

# EDNA NEWS

## The Edna House Newsletter



*A  
Letter  
From The  
Executive  
Director*

It all began in a little white house with a covered front porch on West 128<sup>th</sup> Street in Cleveland. The food was meager, only coming from donations and at the time, so few knew about the needs of the ladies in that house. A woman's bed might be a couch or a reclining chair, but comfort wasn't the most important consideration. In those days, in the beginning, there was no place that would or really could just open its doors for a woman who suffered from alcoholism or drug addiction. The cost of treatment was beyond reach for most and any pathway to recovery seemed obscured and fraught with difficulty. So, when The Edna House first opened, in that little white house, all those involved knew something special was happening.

The initial caregivers came from women travelling their own road of recovery. They would rotate nights, shepherding these women through one of the most difficult journeys anyone can take. With the help of Jack Mulhall, Erin Gibbons Becker, Nancy O'Donnell, Jane Bennett and Debbie Ortgies (to name a few) the first house was founded and soon would overflow. In no time at all, the residents flooded into the small single-family home, quickly overwhelming the space needed to accommodate all the women who flocked towards a chance to change their lives. Soon The Edna House would outgrow the confines of that single-family home and for a short time it was moved to a duplex not far away, but that too was quickly overflowing.

Shortly after it began, it became clear the need was great, and the community was willing to help. Additional space was found in the former convent of St. Colman parish where there was enough space to house many more women. It was here that The Edna House had found it's forever home. I look back at the beginning because it is so important to remember where we came from so we can stay true to the path we are traveling together. This year marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Edna House and our story inspires and guides me in my decisions as its Director.



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I want to highlight some events that stand out in my mind from 2019. I doubt the "Founding Mothers" ever envisioned a St. Patrick's fundraiser with 800 people in attendance, all in support of the mission. This mass of people came together, broke bread and enjoyed an evening of fun where prizes were won, faces were painted, and families got to spend time with their loved ones, loved ones who were now sober and dedicated to a new life. Over the summer, with an emphasis on building teamwork and fostering comradery, the ladies participated in softball tournaments and even went on to win the tournament at Nike Park! We then ushered in the fall with a successful 5K race at Edgewater where over 300 people participated while raising awareness of our cause.

As we enter this holiday season, I can't help but look back and take measure of just how far we've come, not just in the past year but from the very beginning. I can think of no better anniversary present than the completed purchase of the convent and school building from St. Colman's parish. We now can remodel the convent which is in desperate need of repair. We then will renovate the school building to provide suites for longer term sober living on the second floor while using the first floor for education and programming. Our emphasis will be as it always was, to provide a safe and dignified environment where a woman can come and focus on her recovery so she may return to her family and community sober and strong. Over the years to come, with your assistance, we will build and strengthen The Edna House Campus.

*Jenn Lasky*  
**Executive Director  
The Edna House**

# Alumnae Spotlight

## Edna House Alumnae

### Mission Statement

We, The Edna House Alumnae, seek to be part of the solution. We aim to serve The Edna House and her residents while creating a lifelong Sisterhood through meaningful engagement. By volunteering our resources, we make a continued commitment to give freely that which was given to us. We believe in recovery, new beginnings, and second chances.

When I walked into The Edna House in 2017, hopeless, broken, and spiritually bankrupt, I didn't know that I wanted to be sober. I did know that I didn't want to live the way I had been for most of my life. I was going to try a different way, and for the first time ever, I wasn't going to be the one to direct it. Being newly sober and emotionally immature, I was given very simple guidelines. Attending groups, AA meetings, a daily chore, and finding a sponsor were my only responsibilities. Most of the women who took time out of their day to facilitate groups or pick me up for a nightly meeting were alumnae of The Edna House. At some point, they had each sat exactly where I was sitting (literally and figuratively). I watched these women selflessly give back, that which was so freely given to them. I admired their attitudes and outlook on life, how they handled situations, and put others before themselves. They shared with me their experiences and elaborated on how they felt, things they'd done, and where they are today, showing me that I wasn't alone. What they shared, I knew could only be illustrated by someone who had been where I was; who was at one time broken, just like me. These women were no longer broken. They trusted in the process and found a Power greater than themselves who had restored them to sanity. That was all of the "proof" that I needed. I was watching with my own two eyes, a complete psychic change. So I did what they did; I took their suggestions, whether it made sense to me or not. I adhered to a simple model of living, and that little bit of hope that the alumnae gave me eventually turned into faith. That faith grew stronger as I trudged this road. The alumnae taught me how to love. They loved me before I could love myself, and loving others taught me how to love myself.

