



*Front entrance of Vinland's residential treatment center.*

## **"The Only Constant in Life is Change."** —Heraclitus

This summer, we went through a period of reinvention and renewal at our residential campus in Loretto.

*See story on page 1 and more photos on pages 12-13.*



*Half of the back of the residential treatment center with new siding and windows.*



## Independence

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All stories are written by Molly Gilbert, Director of Business Development and Editor of Vinland's *Independence* newsletter, unless otherwise indicated.



# COLORING COMPETITION

The clients had a coloring competition and three winners were chosen. They were proud to have their artwork prominently displayed in the dining hall for a month for all to see. *Congrats, guys!*



Josef's coloring art.



Aaron's coloring art.



Tyrone's coloring art.



Coloring competition winners: First place, Josef; second place, Tyrone; third place, Aaron.

# A SPECIAL NOTE

*From Our Executive Director, Mary Roehl*

*Our thanks go out to Representative Tom Emmer for his support of Vinland Center with a Congressionally Directed Spending Grant that enabled us to complete the wonderful capital improvements on our residential campus in Loretto this summer. (See more photos on cover and pages 12-13.)*



*Mary Roehl, Executive Director*

I've spent a couple of years trying to figure out how to finance the much-needed renovations on our buildings. Then the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020 and the demand for our services increased, making it even more critical that we find a way to complete these projects.

The first three areas as detailed below—from 1980-2002—had been painted a few times, but the exterior cedar siding was really showing its age. Sun-bleaching, dry warping and woodpecker holes were making the building look rough.

The windows, especially in the original house and first addition, were drafty and old. The shingles, driveway and upper parking lot had been here since before I started in 1997.

You can see, listed below, some of the momentous tasks completed this year with the help of this Congressionally Directed Spending Grant! In addition to the projects covered by the grant, Vinland replaced the upper parking lot and painted the 2013 expansion so the whole campus now matches.

We are so grateful to our legislators who helped provide this grant and to all of our hard-working facilities and maintenance staff who organized this entire project and made it run so smoothly.

*The result is spectacular and we are so proud of how our facility looks!*

*Northwest wing, rear view of residential treatment center.*



## Residential Campus Development Phases

- 1980** Vinland purchased the property, including a single-family, one-bedroom home with a six-stall garage that was built in 1973.
- 1983** Office space plus 10 residential rooms to accommodate 30 clients was built on the lower level.
- 2002** A small addition was built with more office space, a conference room, a lobby, and residential rooms for 11 additional clients.
- 2013** A major expansion was completed to accommodate another 20 clients, plus office space, a reception area, a new kitchen, and dining room facilities.

## 2023 Residential Campus Improvements

- New shingles on the 1983 and 2002 additions (13,600 sf).
- New windows on the original house and the 1983 and 2002 additions (73 windows).
- New siding on the original house and the 1983 and 2002 additions (10,000 sf).
- Reclaim existing driveway; widen and slant for drainage (12,492 sf)



# OUTPATIENT SERVICES TEAM

*Katie Richard, Outpatient Services Manager; Vice President, Minnesota Alliance on Problem Gambling*

*We have some very positive updates about our Intensive Outpatient Substance Use Disorder Program (IOP SUD)! We have hired several new staff members over the past few years and want to take this opportunity to introduce you to the entire team, so you can put a face with the name you have met via email or telephone.*



**Lucero Pantoja Hornedo**

*LADC, Case Manager*

Lucy runs group meetings, meets with clients individually who are in her caseload, and completes assessments and admissions for new clients. She

interned with Vinland starting in 2019 and advanced to being a full-time LADC. After graduating from Minneapolis Community and Technical College in 2019 with her associate's degree in addiction studies, she went on to complete her bachelor's degree in psychology in December 2022 through Metropolitan State University.

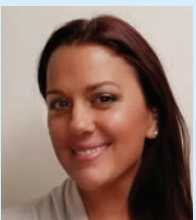


**Collins Nesbit**

*Certified Peer Recovery Specialist/  
Administrative Associate*

Collins meets with clients on a daily basis to help them complete assignments, access community

resources and advocate for themselves in challenging situations (like med cabs). She is celebrating a year at Vinland in September, and has become an essential part of the team. She completed her B.A. in English and secondary education through Augsburg College in 2018. Prior to Vinland she was a schoolteacher, and made a career switch to become a part of the Recovery community, having 10 years of Recovery herself.



**Angie Delisi**

*LADC, Case Manager*

Angie is the newest team member at Vinland National Center Intensive Outpatient Program. She completes admissions and assessments for new

clients and also provides treatment coordination for clients who need an extra helping hand. Angie has had her LADC since 2016 and has worked at several other places prior to joining the Vinland team in March 2023.



**Sandy Halseth**

*MA, LADC, Case Manager*

Sandy manages a caseload and conducts weekly psychoeducation and group therapy sessions. Prior to joining us, Sandra was a counselor

at Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge, working in the men's residential short-term program. Sandra has an undergraduate degree from the University of Northwestern and a Masters in Addiction Counseling from Hazelden Betty Ford Graduate School of Addiction Studies. Prior to becoming an LADC later in life, Sandra had a fulfilling career teaching students in preschool through 12th grade for many years.



**Beth Fraley**

*BS, LADC, Case Manager*

Beth interned with Vinland starting in 2021 and was able to be hired once she completed her internships in spring 2022 and became a full-time

LADC. She is certified to provide services to clients who have gambling addiction. She works with both substance use and gambling clients on her caseload and runs group meetings for both programs.



**Tim Felegy**

*BS, LADC, Case Manager*

Tim meets with clients on an individual basis and runs group meetings multiple days of the week.

He was a classmate of Beth's at

Anoka Hennepin Technical College. He completed his internships through Lake Shore Treatment Center in their inpatient program, then worked there prior to joining Vinland's team in August 2022.

# OUTPATIENT SERVICES: PROBLEM GAMBLING UPDATE

Katie Richard, Outpatient Services Manager; Vice President, Minnesota Alliance on Problem Gambling



*Minnesota is fortunate to have a growing gambling prevention community, in the form of both providers and advocates. Over the past year the need for gambling treatment has grown, and thankfully the resources and access to gambling treatment has as well. We actively partner with all of these entities to get clients connected to resources within the state of Minnesota.*

In order to better meet those growing needs, Vinland National Center's outpatient program has been able to add an additional gambling certified counselor, Beth Fraley, LADC, to provide group services and help grow the client community.

The groups Beth leads are held online via telehealth on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 to 3 p.m. I provide the gambling assessments and admission to the program.

In July 2023, I was fortunate to be able to attend the National Conference on Gambling Addiction & Responsible Gambling in Washington, D.C. On the first day of the conference, I was part of a panel discussion about gambling treatment and perspectives of those who are already practicing within the problem gambling industry. During this presentation, myself and Jeff Hudson, who is president of the Minnesota Alliance on Problem Gambling, simulated what a first session might be like for someone in gambling treatment.

During the rest of the two-day conference there were many sessions offered. Sessions included information on what the Metaverse is; how therapy animals can be helpful in treatment programming; how people can access the national hotline for gambling; and a variety of other studies.

Minnesota was able to have 10 people representing us at the national conference. Our friends and colleagues

at the Minnesota Alliance on Problem Gambling received two awards: best newsletter and best website for a nonprofit. In addition, The director of MNAPG, Susan Sheridan Tucker, was also elected to serve as president of NCPG board of directors. I am honored to be able to serve under Susan as the vice president.

As a reminder, our outpatient problem gambling program serves all adults of all genders, regardless of cognitive issues, and is offered *both in-person and via telehealth*, which allows us to serve anyone within the state of Minnesota from the comfort of their own home, or from a safe place during a lunch hour, etc. We can also conduct problem gambling assessments over the phone in case this might be needed for an upcoming court case/appearance, no matter where you are in the state of Minnesota!

Our IOP SUD, led by Director of Outpatient Services Don Raasch, specifically serves the traditional Vinland population—those struggling with substances, a potential TBI or other cognitive issue such as a learning disability or being on a spectrum, or additionally struggling with FASD/FAED. This program might also serve someone who would simply appreciate a different experience, offering a more experiential and highly-individualized focus. The IOP SUD program is offered *in-person only* and serves all genders 18 years of age and older.

# I FOUND MYSELF

*Chris completed many goals while he was with us at Vinland's residential treatment location. One of the biggest was breaking the all-time cardio record in our therapeutic exercise center!*

## **What did breaking the cardio record mean to you, and how did this all come about?**

"I realized here that exercise is good for my mental health. With issues such as anxiety and depression, you go into the gym angry or discontent, and you leave feeling optimistic and powerful.

I wasn't initially into it for my first two months here, then I started to go, and I saw some people were hitting milestones. You would hear the announcements come through that someone just hit 'x' amount of hours on the treadmill, etc.

