

THEY SAVED MY LIFE...cont'd

...hand to shake it and welcome him. He thought someone had called ahead to set this up. He sat at the back of the room wondering how to escape without being noticed.

Past escapes from many mental institutions came to mind... but he couldn't see a way out now. Much to his surprise, the person who was chairing the meeting was an old drinking and using buddy. He could hardly believe this was the same guy. Frank was smiling, confident and looked peaceful. Nothing like he was. He visited Brian in detox, and helped him to get into ARID House in Fort Erie.

ARID House turned out to be just what he needed to get his life together. "I was given freedom, good nourishment, a stable home.

Many times I would talk to the counsellor about everyday stuff." This is where he first began to see that he was capable of trusting people again.



"I went to as many meetings as I could get to, including all the ARID House meetings." He went fishing with the boys and started volunteering in the community. Interacting taught him to live together, work together, laugh together and settle differences together.

That same friend became his sponsor.

They went to meetings and on long car rides to talk.

Brian then moved in with his sponsor and his family until he could get his own apartment.

Up until this time his family had disowned him. Though now, he has a great relationship with his sister, saying, "I have a new look on life."

Brian returned to school and will graduate in June with his P.S.W.

Before he came in, his doctor told him he had six months to live as a result of his drinking and drugging. His health is now quickly returning. When asked how he would sum up his experience at ARID, he replies, "They saved my life! I would have been dead long ago if I hadn't gone there!"

A TRULY UNIQUE CONCEPT

Jim M. moved from Toronto to Niagara about four years ago. His background was Bay Street, various volunteer work in the GTA, as well as being a Counsellor at Renascent treatment center. After meeting with one of the co-founders of ARID House at an AA meeting he was asked if he was interested in volunteering. He gladly accepted, and in December 2003 he began chairing the in-house AA meeting at the Thorold facility.

Soon after that he was approached by the Vice-Chairman to conduct a feasibility study for the Board. This encompassed discovering where ARID was today and to explore future possibilities within their mandate.

During the performance of this exercise Jim did 26 follow-up interviews with former residents. He found that "ARID offers a unique and essential service to the Niagara Region and beyond. I've seen some amazing changes in the guys that have come out of ARID. How they share, the changes in their thinking and a profound alteration in their reaction to life."

In these interviews he noted that the alumni really appreciated the safe, home-like atmosphere and non-institutional setting. It gave them an introduction to AA meetings and a chance at recovery with dignity.

Jim feels a sense of fulfillment in his association with ARID House. He says, "It has given me a chance to give back what was freely given to me."

Jim currently sits on the Advisory Board, continues to chair in-house weekly AA meetings and is involved in ongoing ARID affairs.

Jim has recently celebrated 35 years of sobriety.

JOIN THE CAUSE: BECOME AN ARID PARTNER

A great way to support ARID is to Partner with us. We started the ARID Partner Program to help cover operating shortfalls caused by declining Bingo revenues. Every dollar we collect goes to providing a safe supportive place where alcoholics and addicts can start their road to recovery with dignity.

Becoming a partner is easy - simply agree to contribute \$1 a day (less than the cost of a small coffee) to ARID Group Homes. Your commitment is especially important right now. Our Trillium Grant is partly con-

tingent on signing up 100 partners over the next three years - so every new partnership contribution is effectively matched by Trillium funding.

Individuals and businesses are eligible to become partners, and the contribution can be made as a one-time gift or as a monthly debit to your Visa or MasterCard account.

Want to know more? Just call or e-mail us and we'll have someone get in touch. Your contribution will help save lives and build a better community.

**ARID** GROUP HOMES NIAGARA is a Canadian Registered Charity #0612085-57-16 | [www.aridhomes.org](http://www.aridhomes.org)

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