He made us laugh and sing and changed our day with the funny things he’d say. He was witty and clever and could make you smile whenever you passed his way. He was homeless, toothless, and didn’t have a dime, but making you laugh was his only true crime. It was hard to believe that he wasn’t well, because of the jokes and tales he’d always tell. We’d give him money and sometimes food hoping to make him whole. But he’d outdo us each and every time, as he’d bring laughter to our soul. He’s gone now, we miss him but he’s still here … every time we tell a joke and laugh from ear to ear.
Editor's Note

It has been said that laughter is the best medicine, and this is often very true. Humor can change a mood, chase away gloom and give a different perspective. It is something we often take for granted in our lives and may not think about and/or realize its true power. I believe we need it the same way we need air, food, and water. As a human possession, it separates us from other creatures as we laugh and have fun. For this issue, let’s have some fun as we explore and exhibit “humor” on the pages of Expressions in Recovery.

Gil Gadson, Editor

Please send your story ideas to bit.ly/EIRSubmissions

It is the mission of Expressions in Recovery to promote hope, faith and a belief that together in this journey of healing and growth, of recovery and resilience anything we strive to achieve is possible.

To facilitate this mission, this newsletter—your newsletter was created. This forum was created by and for those in recovery to give a voice to our concerns, hopes and talents.

Rules for Submission
If you are interested in submitting a story, commentary, and/or poetry for inclusion in our next issue, please use the online submission form: bit.ly/EIRSubmissions

Art, poetry, prose, true or fictional stories are welcome. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide hope, faith and information. In keeping with the spirit of this endeavor all contributions must be free from profanity and vulgarity.

Resources
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255
Mental Health Crisis Line 215-685-6440
Domestic Violence 866-723-3014
Protective Services 877-401-8835
Philadelphia Recovery Community Center 215-223-7700

VOLUME 21, 2016
To view current and past issues visit www.DBHIDS.org/multimedia#EIR
I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT HUMOR, but there was a time where there was no laughter, there was no joy and I was just existing. I even envied those who laughed and smiled because I couldn't. They say that misery loves company, and I was a prime example. One day, someone with a good heart and patience who cared said to me, “Do you know that it takes more face muscles to frown than it does to smile?” That statement made me take a look at myself and get honest as to why I didn't smile or laugh. Once I started to watch others laugh and have real fun just being human, I realized that I could laugh, too. Gratitude entered my life as I realized that others were in much worse situations than me and I learned about being in service to others, and the joy it can bring as I became a better person and started to love myself. These days, I laugh, I have fun, I dance, and there are actually people who always stop me and ask me to flash my smile. A number of people have told me that I have an infectious smile and that it makes them smile. These days I can be silly and break out in a dance in a heartbeat. I love music and I'm not shy. These days … I start the party!

Stacy Little Henry

MY SON

When it comes to humor I think about my son. I can have a very stressful day but as soon as I walk in the door he's right there smiling at me, and always does something that makes me laugh. No matter how hard my day was my son always makes it better by making me smile and laugh. He makes faces on purpose, and sometimes he's just being himself and it's funny. I can't live without humor; I need it, and for me humor is healthy and good for my soul.

Louis Soto

FREEDOM

Humor to me is freedom. When I laugh, it frees me from myself and in that moment I can deal with whatever comes my way. Like many others, I have been through some very difficult times in my life. There have been times when I wanted to give up or was just plain tired, and then something would happen that would change my perspective and I'd be able to keep going. That something would usually be something humorous. Laughing is medicine. And anything that can make me feel free is the best medicine for me.

Kathy Liggins

FUN, PERIOD

Humor to me is just fun. When my creator wakes me in the morning, I'm grateful for another day so I smile. Each and every day is precious and it's up to us and in our power to feel this way. I see every day as a gift and a blessing so how can I not be happy? A good laugh can get you through just about everything with friends, family, work, and just life in general. We gotta' deal with bills, responsibilities, and many other things, but gratitude won't let me worry. I do what I can, keep it moving, and try to have a little fun and humor each and every day. Without a joke or a smile, my day is never complete. Humor is a part of me and I'll never be without it.

Twin

HERE AND NOW

I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT HUMOR

I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT

I am lifeless without humor. To keep my wellness in tack, I need humor every day. We all gotta' deal with a lot of unwanted things in life and humor helps us get past these things. Some realities I can't change, and this can be frustrating, but with humor, I can communicate. I can get along, .... I can cope. I reach people and deliver better messages with humor, and I'm smiling right now .... hoping that someone else somewhere is smiling too.

Terrica Farrell

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Twin
PETEY
There was a man who hung out in front of the neighborhood supermarket. Every time I saw him he had been drinking. He was always respectful and never caused trouble. We all loved him because he was hilarious and had a way of making everyone's day a little better through humor. He'd direct the parking lot traffic, give unsolicited advice, do his special dance, and most of all make fun of himself and those foolish enough to try and tease or belittle him. He did all this without hurting or annoying anyone. A teenager once asked him why he stayed drunk all the time. He joked that he was drunk when he proposed to his wife and when he woke up sober and saw her the next morning, he knew he'd be drunk the rest of his life; we laughed until we cried. His name was Petey. We never knew his last name. It was said that he was a Vietnam vet and that after his wife died he was never the same. However, all Petey ever did was make others laugh and smile; that was his gift. To this day when we tell a good joke, we called it a "Petey" and then we laugh the way he taught us to.