I guess I'm a competitive guy—I had lost my 'perfect attendance' place on the board due to a doctor appointment, so I thought maybe I could get on the Vinland board some other way. Then I saw there was a guy here (that personally drove me crazy), and he achieved something like 6,000 minutes of cardio exercise before he left, and I thought, 'I can beat that!' So, whether it was competition, the dislike of a fellow client, or just for the heck of it, I decided I wanted to *smother* that record! The all-time Vinland cardiovascular endurance record was back in May, 2022, and it was 9,785 minutes, so I asked Jeff (director of therapeutic exercise) who were the top 10 clients of all time? By that point I was at number five or six. I knew I had to get to first or second place! However, I learned that between the number two spot and number one, there was a 1,500-minute gap. I honestly didn't think I could do it...

As I was getting closer, I thought, 'In two weeks I could get there, I'm so close!' Then I found out I was scheduled to graduate and leave for my sober house. I panicked and told Katey (our treatment coordinator) 'I need two



*Chris is a big fan of volleyball!*

more weeks!' Katey said, 'THAT'S what you're worried about?' I told her that if I have to miss every group for my last two weeks so I can make this goal, I will!

*Editor's Note: Of course, he knew that would never be allowed at Vinland, so we were able to work with him to find extra time in his days/evenings so he could achieve that top spot!*

I also learned here that after 27 years of hard drug and alcohol use, I had a monster within guarding the door to any happiness. So I knew nothing but anger and rage. Those were the only two emotions I could ever identify. When I started to work with Melissa and Angie (my mental health therapists), I learned that anger is often a secondary emotion. I used to fight that—told them they were full of sh#t. That my anger WAS anger. But slowly I started to realize, I was really just hurt underneath. I had been taught my whole life it wasn't okay to feel feelings—so this took me a long time to acclimate to and understand."

**"...I learned that anger is often a secondary emotion."**

*Editor's Note: Please see Who Am I on the next page, written by Chris during his first couple of months here, and on the following page, a note he wrote for all staff on the day he graduated.*

"The therapeutic exercise program really provided an outlet for that anger that I hadn't found before. It also helped me realize that I just deserved to treat my body better. All those years of starving my body of





Who am I?



I am a person who is lost and confused in this world. I was guided down the wrong path and embraced the path I went down and did horrible things to people that I have not forgiven myself for, and I don't know how to accept that I have made mistakes. I'm a person who has a lot of pain and anger inside that I don't understand. I am also a person who has an incredible amount of potential, full of energy, and capable of good, and so much love buried inside of me that I am learning to unlock. Deep inside I crave to just be understood, accepted for who I am as a person and loved for being me. I need that so bad. I feel so different from everyone else and so alone and feel like nobody really understands me. I am someone who sometimes doesn't understand why I do what I do or think what I think, or feel what I feel. I am someone who has locked away the good things about me because of things always that I believed and still do believe I need to to protect myself, but really want to change about myself. C

nutrients due to drug/alcohol use had likely done a number on my metabolism—so as I was kicking drugs in my second week here, I decided to get off of soda pop. Then I stopped putting sugar on my cereal and eating sweets. I found the more I worked out, the less craving I had for that stuff! I actually tried some apple juice recently and thought, 'Ick—that's way too sweet for me!'

Anger, anxiety and depression—I learned to work it out in the gym, and once I did, I miraculously felt better about everything. Burning off that excess energy, I noticed also helps me sleep better at night.

Now, I work out three times per day; four if you include volleyball, which I now play every night.

I realized here that I tend to operate in 'all or nothing' modes. This is sometimes referred to as black and white thinking, and I definitely see it translating to other areas of my life. I mean, I didn't realize how extreme I can be. For example, after my morning workout at Vinland, I absolutely had to cool down, change, then go get my first cup of coffee for the day. While I had this coffee, I had a habit of just looking out into the restored prairie and admiring how beautiful it is. Just... nature. It made me feel peaceful, calm and content (three words I assure you I had never before used in my life!)

Because my workout edged into my first group session, I was regularly 15 minutes late for that group. I mean, I really prided myself on making it to every single group on time, and never being called to attend make-up sessions, but I just HAD to have that... ritual, if you will. It just could not be any other way for me, or my day would not have started off on the right note.

This is ironic, as I was a guy who previously *hated* to have a schedule or even an appointment I would have to attend! Now it has completely flipped for me. I like to have my entire day sketched out and know what I am doing—what my goals are for the day."

**Tell me about this whole volleyball thing. How did this come about?**

"Yep, I created the whole outdoor volleyball thing here at Vinland! I hadn't played since high school—it was never a big passion of mine, just something I did for fun. One night here, we were going to get a game going of Wiffle ball and didn't have enough people who wanted to play. So, I suggested a couple of us play volleyball. We weren't the greatest at first, but we got better—eventually we got a huge crew of Vinland guys playing every night, and we started to get competitive. We've had some really great games, and it's helped create a real brotherhood here."

*I Found Myself continued on next page.*



Editor's Note: Volleyball was such a big hit this summer at Vinland, that when I would leave around 5 or 6 p.m., I would see a group of up to 25 clients all 'bro-ing out' (as I call it), high-fiving and chest bumping, and really enjoying themselves. Not to mention the physical and emotional self-esteem they were all gaining from their time spent getting in shape while at Vinland. Chris was such a leader in getting people together to participate, and just by greeting clients as they came into treatment—being a smiling face and welcoming figure to all—that when his graduation was held last week, it was one of the largest I have ever seen. So many clients and staff voluntarily attended, and there were tears all around! On his way out, the staff gave him a volleyball that was signed by all of us.

Chris found his family here, and he shared a heartfelt note of gratitude with our entire staff when he graduated:

I want to thank all of the staff at Vinland. Every single one of you has helped me more than you know and I can't thank you enough. Whether you know it or not, every one of you did, said, taught, helped me with something, or listened to me when I needed it the most. When I got here I can only imagine what a handful I was to deal with. I know that inside when I came through these doors I felt so angry and hopeless. I felt broken inside. I was torn and ripped into so many pieces and hurt so bad that it wasn't possible to not feel how I felt. I truly believed that I was a bad person and didn't deserve good things. I didn't understand why I was even here or what I was even trying to do any of this for. I hated myself I hated my life I hated everything. I felt so alone, lost, misunderstood, and by myself fighting a war in complete darkness inside. I was mad and hated the fact that I was alive. I had never in my life cared about or loved myself in any way. It didn't matter to me I didn't know how to and the thought of it made me mad because I didn't understand how it was even possible. That whole you matter and you are worth it stuff to me was just a joke and a lie and would never be true because I didn't matter and I would never be worth it. And I really believed that and the pain inside wouldn't allow me to think or feel anything but that way. My whole

life I wasn't allowed to have feelings and anytime I did I got crushed. Anything or anyone I have ever loved or cared about either died, lost, hurt, abandoned me, used me or was a lie or a joke. So the whole loving myself or feeling feelings thing was not an option for me. And it took a lot of time and patience and me having melt downs and running out of offices, but none of you gave up on me. I used to get so mad when I was told that I needed to feel my feelings, but I did and I do. I don't even know how I can thank you enough. This place is wonderful—the staff here is amazing. You did the impossible, something that I never had dreamed of. You changed my life. It is really gonna hurt my heart leaving here time in my life I can honestly say that I care about myself. Because of you I can actually look at myself in the mirror and tell myself that I love myself and mean it. Because of you I'm happy that I'm alive and want to live a sober and healthy life. Because of you I can feel my feelings and be ok with them. You have given me hope that I can actually do this. You have helped me see and understand that I'm an amazing person that is worth it and that I do matter and that I'm not and don't have to be a bad person. You have helped me understand and see that the monster inside me was just guarding the door to who I really am.



# NOTES FROM OUR GRADUATES

These are day-brighteners and great reminders that although some days it feels like one step forward, two steps back, some of our clients ARE absorbing what they're learning here!

Jeff-

Hi! Your program is awesome!! I love your energy and positive attitude. I'm so glad the program is "mandatory". I feel great, and will keep it up when I leave here. You do know it is my favorite thing at Vinland... (in the building). Oh come on, you knew that was coming! The clients at Vinland are very lucky to have you and Kirsten. I've heard many people say it's their favorite part here. Keep it up Jeff. You rock!

GROUP 3! SM

"Look at the super cool note I got from a client who is leaving tomorrow! Vinland rocks, I say!"  
— Jeff Willert, Director of Therapeutic Exercise

Peggy-

Hi! You are a good therapist! I wish I was staying longer so we could "dig in" a little deeper, but even the little we talked was helpful and I wanted you to know that. You are a good person and bring a lot to the Vinland experience. Keep up the good work and take care!  
SM

"I got one, too! Made my day."  
— Peggy Martin, Director of Mental Health



Dear... Connie, Nancy & Nicole Thanks for all your hard work around here. I've been a custodian and know that it can sometimes be a thank-less job <sup>so thanks</sup> again Tom

Heartfelt thanks like these are always appreciated!

## The Last 180

In my addiction I've had many 360's. I spin around, glance at the future for a moment, see all the great things that lie ahead but end up headed in the same direction. Loneliness, Fear and sadness keep me spinning in the wrong direction.

