half prior to when the walk was scheduled to take place, Phil came to me and was very concerned that even with all the effort he was putting into it, that it was possible that not very many recovering people would show and that would not be very good for recovery in general. My response was to explain that this was our first effort and that, even though not that many individuals and families may show, we will have learned a lot on how to do it better next year. I believed there was no such thing as failure on any project as long as we did our best. That seemed to help and off Phil went to do more work. We hoped for 70 to 100 attendees and, lo and behold, over 700 came on the day of the walk and had a great time. In the final analysis, the most significant contribution to the walk were the number of persons in recovery and their families that were willing to put their face on recovery in that manner for the first time. The numbers continued to grow each of the following years that we held the walk”.

They now boast over 1,000 attendees, and are still reaching for even more participants at their next celebration.

<http://ccar.us/#events>

Pennsylvania

Going south from Connecticut, we reach Pennsylvania. For 40 years The Council of Southeast Pennsylvania, Inc., has provided resources to reduce the impact of addiction, trauma, and related health issues through prevention, consultation, education, advocacy, assessment, intervention, and recovery support services.

DUNDEE 30TH SEPTEMBER 2017



Pennsylvania Recovery Organization—Achieving Community Together (PRO-ACT), hosted by The Council is the grass roots advocacy and recovery support arm of the Council. In their words:

"We pay taxes, we vote, and we each contribute to our community's well-being. Together we can eliminate the shame and embarrassment associated with this disease and save lives! Together we can show decision makers that the individuals, families and communities want to end stigma! We can't afford to be silent anymore".

People have been walking in Recovery Walks to support recovery from drug and alcohol addiction disorders during September's National Recovery Month for 15 years.

<https://www.recoverywalks.org/index.cfm>

UK Walks

Much of the impetus and energy started in the USA contributed to the emergence of the UK Recovery Walk, which began in Liverpool in 2009.

Organised by the UKRF (www.ukrf.org.uk) these Walks went from strength to strength and developed a format that meant that the organising committees were made up of local people in recovery. Numbers grew and grew; Glasgow in 2010, Cardiff in 2011, Brighton in 2012 (see this amazing film here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TX820BO8-qo>) and Birmingham in 2013.

Subsequent UK Walks have been held by the formation of a charity, UK Recovery Walk – now known as FAVOR UK. They have been very well attended walks in Manchester 2014, Durham 2015 and Halton (Merseyside) 2016. This year's walk takes place in Blackpool on 9th September.

Please see the FAVOR UK website for more information and how to get involved:

<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org/>

Faces and Voices of Recovery have a substantial website that has many great resources to utilise too:

<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/>

The first ever Recovery Walk Scotland took place on the Forth Road Bridge in 2013. Many people felt it was important for us in Scotland to have our own Walk, whilst not taking anything away from the UK Walk.

And now there are many local Walks across the UK and Scotland, from Plymouth to Wales to South Ayrshire to East Anglia – local Walks are a great way to build recovery communities.

Elsewhere

Links have been made with other Walks that have sprung up around the world.

Australia: Sydney have had two Walks: <https://www.facebook.com/Sydney-Recovery-423661297751312/>

Ireland: they are onto their fourth Walk in Dublin - some of us Scots were at the original one!

<http://www.newsfour.ie/2015/09/recovery-walk-ireland-2015/>

South Africa: Cape Town <http://worldwithoutwine.com/recovery-walk-cape-town-september-2015/>

With all of this in mind, don't forget to register and attend our next **Recovery Walk Scotland 2017!**