## Edna House Alumnae Officers:

Jess S., President  
Sabrina B., Vice President  
Meagan W., Treasurer  
Lyndsay W., Secretary

Together, The Edna Alumnae Association aim to uphold the mission statement of the house and to give the women who reside at Edna the same love and dedication that we were given when we first arrived. We facilitate groups, take women to AA meetings, and sponsor them when asked, sharing our experience, strength, and hope. We take the residents on quarterly outings and meet once a month to discuss said outings and other ways to serve The Edna House. The purpose of the outings is for the residents and alumnae to get to know each other. For the alumnae to show the residents that life is beautiful and fun with other sober women that we are making friends with. We've went to the Cleveland Museum of Art, escape rooms, ice skating, beach outings, the zoo, A Christmas Story House and other fun activities. When new residents are admitted, they're assigned an "Alumna Buddy" to help that new woman feel welcomed, to show her that she is "home".

The Edna House brought me to Alcoholics Anonymous, which brought me to develop a relationship with a Power greater than myself, and to continue to grow in that relationship, as well in relationships with others. Being an alumna of The Edna House means more to me than any frothy label. It means being part of the solution. It means conducting myself as a respectable woman and representing Edna in the fashion she has taught me. It means having integrity; doing the right thing even when no one is watching. It is a community, a sisterhood, a way of life, not just for me, but for all of those I come into contact with. It's seeking to give, rather than to receive, and to love rather than to be loved. It means carrying the message and practicing the AA principles in all of my affairs.

*Jess Saker*

**President**

**Edna Alumnae Association**

December, 2019



## COMMUNITY FOOD DONATIONS

By Sarah E. Murphy

### *Where Does the Food Come From?*

On any given day, we are asked, “How do you feed all those women every day?” Everyone asks this question and wants to know how it’s done and where the food comes from? Thanksgiving seems like a perfect time to say thank you and share with you where all the food comes from. Simply put, it’s with the help of the community. Because of the community, we don’t have grocery bills.

Every Friday, a couple of our ladies grab the pull-cart and drive down to the West Side Market. We already know what stands to go to, as many of these kind folks have been donating for years. As we walk in, the vendors recognize The Edna ladies and are calling out to us from across the busy market. There’s a sense of home here, as Nina Coleman, owner of Meister Foods, is one of our proud alumnae, and many of our other ladies have worked there over the years. They generously share their products with us, from bread to meat and fish and chicken, dairy products, and fruits and vegetables. On a recent trip, we had an overflow of goods; we couldn’t even fit all the food in our pull-cart thanks to the kindness of our friends at the market.

Across town we stop at Ohio City Pasta for fresh pasta, and Kocian Meats for our weekly corndogs, potatoes, and butter. One of Edna’s very first alumnae, Flossie, still works at Kocian’s, and seeing her smile each week is an inspiration and proof to all of us, that we do recover!

During the week, we receive donations from visitors in the community like Jim and Bill who stop by with food and fresh flowers from Earth Fare; we receive pastries from a local bakery; and we have a family or two who donate fresh meat monthly for our ladies to cook. That’s right, our ladies do all the cooking. Lunch and dinner are prepared in our little kitchen and the women eat together twice a day. Three residents have the daily chore of cooking for two weeks. Occasionally, organizations or church groups donate prepared sandwiches and hot food, as well as leftovers from parties and weddings which is a treat to the cooks to get a night off.

When it is time to eat, we sit at the dining room table and pray and laugh and eat together as a family. It’s more than just food being cooked. It’s one woman helping another, showing her the ropes and teaching her how to cook something nutritious or sharing a family recipe. There’s a lot of heart that goes into the meals prepared in our busy little kitchen. As the year winds down, The Edna House residents would like to thank all of the wonderful people who believe in them and support them with food donations. Thank you for helping us provide nutritious meals, cooking skills, and life lessons to our ladies. After all these years, you continue to help us and are a part of our daily journey. Words may not be able to express our gratitude, but we hope to do so by the lives we get to live today.



P.O. Box 602686, Cleveland, OH 44102

Check us out at [ednahouse.org](http://ednahouse.org) and like us on facebook for event notices!

## SAVE THE DATE

- Annual Open House  
Saturday, January 11, 2020  
from 4:00-7:00 p.m.
- Annual St. Patrick's Day  
Fundraiser, Saturday,  
March 21, 2020
- The Race to Recovery at  
Edgewater Park Sunday,  
October 4, 2020

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Treg Balding, Expansion & Fund Raising Committees  
Ericka Bazzo, Facilities Committee  
Erin Becker, Chair of the Board  
Jane Bennett, Founder  
Bill Denihan, Development Committee  
Bill Dillingham, Chair-Facilities Committee  
Taylor Evans, Treasurer & Chair-Finance Committee  
Bill Gibbons, Governance & Facilities Committees  
Chris Gibbons, Chair-House Resident Programs Committee  
Scott Hamilton, Fundraising Committee  
Kate Hubben, Secretary & Chair-Governance Committee  
Shelley Keller, Chair-Governance Committee  
Sherrie Miday, Governance Committee  
Katie O'Toole Smith, Chair-Development Committee  
Jess Saker, Chair-Alumni Board  
Toni Wick, Facilities Committee