It is time now for the last 180. To finally see the future and move forward. Embrace the greatness ahead of me and love myself.

There will be many more 360's from here on out. Glancing at the past but choosing to stay on the path to future happiness. Never stopping halfway looking at the past for too long.

Another 180 will only lead to more pain, suffering or even death. So stay the course. Recognize the past and learn from it, use it but make this the last 180. The 180 that will save my life and finally bring me joy.

Anonymous

## B Brandon Johnson

4 reviews • 0 photos

★★★★★ 9 hours ago

I was in like 12 or 13 other treatments I went to Vinland 1 time and I've been sober over 15 yrs today



Vinland National Center - Residential location Owner



Just wanted you to know you're an awesome lady. you work very **HARD** Thank you for your smile

We appreciate that a client posted a review after 15 years of sobriety. That's awesome!



Molly,

I appreciate all you do for Vinland and us clients.

You give off such a great vibe.

I am thankful you did lead an N.A. meeting for Group 3 because that inspired me to start an N.A. meeting at Vinland. God Bless - Beau

# TYRONE TURNS HIS LIFE AROUND



Tyrone

## What was your life like prior to coming to Vinland?

"I grew up on a farm, out in the boonies a bit, with my dad preaching anti-society—teaching us that everyone was out to get us. In retrospect, that set me up for self-isolation and thinking everyone other than my family was bad. Until I got here to Vinland, I truly believed everyone was awful. Although I never used drugs or alcohol until age 30, I realize I was crazy before I ever picked them up. I mean, I used to start off my mornings pumping two shotguns simultaneously in the air and screaming just to release stress! Due to the isolation I grew up in, I did not know it wasn't normal to scream and yell until the other person cried like we did at home.

I worked night and day from the time I started high school to help my father build his empire—and in the process I took everything to extremes. Because of this, I spent the first 30 years of my life as a redneck millionaire. I had employees running hog farms all over the state. I could have easily retired. I didn't do drugs and didn't even drink. I was so naturally intense and wild, my employees were surprised I wasn't on drugs already. I threw drinking parties for my employees on the weekends—which is where I introduced a lot of them to their wives! I had a beautiful house and a two-track champion dirt track for stock car racing. One of my employees introduced me to meth to help me get more done and stay awake longer, which quickly took away everything that made me so successful. Previously, I had NO idea that addiction was in my family system—I learned later that my two older brothers were hard addicts/drunks.

Ten years ago, during the height of my using and having lost mostly everything I had worked so hard for, I was in a car accident in North Dakota, where I suffered a traumatic brain injury. Looking back, there were lots of car crashes and bar fights in my past—bats and pipes over the head—before this car accident, so I likely already had a brain injury or two. But this time I was in a tiny Ford Aspire, and the last thing I remember was turning on my turn signal. I was rear ended by a taxi going 90 mph. My

bumper ended up under the driver's seat of the taxicab. It took more than an hour to have the 'jaws of life' cut me out of that car. The rescue crew all thought I was dead.

I woke up more than eight hours later in a hospital with 12 staples in my head. It was such a tiny car, I really don't understand how I wasn't killed. I do remember waking up a couple of times in that hospital to see my dad praying over me while I was sleeping.

**"...a judge finally said to me, 'Mr. S., are you trying to do a life sentence 30 days at a time?'"**

Though I was driving stone-cold sober that day, there had been countless times that I had previously blacked out while driving it's truly a miracle that I'm here.

I spent seven months in prison in Stillwater on a third-degree possession charge, with a 47-month sentence. It was like a big dorm, with all the guys in one area. I got lucky and was awarded the job of truck driver assistant five days per week, which allowed me to drive all over the state. I left early in the morning before anyone woke up, and returned to Stillwater Prison to sleep. It was a sweet job.

I spent so much time going in and out of jail during these years that a judge finally said to me 'Mr. S., are you trying to do a life sentence 30 days at a time?'

Right before I went into the Kandiyohi jail, the main judge had told the courtroom that I was "a menace to society," which pissed me off, but after thinking about it, I realized that she was right. Over the last 25 years, every minute of every day I had been living on the edge. I couldn't trust anybody and was constantly engaged in street fights and brawls, but never once had I considered quitting dope."

## How did you hear about Vinland/get connected?

"During that stint in Kandiyohi jail, I had a celly (roommate) there named Chaz. After listening to me make excuses, deny my charges and try to fight the system on small technicalities, one day he grabbed me by the



collar, told me to get my head out of my ass, and threw me out of the cell until I did. He was a 485 lb., 6'5" monster of a guy, so he wasn't playing! Basically, he could see that I wasn't taking responsibility for myself or changing my way of thinking; instead just being the same stupid guy I had been for the last 25 years.

In the end, Chaz was the first guy I ever admitted to that I was using drugs. Never had I uttered those words before to anyone, even though it was ruining my life. I had been super focused on fighting my case based on tiny technicalities for six months, until New Year's Eve, when I picked up a book that was lying around the jail, called *A Prisoner Released*, by Brian Brookheart. There was a prayer at the very end that resonated with me. You have to understand that I had just gone through three months of not being able to sleep, and then when I finally did, I was consumed with night terrors. The night I read this prayer, I had an immediate change in thinking. I went from being angry, with a literal 'kill list' of people I was going to go after once I got out of prison, to letting it all go. The night terrors immediately stopped. I started going to Bible class in jail, and I plan on joining a church when I leave here. I even apologized to the sheriff in Kandiyohi County for being so awful while in jail there.

Obviously, jail staff saw changes in me and suddenly my lawyer asked me if I was interested in participating in drug court. I asked what that was, as I'd never heard of it. My public defender was pretty new and he didn't know, either! By some miracle, I got accepted.

My celly, Chaz, wasn't a past client, but had a friend who had gone to Vinland and had a very positive experience, and he suggested I might want to look into it. So I did. I tried calling, but you guys don't take collect calls from jails, so I had to beg the jail to get me an application for Vinland. They didn't know who Vinland was, so kept trying to encourage me to go to two other programs that were nearer to them, and were easier to get into. I knew I needed the help with my TBI and understanding why I had the behaviors I did—how that might be affecting my impulsivity and other behaviors, so I sat and waited. I stayed an extra couple of months in jail just so I could get to Vinland!

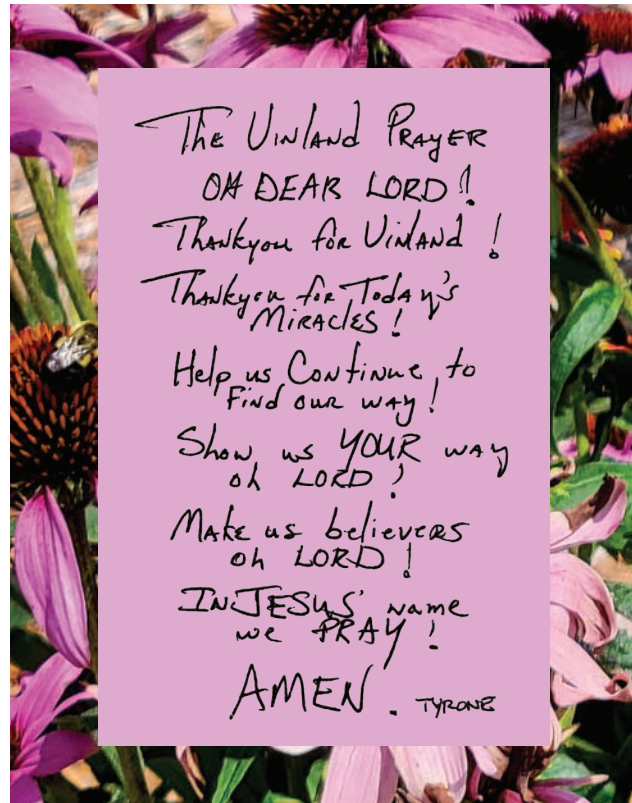
In total, I sat in that jail for nine months and one day. On May 24, 2023, I was released from jail to come here. I had never been to treatment before.

When I arrived here, I had warrants in Anoka and Hennepin Counties. I had to attend drug court via Zoom from Vinland. After spending about three months at Vinland, I was checking in on a court hearing where they were about to address the other two warrants. I was really

afraid of what was going to be thrown at me for those violations. I had a fifth-degree charge hanging over my head for years. Then I heard the prosecutor recommend they dismiss the charges because I was doing so well at Vinland.

I almost fell over. My jaw was on the table. I was in tears. I could not believe the changes they said they saw in me! Then Judge Wentzel said: 'Mr. S—have a nice life, we don't want to see you back here!'

I fell to my knees once off that Zoom meeting and wrote a prayer we all now refer to as *The Vinland Prayer*, because so many of the guys here have asked for a copy."



When I look back, it's unbelievable the stress I lived under for the past 25 years. Unlivable, really—just one train wreck after another. I am completely starting over financially, but I realize that I have a tremendous amount of experience, and I know what I am capable of, so I am not worried at all. I do understand that the 'relationship factor' could take me down. I have a real weakness right there. Previously, I was so angry at women due to all the harms I believed they had brought upon me, that I used to make it a point when hunting to shoot only the female birds (or other animals).

