

Welcome!

I'm very proud to be here today to open Faces & Voices of Recovery's *RISING!* RECOVERY IN ACTION SUMMIT.

Over the next few days, we're going to be engaged, stimulated and inspired!

And we're going to be a presence in our nation's capitol.

We're a small part of the growing recovery community – people in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, our families, friends and allies.

Those of us gathered here today are the tip of a growing movement that is coming together, organizing and speaking out all across the country. We represent the full array of the recovery community – there are people here from 41 states.

WE EMBRACE ALL PATHWAYS TO RECOVERY.

AND WE ARE RECOVERY ADVOCATES.

We are taking public action, individually and collectively through our recovery community organizations to deliver the message of the power, possibility and proof of recovery.

We are promoting public policies and actions which support recovery from addiction and break down the barriers for others to find and sustain recovery and a new life.

When Faces & Voices of Recovery was launched in 2001, we decided that our mission would be to organize, mobilize and educate the millions of Americans in recovery from addiction, their family, friends and allies to:

- End discrimination,
- Broaden social understanding and
- Achieve a just response to addiction as a public health crisis.

Since then, Faces & Voices has evolved into a national organization by and for the recovery community – bringing

together advocates to share ideas and strategies, link the growing network of recovery community organizations and take action. Our new quarterly publication, *Rising! Recovery in Action*, is packed with valuable information and examples of how people are organizing and speaking out.

We see grassroots citizen advocacy as the core of Faces & Voices – mobilizing and organizing to empower individuals to collective action.

Working in concert, we can bring about life-saving changes in public attitudes and policy. We are organizing to build a unified movement that will mean a real difference in the lives of those still struggling with addiction and their families and communities as well as those who are managing their illness and ready to get their lives back on track.

It's not always easy, as you know. And that's one of the reasons that we're here together – to renew our commitment and inform our future work together.

In the last year, Faces & Voices has organized itself for more effective leadership over the long term. Our newly-formed board of directors includes representatives from 13 regions, representing the entire United States. Eight additional long-time recovery leaders serve on the board as at-large members.

Board members have purple name tags. Please stand. Take some time over the next few days to talk with them. I know that they will be talking with you about Faces & Voices and they are the leaders who will be charting our course over the coming years.

Over the next three days we will be learning from one another and building our organizational and communications skills, hearing from key federal officials, taking the power of our stories to Capitol Hill, where we will be hosting the Recovery Month luncheon.

As we all know, September is National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month. This national observance is an opportunity to educate the public and engage policy makers and the media. We're working with the Congressional Caucus on Addiction, Treatment and Recovery to organize members of Congress who will be speaking on the floor of the House about the power of recovery. Thanks to all of you who contacted your Representatives about this event.

But, recovery advocacy isn't just about one month of the year. As we know, it's every day – fighting for our rights and exercising our growing power. It's about developing a new, shared language that embraces the experiences of the recovery community while reaching out and educating new audiences.

It's about successfully and strategically exploiting growing media attention to addiction to alcohol and other drugs and challenging portrayals of addiction that perpetuate stigma and hamper recovery. That's why Faces & Voices of Recovery organized our first house parties – over 1,000 people came together in 70 homes, houses of worship, treatment centers, and yes, even jails, to watch and discuss Dateline NBC's program, "Saving Carrick." We will be doing more house parties, as a way to mobilize and organize around specific campaigns.

It's about getting our stories – those of people in recovery and family members – out to the public and policymakers. Family members of people in recovery are fed up with their relatives being ignored and denied the care they need. That's why Faces & Voices of Recovery is producing a video called the "Power of Story," that will demonstrate how people can and are using their stories, with examples of many people telling their stories.

And we're using our stories to rally Americans to support repeal of the ban on federal financial aid to students with drug convictions.

The shattering absence of recovery-oriented systems of care and the persistence of stigma and discrimination can give rise to frustration and anger. But working together, Faces & Voices of Recovery and our allies are building a grassroots movement of tens of thousands, working to affect change across the country that can bring fairness and ultimately, vanquish the epidemic of addiction.

Our speakers' bureau sends recovery advocates across the country, sharing their experiences and motivating others to join the campaign.

Together, we are working to mobilize millions of Americans for a more promising future.

I want to express our gratitude to the many organizations and individuals who provided the financial support that made it possible for us to be here, together, over the next few days. The continued support of allied national organizations as well as the ongoing support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment made this meeting possible. And a special thanks to the organizations who contributed to our scholarship fund so that many of us could be here today.

Despite this generous support, it wasn't possible for everyone who wanted to attend to come. So I feel a special obligation to take back the valuable new tools, expertise and experiences that I have over the next few days to New Jersey and I urge you to do the same. And that's what our movement is all about.

As we move forward, we are looking to find new ways to make the Faces & Voices of Recovery campaign work for you and your organization – a place that you can plug into to raise the national profile of the issues that we all care about and that you are working so hard on in your communities.