I have grown kids who don't know I'm their father; the mother of my daughter elected to not tell her that I am her dad. I didn't deal with that too well. I was completely

*Tyrone continued on next page.*

*Tyrone continued from previous page.*

psycho over this, but was absolutely against any sort of therapy—that was for ‘girly guys.’ I had never experienced failure until then, yet I was on a U.S. Marshall Top 10 Wanted List years ago. I later found this out from a buddy.

Drug court saved my life—they told me to stay as long as I wanted. I don’t think I had many years left of that lifestyle in me—if I would’ve been sent to prison at age 61, I think it would’ve killed me.

I hear all the time, ‘Don’t do the crime if you can’t do the time.’ By the time I got in trouble in Willmar, I realized I couldn’t do the time for the crimes. But I had to take responsibility for my own stupidity. Never once had I admitted my use of meth to anyone. While in jail, the staff doctor gave me buspirone and hydroxyzine to sleep and it worked, but as soon as I stopped taking them after three weeks (because dope got me there, and I’ve watched all these people dying on fenty (fentanyl), I didn’t want to get hooked on these new drugs), I decided I needed to get off everything, which is when the night terrors started. I only took those two prescriptions for three weeks! Then the end result was night terrors? They were horrible! I couldn’t sleep because of them. Then, as I mentioned, I read the book, *A Prisoner Released*, and it was truly a miracle that it changed my thinking.”

**“Drugs kill everything good—your family, body and mind.”**

### **What made this a successful treatment program for you?**

“Being in as bad of shape that I was, I was really worn out and looking for some way out of that vicious cycle. Even though I was 100% committed to not going back, I didn’t really know how. Now, I’m eating right, and with the help of the therapeutic gym, I got in shape and got my health back! I’ve even put on over 25 lbs. of muscle while here!

Vinland taught me these things—and I have no intention of losing it. I’ve learned how the brain works a lot better with regular nutrition and exercise. I think I got lucky, because I don’t think I’ve damaged myself as much as some of these younger kids here. I’m getting better daily. I’m happier than shit—in a good mood and don’t want to lose it. I have been taught perspective about how we look and react to things. A lot of my behaviors that made me successful are the same ones that made me a train wreck. Although I never smoked dope with those I sold it to, I needed to have a ‘dangerous persona’ for my own protection.”

### **What would you tell others who are considering treatment through Vinland?**

“Having been a guy that was against it for 25 years, I’d say don’t waste everyone’s time unless you’re ready. If you really truly open your mind and heart, there’s a whole new world out there.

Just the other night, it was so heartbreaking to watch a newcomer arrive, then, once their high wore off, they started to feel all the emotions come up they had spent so much time trying to suffocate. I’ll never forget his last words to me, ‘Meth never did me no wrong.’ He then left AMA (against medical advice).

Drugs kill everything good—your family, body, and mind; your significant other is going to leave you; and you’ll destroy everything you’ve worked hard for and end up either in jail, prison or dead.

### **What were your first impressions upon getting to Vinland, and how long did it take you to assimilate?**

“Wow. I have been continually impressed by the staff—they all seem to know everything about everybody. I’ve never heard one negative word from anyone who works here. I might have changed my mind about treatment if I knew people were this good. EVERYbody cares—even the cooks and cleaning staff!

One of the most lasting lessons I’ve learned while here is the importance of nutrition and exercise! I’ve started a Bible study group while here, and I’ve learned more about the ‘how, why and what’ I think.

Upon graduation from Vinland, I’m going (back!) to Willmar to attend a halfway house for men—one that’s sober and faith-based. There, they help you get your license back, get set up to find a car, get work, and set you up for the rest of life.

I absolutely love my parole officer now. This is what they have said to me: ‘Number one rule: Do not lie to me. You lie, I will throw you in prison. If you tell me the truth I will fight tooth and nail to get you back on track.’

I’m living proof that this stuff works! I have learned to ask myself—when have I experienced that what I *thought* was a good idea ever worked for me? I’ve learned I have to listen to others that know more and get out of my own way. I am thrilled I’m finding my way and finding the light.

I told Judge Wentzel I was going to be the poster boy for drug court, and here I am being the poster boy for Vinland! Wah Hoo!”



# MEANINGFUL LIVING SKILLS PROGRAM IMPLEMENTED FOR CLIENTS

*Thomas Beckers, Director of Residential Services*



*Thomas Beckers, Director of Residential Services*

One year ago, Vinland National Center received a Congressionally Directed Spending Grant endorsed through Representative Dean Phillips' office, and supported by Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith.

The purpose of this grant was to develop a Meaningful Living Skills Program for our clients. The program has two areas of focus: one is to increase the use of technology to help support clients in the community; the other is to use a software application to improve cognitive functioning.

Clients are screened to determine the desire for an email account, online searches for Recovery support, job searching and connecting to a certified peer recovery specialist. In the process of implementing this program, we found that many Vinland clients were not in need of a resume-building or job-searching function, often due to results of a TBI or other disability status, so we introduced BrainHQ, a software application which allows clients to engage in cognitive skill building. BrainHQ offers interactive skill building to increase functioning in attention, brain speed, memory, people skills, intelligence and navigation. Clients work with staff to generate a unique username and password that

allows them to track their performance over time. The interactive touch-based technologies provide real time feedback to those working through the exercises.

Members of the treatment team meet with clients to help use their existing devices to increase their effectiveness and connect them to supportive services. Clients are engaged in smaller groups consisting of 5-10 clients per session. The smaller groups allow for facilitators to support and monitor clients as they navigate the internet.

Exit surveys indicate that the response to the groups have been positive, with clients reporting a high level of motivation to continue working on the exercises.



*Senator  
Tina Smith*



*Representative  
Dean Phillips*



*Senator  
Amy Klobuchar*

## *Editor's Note:*

*Vinland is the only disability-responsive treatment center in the state, specifically offering expertise in working with those with traumatic and acquired brain injuries or other cognitive deficits (including learning disabilities, severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI), those on a spectrum, or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Effect). Therefore, we are very grateful for this opportunity to provide new and unique services for the clients attending Vinland's residential program, and we wholeheartedly thank Representative Dean Phillips and Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith for granting us the funding to make this possible!*





# VINLAND GETS SOME TLC

*It's finished! Pictures on the cover, page 1 and this spread highlight the changes/updates now completed at our residential campus in Loretto: A brand new roof, siding, 73 windows, and replacing and repaving the driveway and upper parking lot.*

*Close-up of front entrance of building.*





# THANK YOU!

*We were able to complete the process of updating our residential campus in Loretto thanks to a Congressionally Directed Spending Grant from Representative Tom Emmer's office with support from Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith. The grant was managed by HRSA (the federal Health Resources and Services Administration).*



*Upper parking lot outside of original, one-bedroom house we started with in 1970.*

# GREAT JOB!



*Matt Koch, Facility Maintenance Supervisor*

*Although our goal for completion of this transformation project was late summer, the stealth work by Matt and his team got it done ahead of schedule in*

*July! In record time! Thanks for the extra effort by you and your team, Matt!*

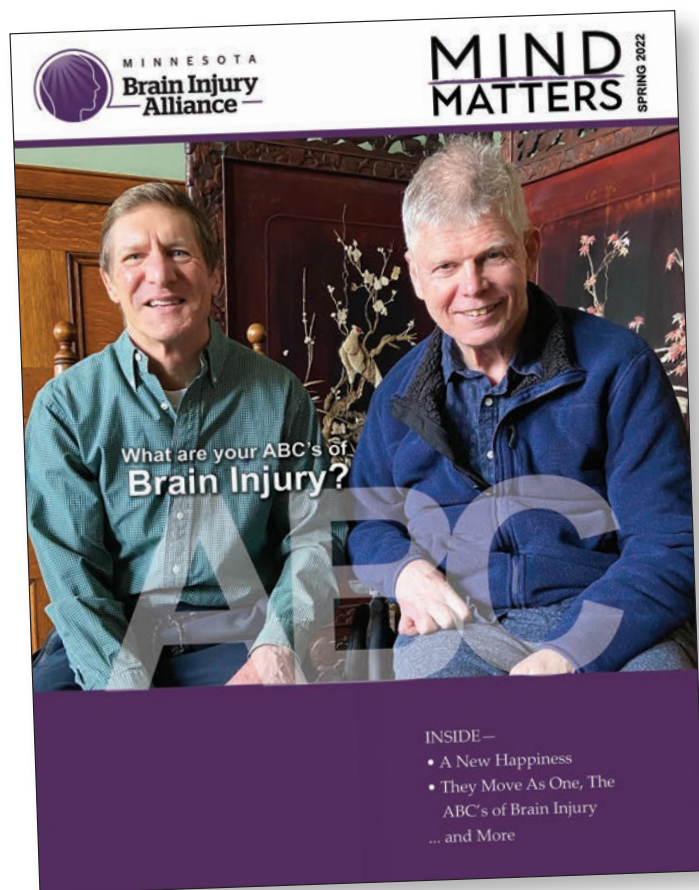


*Billing office area looking towards Therapeutic Exercise Center/gym.*



# “WAIT FOR ME, 'CAUSE I'M GOING PLACES!”

I first learned of Henry Bromelkamp's horrible two-wheeled rental scooter accident that occurred while he was on a business trip in Denver from a wonderful article in the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance's *Mind Matters* publication, which came out spring 2022 (<https://www.braininjurymn.org/newsletter/MM-2022-Spring.pdf>).



Spring 2022 edition of *Mind Matters*, published by the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance.

I immediately took a step back in shock. Henry was the person who changed my life back in 1986-1987 while I was an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota. You see, he had set up the Henry A. Bromelkamp Grant—that I was (amazingly) awarded—which provided for one student to go to what was then the Soviet Union for an educational cultural

exchange program in Leningrad and Moscow. The directions in his

letter were to “Open your eyes and ears and close your mouth; do NOT bring a suitcase full of blue jeans to exchange on the black market, but instead learn everything you can about the people and their culture, then come back and tell every American what you learned.” I’ve been doing that ever since.

Most importantly, after being ashamed that I hadn’t even bothered to learn to say hello or thank you in Russian, but I had 6- to 11-year-old children rushing our tourist bus offering us Soviet army pins in exchange for the simple request for us to speak English with them, I knew I had to change my ways of thinking and being. Yes, I was culture-shocked, but man, did I ever run with it! I immediately switched my major focus from journalism to political science and studying the Russian language as a minor, then once I got to my international exchange site in Scotland (separate from Henry’s grant) I embarked upon those studies full-on.

When I returned to the states a year and a half later, I tried to find Henry to thank him. I searched everywhere I could to finally locate his address, then knocked on his door to no answer, so left a thank-you note. I wanted him to know how deeply this experience had affected me.

35 years later, I see this profile of Henry and his husband, Jeff, in *Mind Matters*! It’s a full-circle moment for me, as I am now involved in the brain injury realm through my work at Vinland National Center. As I read about this tragic accident, I can’t help but think, “Something this bad cannot happen to someone this good!” Sound familiar? It does to most of our clients at Vinland with TBIs, as well as their loved ones. I read the article again. I tried to find the CaringBridge site mentioned in the article. I did as much research as I could to try to find



Henry A. Bromelkamp



Henry and Jeff to reach out; I didn't know what to say, but if he was able to take it in, I wanted to thank him for what he did for my life. At that time, back in 1986, my parents were going through a terrible divorce—we didn't understand why my father had suddenly abandoned our family and seemingly changed his personality in a drastic way (a year after their divorce we discovered it was a massive brain tumor), and in the midst of all this, Henry's grant allowed me to travel closer to my exchange study site. I had zero money due to the devastation that was taking place within my family system at that time, so was completely reliant on scholarships and grants. That was a lifesaver, as I did not have the money to even be able to buy my plane ticket overseas! I did not fully understand who this Henry guy was, but I knew he was changing my life for the better, and I didn't know why. This was (finally!) my opportunity to truly thank him and let him know how incredibly his generosity affected my life. So, I reached out to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance (<https://www.braininjurymn.org/>) and pretty much just begged for a way to reach him. A few weeks later, the author of the article got back to me and let me know I could send a letter or email to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance and they would get it to Henry. I did this, and anxiously awaited a reply.

Almost one year later, Henry reached out to me, and we had one of the most meaningful Zoom conversations I have ever had. There were tears, revelations, more tears (of joy!) and a deeper understanding of his life and legacy, and why he was so moved to create this scholarship, especially during the height of tensions between the U.S. and U.S.S.R.

I learned that Henry is a profound pursuer of peace and understanding in our world, and believes that wherever we can help others less unfortunate, we should. He gave out approximately 10 of these U.S.S.R. educational scholarships over the years. In addition, he has played a role in building approximately 3,000 schools in Africa, in part because during apartheid (from 1948 to the early 1990s), the South African government declared it illegal to educate Black children. Henry decided that may have been, but it wasn't illegal to build schools, so 20 years ago he set about doing just that! As of late he is focusing on Zululand (recognized as KwaZulu-Natal since 1994) and Malawi (the poorest country in the world). In fact, he is leading a delegation to Malawi this autumn where

he is going back to teach leaders and friends there how to fundraise for themselves. I just love that at the end of the discussion he asked what I was doing this fall, and did I want to join them? Although I would have *loved* to, I let him know it just wasn't financially in the cards for me. Then he asked, "Can you drive a stick shift?" Henry wasn't yet aware of my gearhead nature, but I can drive anything with wheels! Henry said, "Cool! If you agree to be the driver, I can get you there for a discounted rate!" Chance of a lifetime, I realize, but I was already so committed with my work schedule and this was (super) short notice. Maybe next time, Henry! My goodness, this man just keeps trying to make me a better person...

In our initial Zoom meeting, we simply could not stop



Spring 2022 edition of Mind Matters,  
published by the Minnesota  
Brain Injury Alliance,

learning from each other, and I realized Henry is worthy of his story being told in every format available to him. Not only is he an incredible force for good in our world, but he has just survived a brain injury that many medical professionals predicted he wouldn't, and since Vinland

*Going Places continued on next page.*

*Going Places continued from previous page.*

specializes in helping those with brain injuries and substance use disorders, I thought Henry's story might be motivating to some of our clients, while inspiring to their families and loved ones.

Often in the realm of Recovery, when one is telling their story, we tell it in three parts: What it was like, what happened, and what it's like now. So I set up another meeting with Henry—this time *much* longer, so I could ask him these questions.

### **What was life like before your accident in Denver?**

"I was living life in the extreme! I had a software company with 17 employees who were well paid, and because I believe that teaching others is one of the greatest ways to develop employees, I had made it a point to teach them everything I could about my job within the organization. That's what builds people up. When I came out of the coma after 18 months, the same 17 people were there keeping the place running. They were scared, but they knew what it took to keep us going. I had 10 employees in the Twin Cities, plus 7 or 8 in California, Michigan and Wisconsin. We provided software development for foundations."

When I asked how he got into this field, in the usual Henry parlance, he responded, "By hook and by crook!" In actuality, he had worked for private arts councils and state agencies in the past, and at one point he hired a consultant who asked him how many clients he had, which was about 50. Her response was, "Fifty thousand?" He said, "No, 50." The consultant told him he needed to start looking into foundations. This is where he learned about the wonderful work that so many foundations are doing in and for our world, and it was game-changer for him. He credits much of his success to a strong sense of ethics, morality and the pursuit of social justice. He is known for this and is proud of it.

### **What happened?**

"I was in Denver for a conference for my foundation clients. I was going to meet a prospective client and rented a scooter with a helmet ahead of time. I received confirmation both would be there waiting for me. When I got there, they had no helmet. That's the last thing I remember. I apparently decided to go without the

helmet. As it's been told to me, I was found laying on the ground with my skull cracked open—with my brains visible. The EMTs used my phone to call Jeff who was luckily starred as my emergency contact, and when he answered he said, 'Hi Henry! How is Denver?' to which the EMTs said I was in an ambulance with a severe head injury and they needed to know if I was allergic to any medications. Once at the hospital, surgeons removed part of my skull so that the brain could swell, and placed that part of my skull in a freezer, which they eventually reconnected (isn't science amazing?!) Within a couple of weeks they had a helmet on my head.



*Henry A. Bromelkamp*

Every day Jeff would have a care conference with my medical team where he would go around the room asking each of them what their prognosis was. Overwhelmingly the medical team would advise Jeff to 'Let me go (die).' They said I would likely never wake up from the coma I was in, and that I would never recover. Thank goodness I had a Living Will, which Jeff would then proceed to read at the end of their medical input, which said, in part: 'If I lose the ability to see, I want to be alive. If I lose my ability to hear, I want to be alive. If I lose all of my limbs, I want to be alive!' Jeff had to repeat this process almost daily, as there would be new team members cycling through, or they would simply forget. Jeff was an incredible advocate for me.

I was eventually transferred from Colorado to Bethesda Hospital in St. Paul, where I was mistakenly given an anti-seizure medication I was allergic to that cost me approximately six months of Recovery, and I almost died because of this. I was then moved to a nursing home. Of course still in a coma, I was completely unaware that the world was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with Minneapolis burning after the murder of George Floyd. Jeff couldn't get any contractors to come to the house due to these two coinciding events, so they had to put me in a nursing home until we could get our home fitted to be able to support my recovery.



At this nursing home they prescribed over 4,000 mg. of anti-seizure meds. My best friend came to visit and saw the medications I was on and recognized it was all too much. She and Jeff asked the nursing home to stop giving such high doses of these meds, but they refused, claiming medical necessity or standards. So Jeff went to HealthPartners, and asked what they would do if this was their loved one? What is the lowest level they could possibly take my medications down to? They responded they would offer 25% of the medications that the nursing home was giving me. They agreed to write a letter saying so to Allina Health (who was an owner of the nursing home) and only then would the nursing home respond to this request.

The next day, purely due to the new levels of meds, I woke up from my coma.

At this point the staff at the nursing home had to buckle in as I was on the move! I was angry that I was being hand-fed by someone else while my head was resting on a platform, with my hands bound to my wheelchair. I kept saying 'I can feed myself!' but I apparently wasn't ready, as I had lost so much muscle mass during the 18 months I was in a coma. They were feeding me food that would keep a person alive, but that was it. I was so disgusted with it that they finally allowed me go to the cafeteria to order my own food, and my goodness, it was like a smorgasbord to me! Staff was shocked that I was wheeling myself around with my head still on that danged platform, but I was determined to get my neck strength back! The way I saw it, I had 100 friends in that nursing home who were dying, and I didn't want to join them yet. It appeared to me that I was the only one there who was surviving."

### What is Life Like Today?

"I am 95% happy and 5% angry. My anger comes from feeling unappreciated and not taken seriously. When my conservator talks with the lawyer that *I pay for*, they talk around me. They are just now thinking of getting me an ATM card as I don't even have enough money to buy my own metro transit ticket, which is \$1.00! My anger is situational, as they had to protect my company and my employees. I still have my brain, speech, ethics,

and my passion for social justice and I can *still* speak 15 languages! I'm lucky—you don't still have all that with most TBIs. Everything I've had happen to me has been, for the most part, optimal. My office grew too big for my house, and my company is doing very well. We rank #2 in the world for what it is that we do, and we're likely the most respected.

I'm a miracle. I don't know why this happened to me, but I know what I'm going to do."

### What would you tell families/loved ones in a similar situation?

"This is difficult for me to answer as I am so blessed. Most who suffer from such severe TBIs don't recover so are left with a partial memory, clouded brain, or a lack of speech. If I have any advice it would be to advocate

the HELL out of the situation—as the person with the TBI is not able to do it for themselves. Like Jeff did for me. Think out of the box. When a doctor or therapist says one thing, ask WHY NOT THIS instead? They are trained in XYZ; not 1, 2, 3. My best friend, Marlys, wrote to HealthPartners repeatedly to question why they made

this or that decision for my treatment. For example, soon after coming out of my coma, I slipped on the ice when getting into a car and had horrible knee pain. I went to doctor after doctor who all took knee x-rays and told me it was in my head. Not one of them had taken an x-ray of my hip, so after 7 months of telling me nothing was wrong, one of them finally took a hip x-ray and found I had been suffering from a broken hip! The pain was immediately lifted in surgery—coming out from surgery I told them, 'Man, you have me on some WHAMMY drugs as I am feeling good for the first time in almost one year!' They told me I had finally just been fixed."

I can't stress enough how honored I have been to get connected with this man during my lifetime. I am grateful beyond words that this human exists in this world, and I hope to become more like him. Someday. One day at a time.

*I am pleased to tell you that as of the writing of this article in July 2023, Henry just walked for one hour without the use of his wheelchair!*

**"The next day,  
purely due to the  
new level of meds,  
I woke up from  
my coma."**

# PET CORNER

*We welcomed a few new furry visitors to Vinland's residential program over the past few months.*



*Jessica's pup, Kyla*

We are always happy to see our furry friends! A few new visitors to Vinland's residential program over the past few months include Case Manager Jessica's pup, Kyla—a 10-month-old puppy she adopted at about six months of age when her cousin called her from South Dakota to say they found her in a ditch next to a busy road. When the cousin opened the door to their car, the pup jumped right in, completely covered in ticks and very undernourished, weighing all of 17 lbs. Jessica's cousin and aunt had a vet come out to their home to detick her, give her shots and all the health things that needed to be done, then her aunt drove Kyla up to Minnesota to be united with her new mommy, Jessica. Part black lab, part pit bull (we think, collectively), Kyla now weighs 35 lbs. and is thriving! She loves to play out in the restored prairie, and loves other dogs. She's still terrified of most men, but the clients have been working with her to learn to trust again.



*Connie and her new pup*

The next little treasure that happened our way was the latest furry addition to one of our wonderful housekeeping associates, Connie W. Her significant other was on an exterior painting job in Bloomington when a teenager came walking down the street with this little furball in the palm of his hands asking if anyone wanted to buy him for \$200. He immediately sent a picture to Connie as he's just as much of an animal-lover as she is, and although they already have two large dogs, a cat and

more, Connie instructed him to find out where they lived and go see if this was a bad breeder (just in it for the money), as this tiny baby looked dehydrated and filthy. Of course they weren't going to let this baby go, so the pup was picked up—and indeed, they could “smell the house from the street, it was so filthy inside.” The upside was that a puppy was saved, a terrible breeding situation reported, and the little boy is now a very tiny fixture here at Vinland. He is a Teacup Chihuahua and is estimated to be about four months old.



*Connie and her new pup*



One of Peach's favorite clients was Steven. He came in just about every day to hold, snuggle and get great vibes from our furry little mascot, and he said a teary goodbye when he graduated Vinland just last week!

*Peach isn't the only one who will miss him. Come back and visit us soon, Steven and tell us of all your success!*



# VINLAND'S OWN WHEATIES CHAMPIONS

Elias Rocha, Lead Case Manager



At our latest all-staff quarterly meeting, a big surprise was presented to Jeff and Kirsten in the Therapeutic Exercise Center, with each of them highlighted on a Wheaties box!

We asked Eli, one of our case managers, how this whole thing came about and this is what he said:

“The idea of making the Wheaties boxes came from Kevin, one of our case managers, and I took it and ran with it. I continued to reach out to Kevin, Tom Beckers, Molly Gilbert, and Matt (Jeff’s son, who was conducting his internship with us at that time) on design ideas throughout. Matt helped provide most of the information on the boxes, and Molly helped with the editing. I bounced design ideas off of Kevin and Tom mostly, which was a HUGE help. Here are some of my thoughts that helped drive all of this...

Fitness group, by and large, has been the favorite group of all clients. Jeff and Kirsten do such an excellent job of motivating

clients and strongly instilling a workout routine. Their work is incredibly powerful, and oftentimes it’s a workout routine that’s helped keep many sober, including myself. Vinland would not have the impact it does on clients’ lives without the strong motivation by Jeff and Kirsten as they teach clients that exercise is one of the most powerful coping tools. Jeff and Kirsten’s work is part of what sets Vinland National Center apart from other programs.”

## NEW FACES

*We are happy to announce new hires and staff changes that will help us continue to best serve our clients.*

### ***New Staff:***

- Sara Derhaag, HST
- Andrew Volk, HST
- Angie DeLisi, LADC (OP Intake/ Assessor/Treatment Coordinator)
- Mary Emery, HST
- Ben Knauf, HST
- Romney Skarp, HST
- Maddie Elstad, HST
- Nicole Eldridge, HST
- Tina Thurber, HST
- Jeremy Marschel, HST

### ***Changes:***

- Jessica Pace, from intern to Case Manager
- Brittany Weinand, from intern to Case Manager
- Eli Rocha and Desiree Hemstock promoted to lead counselors



*As always, we want to thank our quilters for their generous donation of beautiful quilts. Our clients truly appreciate the warmth they bring on these crisp, autumn nights. Pictured: Sue Dvorsak from St. Thomas Women's Club (Corcoran) with nine quilts they donated.*

# MINNESOTA ALLIANCE OF RURAL ADDICTION TREATMENT PROVIDERS (MARATP) ANNUAL CONFERENCE



L to R: Blake Paulson, district representative from Representative Tom Emmer's office; Matthew Bergeron, vice chair, Vinland board of directors and MARATP's legal representative; Liz Reyer, Minnesota representative; Marti Paulson, Project Turnabout's executive director and MARATP president; Sadie Broekemeier, president, recovering hope; Mary Roehl, executive director, Vinland National Center; Nancy Fasching, vice president for community impact at Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF); and Leah Trulock, executive administrative assistant, Project Turnabout and MARATP Conference coordinator.



Matthew Bergeron, vice chair, Vinland board of directors and MARATP's legal representative speaking at the Legislative Dinner.



Representative Liz Reyes addresses the room at the Legislative Dinner on day two of the conference.



Above: A packed room at the MARATP Conference to discuss utilization review. L to R: Tom Beckers, director of residential services at Vinland; Annie Tetnowski from Recovering Hope; Jennifer Barkley from Project Turnabout; and Marti Paulson, executive director of Project Turnabout, introducing the panel.



Senators Tina Smith, Michelle Fischbach, and Jim Abler were presenters at the Legislative Dinner.



# FROM LOW DAYS TO HIGH FIVES

*This is the type of communication that goes out to staff at the residential program when a client not only arrives, but when they are about to graduate Vinland. It's so great, as it allows everyone from the clinical team to the administrative and support staff to join in and help celebrate our clients' successes, give high fives, and participate in giving them a positive send-off:*

*From Brittany, Case Manager*

Client Daniel (Danny) is successfully graduating, transitioning to Change Place sober living and attending IOP through Twin Cities Wellness and Recovery Gym in Minneapolis. As everyone knows, Danny has been here for over 90 days. When he first came in, you could hear him from one side of the building to the other with how overstimulated and loud he was. Over time, he calmed down, was able to focus, and really devoted himself to the program. He has led two evening Recovery meetings for/with the other clients, and has hit remarkable goals in the fitness center! Danny has absolutely had his challenges and some bumps in the road, but he is highly motivated to remain sober and will continue to use fitness as one of his coping mechanisms. We wish Danny well!

---

*From Jeff Willert, B.Sc., E.P., S.E.T.*

## **We wish these fine fellas well in their next steps!**

- **Danny** achieved perfect attendance, over 6,000 cardio minutes and stated his chronic pain is gone! His overall pre- and post- assessments show that his physical health improved significantly while with us. He is going to the Recovery Gym to continue with what he started here.
- **Travis** did great! He plans to join a YMCA in his hometown to continue what he started here. We provided him with a scholarship letter. He said when he first got here he didn't want to exercise, then he started (I may have pressured him a bit,) and now says this is the best he's felt in years!
- **Jamie** had nearly perfect attendance. He came in with intense arm and hand numbness and tingling from what I suspect is an old cervical disc injury. HE LEAVES VINLAND TODAY WITH NO PAIN! He is excited about it and said, "I am in the best physical condition of my life!"

- **Dave** achieved perfect attendance and 3,000 cardio minutes! When he started here he would barely speak to me. He didn't have an understanding of formal exercise of any kind. By the end, he was totally independent and absolutely loved the exercise and nutrition information.

He plans to join a club near his home to continue what he started here. It is unfortunate that he left early and didn't get a graduation that he so deserved! He is a sweet, gentle man.

- **Tyrone** did fantastic! He wanted to leave when he first got here, but turned out to be a star client! He had perfect attendance with us and 2,600 cardio minutes! He is extremely proud of how he looks and feels now compared to when he came in. His exact words this morning were "you (Vinland) saved my life!"

I explained to him that he did all the hard work; we just provided him the tools and knowledge that he needed to make these changes.

I am extremely proud of him! He will join a health club in Willmar. Yahoo!

- **Robert** was a fantastic client! He told me this morning that he never expected the exercise program would make him feel this good. He made huge changes in his pre- and post-testing. He will join a health club in Alexandria as part of his Recovery!
- **Marc** had perfect attendance, 1,500 cardio minutes and already has a YMCA membership!

He said he saw results in his health in a week after starting with us. His favorite thing was nutrition class and volleyball!

He said his friend was here in November and he knew then that this was where he wanted to do treatment!

***Wow, what a group of hard-working individuals! It was a pleasure to work with all of them.***



# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

*Business Development is back up to full speed following a few years on pandemic-induced Zoomland, so it feels like at times I am being pulled in five different directions at once, but it's been fun to get out and see people face-to-face again!*

*Molly Gilbert, M.Ed., Director of Business Development*

September is National Recovery Month, and Vinland helps sponsor and actively participates in the Minnesota Recovery Connection's annual Walk for Recovery; the Gratitude Breakfast at Augsburg University, where GB Leighton is the featured speaker this year; and the annual Rally for Recovery Twins game, where we gave away 10 free tickets to staff!

Vinland recently committed to a monthly presentation for inmates at the Hennepin County jail on the subject of TBIs and the criminal justice system—helping educate those who are justice-involved on signs and symptoms to be look for if questioning whether they might have a TBI that has not been diagnosed by a medical professional. In the field of brain injury, most practitioners share stories of the high number of clients who present without knowing they are living with a brain injury, mostly because they report that no doctor ever “diagnosed them” with one. So, even though—and this is a true story—they have gone head first through two separate windshields, in two different car accidents, and in one of those cases laid in the ditch unconscious for eight hours, the emergency room doctor stapled his head together and told him his “work looked perfect,” and sent the client out the door with no discussion about having a brain injury and what to expect going forward. Emergency room staff are getting better at informing of TBIs and what to possibly expect going forward, but examples like this still happen too frequently.

The general public constantly needs education on the prevalence of TBIs within the U.S. population. For example, the Minnesota Department of Corrections recently conducted a survey on the female inmates in the Shakopee facility, where 98% of them came up with a TBI. Sadly, most of these are due to domestic violence, as the assailant is aiming for the head and neck. But it begs the point: If 98% of women who are justice-involved are living with a mild, moderate or severe brain injury, what might it look like for the male prison/jail population? No one knows, as that survey hasn't been taken yet. But, with all of the drug deals gone

wrong; the pipes and bats over the head; the bar/street fights and high risk-taking behaviors, not to mention the preponderance of high-impact sports that males tend to partake in when young, the odds are pretty good that our male justice-involved population also needs this education. Therefore, not only is Vinland at the Hennepin County jail every month, but we've been doing this at the Anoka County jail for more than six years now, and we're working to partner with Ramsey County jail as we speak.

Another outreach focus is on the many behavioral health conferences that we attend from August through November, and this year we had the National Alliance of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) conference held in Minneapolis for the first time, and it was so great to realize what a leader the state of Minnesota actually is in the field of brain injury. With brain injury state plan administrators attending from all over the U.S., including Hawaii, I was able to converse with all sorts of people about the work Vinland does in substance use disorder, specializing in working with those with TBIs and other cognitive deficits. To put it lightly, minds were blown. Many people I met with had never heard of such a combination! Dr. Erwin Concepcion, the clinical services director in the Minnesota Department of Human Services Direct Care and Treatment Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment Services Division, presented on Mental Health and Traumatic Brain Injuries, tying in substance use disorder and the prevalence of it within the TBI population, and many attendees were on the edge of their seats. The discussions afterwards highlighted the novelty this presented for many in the audience.



*Everyone could use a little unicorn in their lives! Molly encountered one at the Walk for Recovery.*



Vinland was also a sponsor of the annual Minnesota Alliance on Problem Gambling conference this month, with our two outpatient problem gambling counselors also in attendance. This was immediately followed by our sponsorship of the Criminal Justice Mental Health Summit put on by Eckberg Lammers Law Enforcement Training Academy & Consulting. This summit provides a really unique combination of law enforcement, medical providers, prosecutors, social workers, and other criminal justice professionals as attendees who get together in the same room and learn about the importance of mental health considerations and collaboration with each other to help them and the people they serve in their daily work. Minnesota Attorney General, Keith Ellison, helped open the conference and the keynote presenter was Travis Howze, U.S. Marine Corps veteran, former police officer, retired firefighter, speaker, and author. He focuses on the need for mental health help in all of these fields, and shares his own journey with PTSD and the price he paid for not getting help when he needed it. Really powerful stuff. He also has a podcast called “Create Your Own Light.” We are so grateful for the exclusive invite from our friend, Imran Ali, who is an attorney and senior director of training, consulting and investigative services. We were thrilled to be able to sponsor and participate, as the speakers, presentations and participants are absolutely top-notch.

The DHS TBI Advisory Committee is another important connection for Vinland. I just began my second four-year term as part of this committee and will fulfill the role of vice chair this year, which is an honor and a challenge. Here is a quick history of this committee:

- In 1997, Governor Arne Carlson designated the DHS TBI Advisory Committee as the state TBI advisory council. All members are appointed by the DHS Commissioner, and Vinland has always had a seat.
- The Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Committee provides recommendations to DHS on program development and issues concerning the health and human services needs of people with traumatic brain injuries (Minnesota Statutes, section 256B.093). <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/services/home-community/contact-us/tbi-advisory.jsp>.

The work done by this committee has helped implement important interventions on behalf of those in Minnesota living with a traumatic brain injury, such as the recent implementation of an intake TBI screening process with the Department of Corrections that is

time-efficient and capable of identifying those offenders who are at increased risk for adverse health effects due to sustaining a TBI.

This committee also helped implement the consistent use of the HELPS brain injury screening tool during all MnCHOICES 2.0 screenings to increase the recognition of traumatic brain injury among individuals participating in assessments for potential support services from the Department of Human Services, and thereby better meeting the needs of individuals with brain injuries.

There are *years* of similar accomplishments from this committee before my time that I don’t have the space to mention. It’s more work than I could have possibly imagined, but so very worth it.



*Peer Recovery Specialist Steve Applin, CPRS is part of a dinosaur-unicorn sandwich, at the Walk for Recovery.*

Sprinkled amidst all this activity, Vinland has been presenting to for various treatment and veteran court staff across the state on “Working with Those with TBIs and Substance Use Disorders,” with the latest being the Family Healing to Wellness Court, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Judicial Branch of Tribal Government in Onamia, Minnesota. I have enjoyed meeting those in the field of corrections who are dedicated to truly helping those who need it. I am honored to play a small role in helping fill some of the gaps when it comes

to identifying those with TBIs and cognitive deficits. Reach out to me if you feel your team, treatment center or court staff could benefit from this free, one-hour presentation, as the more education we get out there regarding TBIs and SUD and/or those who are justice-involved, the easier it can be for each individual organization to better assist these clients.

Speaking of justice-involved people, in mid-October I’ll be presenting at the Minnesota Corrections Association Conference at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center, following our sponsorship in the annual St. Louis County Health and Human Services Conference at that same location two weeks prior! It’s a busy time, and I’m burning a lot of rubber on Minnesota roads, but Vinland is thriving all around, and I think I speak for everyone here when I say we are grateful to be doing the work we all do, every day. **Happy Autumn!**

# THERAPEUTIC FITNESS

*Now for the 'popular kids' among us...the place where our clients go up to three hours per day to get one-on-one therapeutic exercise support, feel better and rock out, instead of talking about deeper stuff like grief and loss, family systems and harms we may have caused!*

*Fitness and Wellness Assistant, Kirsten Dager*



Upon entry to Vinland, the therapeutic exercise team conducts a functional musculoskeletal assessment on each new client, including lumbar range of motion, upper body strength, lower body strength, balance, body fat percentage, perception of physical ability and subjective pain level. There are also two brain-speed tests.

They also go through a health history, including any past injuries or physical limitations. Many of the clients have a chronic pain history. They talk about treatment history, motivation for treatment and specific goals they have for the therapeutic exercise programming.

For example, someone who uses a wheelchair, walker or cane might want to work on balance and strength to try to achieve physical independence. If a client has a specific shoulder dysfunction, they will work on a shoulder protocol designed to improve range of motion and strength, with the goal of getting back to 100%.

With this information, they also gain insight into what other areas of the body need attention. The physiologists create a personalized therapeutic exercise plan that the client works on with the exercise staff on a daily basis to help achieve their personal goals. The basis of this plan includes the words, "Safe, slow and gentle, listening to the pain." Most clients are amazed at the progress they make with this method, erroneously believing they need heavy weights to gain muscle mass, when in fact, being taught the *correct* way to lift and the correct number of repetitions has most of our clients leaving in the best shape of their lives. It feels (to them) like a true miracle, and the gratitude is immense.

Upon graduation, they go through the post-testing process, which repeats all the testing done at the beginning. Most importantly, they report improved pain levels, increased strength, lower body fat percentages, improved brain speed and a general feeling of improved overall health which helps them launch into their Recovery, post-Vinland!

All clients are encouraged to continue with their exercise program and the nutrition information they received (to make better food choices) as part of their Recovery.

Clients receive a scholarship letter for the YMCA, which can help in securing a membership.

Exercise staff contact information goes to each client for questions or concerns in the future or to simply check in with the exercise staff to let them know how they're doing.

*Editor's Note:*

*Vinland does not receive compensation from insurance or state plans for this mandatory, daily, one-hour fitness class. We know that the two things that have been proven to help heal a brain injury are 1. Therapeutic exercise and 2. Sleep. Because of research conducted within the field of brain injury science, combined with our own our expertise and experience, we recognize the undeniable importance of fitness being a full partner within our SUD program, making us unique in this realm.*

## **Introduction to Kirsten, our new(ish) Fitness and Wellness Assistant**

Hello, my name is Kirsten Dager and I started as the Fitness and Wellness assistant at Vinland on Nov. 1, 2022. I graduated from the University of Minnesota, Duluth (UMD) with a bachelor's degree in exercise science, while also competing on the UMD women's soccer team.

My first impression upon arriving at Vinland was noticing the team of thoughtful, caring, and passionate staff that shows up and gives their best every day in an effort to assist each client. I really enjoy working alongside Jeff Willert, director of therapeutic exercise, to learn the ins and outs of Vinland's very unique therapeutic exercise program.

The most rewarding thing about my work here is seeing the healthy changes each client makes throughout their entire stay at Vinland. I can truly say I have had such a wonderful first year and am so grateful to have the opportunity to be part of the team!



# THERAPEUTIC FITNESS FEEDBACK

*Jeff and Kirsten get the best notes from our clients!*

## Did the program meet your fitness and wellness goals?

- Above and beyond! I'm in the best shape I've been in for the past 20 years!
- Yes—best fitness program ever!
- Yes, I loved the personal trainers. They taught us not to push ourselves so that we don't hurt ourselves.
- This went beyond my regular fitness routine, never this rigorous. I loved it! But I can't wait to get on my own "real" bike and see MORE countryside.
- Yes, for sure.

## What did you like best about the program?

- The emphasis that Vinland puts on physical fitness as a *part* of their treatment plan! Also, Jeff and Kirsten's guidance and encouragement, and the many extra "bonus hours" the center is open for us to be able to blow off steam.
- The fitness instructors are awesome. And I loved that fitness is actually one of our "classes" in treatment—part of our daily schedule!
- How centered on our healthcare y'all are. Helping us to get healthier/stronger with what we are physically capable of doing.
- I liked that Vinland Center makes therapeutic exercise a primary part of the treatment program. It is a HUGE support for mental health/Recovery.
- The equipment was very adequate, clean, and the instructors are great.
- That I gained good (muscle) weight and learned new ways to be healthier.
- Guidance and precautionary advice. It seemed like they had every possible resistance device!
- Self-esteem, better sleep, goal setting, toxin releases. Created a domino effect into healthier eating/living.
- The outstanding instructors.
- Needs being addressed instantly, and all questions being answered.

- The program was closely monitored and countered around my needs. They increased my workouts gradually and safely.
- The know-how to keep me working out with my rib injury!
- They made it FUN and they taught me about nutrition for healthy living and literally rebuilt my body!
- The personal attention and help that I received from Kirsten and Jeff—it not only improved my health but also my depression.
- All of the help with everything workout-wise, and they are always so friendly.
- The extra "bonus" classes that are offered! Plus, actually seeing physical results within one week of starting therapeutic exercise really pushed me to keep going. Plus, Jeff's nutrition class was very informative.

## How did you hear about Vinland?

- After I got my TBI, I received a professional recommendation in 2008. It took me a while to finally be ready to come here...
- From the detox program at the Duluth Center for Alcohol and Drug Treatment (CADT).
- Ramsey County detox.
- My older brother came here a long time ago.
- Molly from Vinland came to present at the Anoka County Jail.
- Duluth detox.
- Someone at the jail I was in.
- Friend I was in jail with, then a flyer that was at 1800 Chicago detox.
- Through Unity Hospital.
- A man I met from Burkwood Treatment Center.
- Through my therapist.
- An aunt of mine found it through doing research.
- At an AA meeting.
- Online through my insurance company.
- From 1800 Chicago detox—they knew of my TBI.

- Through another outpatient treatment program.
- My mother.
- The Center for Drug and Alcohol Treatment (Duluth).
- Counselor from Nuway in St. Cloud.
- While in the hospital after suffering a brain injury.
- I first heard about Vinland from a case worker at Justice Point (Liz). She oversaw my conditional release for a disorderly conduct charge.
- Community Behavioral Health Hospital in Bemidji.
- From my counselor at Cedar Ridge while we were discussing my TBIs.
- Jennifer at Douglas County Social Services.
- From a friend who came here last November. I visited him twice while he was here and loved the place then!

## Overall, how would you rate Vinland's TEP?

- 10/10. I learned the importance of "Iron Therapy" as part of my Recovery from Jeff and Kirsten. I haven't felt this good mentally and physically in years. I owe it all to Vinland and the Vinland staff!
- I never thought it could be this great. All I knew was that there was a pretty extensive gym, but having you guys there to guide us in getting healthy and strong is amazing.
- This was the best program for me because of the constant one-on-one attention to the exercise program. I (personally) made over 1,000 minutes in cardio exercise!
- Extremely well done. Thank you for getting my busted-up body back!
- Fantabulous! It was crucial to my rebirth and Recovery.
- 15 out of 10! Vinland as a whole is incredible. The fitness program is truly above and beyond, and is transformative. Saw it, did it!

**"The body achieves what the mind believes."**

—Napoleon Hill



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## About Vinland National Center

**763.479.3555**

Vinland National Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that enables individuals with multiple disabilities to live productive and fulfilling lives through a whole-person approach that addresses the mind, body and spirit. Vinland's programs meet the complex needs of individuals living with brain injuries, serious and persistent mental illness, learning disabilities and other neurobehavioral disorders. Our primary focus is on substance abuse treatment including mental health services, a renowned therapeutic exercise program, family programming, outpatient services and permanent, supportive housing for adults with disabilities in recovery from substance use disorder.

## *Earn CEUs with Vinland's Online Webinar Library*

You can watch recorded webinars on Vinland's website and earn CEUs for free. Webinar topics include substance abuse treatment for individuals with cognitive impairments, dual diagnosis, therapeutic exercise, and mindfulness meditation. Vinland offers free webinars as a way to share our expertise with other health care professionals.

➔ To view recorded webinars, visit [VINLANDCENTER.ORG/EVENTS](https://VINLANDCENTER.ORG/EVENTS)

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