Kareem Taylor

LAUGHTER
People say I'm always laughing. What they don't know is what I've been through in my life. I've lost two brothers, a son, and many close acquaintances. I've seen and been through some of the most horrible things a person can imagine, but I'm still here. Life still shows up and hard times still may come but I have learned the true meaning of gratitude and how to count my blessings — and humor empowers me. Sometimes I laugh to keep from crying. I laugh when I feel helpless. I laugh to take away anger, and when I'm moody or unhappy. I laugh at myself and the foolishness of worrying about things you cannot change.
I live by the Serenity Prayer and what it truly means. I've learned to take it apart to get to the real meaning and purpose of it, which is freedom. We can't let life get us down to the point that we feel helpless and hopeless. As long as we breathe, we still got a chance, and in the middle of it all I'm gonna laugh as much as I can and feel free. And that is what laughter and humor is to me ... its freedom.

Monique Williams

ONE OF MY BEST MEMORIES ABOUT MY UNCLE KENNY
My uncle Kenny missed his calling. At family get-togethers, once Uncle Kenny got him a few drinks, he'd jump up and demand that everyone get up to dance. He would go around the room and wouldn't let anyone just sit there. He broke a lot of people out of being shy. The room would be full of laughter and there was no such thing as a get-together without Uncle Kenny.
We'd all get excited because to watch Uncle Kenny dance was a thing to see. He never did the same thing twice except the one move that always had us on the floor laughing until we cried. He'd dance moving backwards away from you and then slide back up to you real close, get in your face and say, "Whatcha 'gon' do wit dat huh?" and quickly dance away with the most serious look on his face.
Uncle Kenny is gone now, but to this day at every family get-together, we get up and all do the "Uncle Kenny," and everyone ends up laughing our butts off. When I think of humor, I think of Uncle Kenny doing his dance.

Donna Kenny
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN YOUR SMILE?
I remember you ... when you first came.
So serious, as you looked around ... wondering if this was a game.
Then I heard you speak, and got a glimpse of your mind.
That made me sure there was more I would find.
We sat and talked and began to flow, and there's something I have to ask something I need to know: “Have you ever seen your smile?”
It lit up the room.
The sun was on your face as you smiled at me, I left this place I went with you inside my mind we took a walk and began to find a place to sit for a little while then I turned to you ... and said: “Have you ever seen your smile?”
This morning I prayed as I always do. I added a prayer ... that prayer was for you. I prayed that your smile will never end ... I thanked him for the sunshine we always sends.
Then I sat down and reminisced for a little while And I ask you again: “Have you ever seen your smile?”
I watch the door waiting for you to come ... I care for them all but you're a special one. Nervously, I wait knowing you'll come soon and smile that smile that lights up the room.
You make me smile like a little child but I must know ... “Have you ever seen your smile?”

I SEND YOU ME...
I have no magic wand but I send the magic of my heart and care.
I send the thought of goodwill and wishes of a better day.
I send the belief that God sees you ... and has you in his hands, loving you and never giving more than you can bear.
I send the heart of a sometimes-silly friend who loves laughter and the smile of a child.
I send the sunshine God gave to me today ... on wings unlike Icarus that can never melt but only soar on the winds of belief and faith.
And I send a reminder of who you are... an earthly angel, a vanguard, a sentinel, a teacher and motivator, and a wordsmith who with a few lines can change the day.
I send you the thought that I think of you, today, yesterday and looking forward to tomorrow.
I send you me.

Layla Riley

THE WAY WE USED TO...
I remember we used to like to breathe early in the morning – when the air was new and populated by morning creatures, signaling another welcome dawn.
When cornflakes and Cheerios were fun as we thought rushing about the crush at school. The way we used to ... I remember just wanting to hold her hand or sit next to her ... and it was enough for the day.
A first kiss ... lost in the recollection for days following ... and it was enough.
I remember parties where music played that only inspired and made you want to dance ... and maybe that first slow, awkward dance where her scent and the smell of her hair left you spinning and intoxicated for days.
I remember stickball, hopscotch, jacks, redlight/greenlight, 1,2,3...G.I. Joe , Barbie dolls, and Easy-Bake Ovens.
I remember the foot races, but not who won and I don't care. The basketball games in the snow with frozen hands, wet feet, and cold cheeks split by smiles outshining the sun. I remember yes ma'am and no ma'am the way we used to say it and the way they deserved it.
I remember when fathers were magicians making things we needed appear, and mothers were angels making us believe in things we could not see, our future, and ourselves. Sometimes we all ate together, food that we prepared after we prayed ... the way we used to.
Yesterday, I saw a child playing with a stick. He was a general in an army of his creation and as he marched, I saw the fertility of his mind, the free imagination unfettered by sophistication and the fearlessness of innocence. He played happily ... the way we used to.

Anonymous
The best comedians often used self-deprecating humor as they poked fun at themselves, while making us feel a little better about ourselves; knowing that not being perfect is really OK.

Humor has a power that can change hearts and minds with a simple joke. A well-known comedian often puts us all at ease while he made black and white laugh together about our differences. It is a medical and scientific fact that stress is the number-one killer and aggressor. It is also a fact that the most instant reliever of stress is humor. We pay to go to have talented people make us laugh. And while we are there for a while we forget about all our problems, get some needed relief and just feel good. We heal better when we can laugh. We gain acceptance when we are powerless in certain situations, and humor is often the catalyst and balm that makes it all easier to alter our perceptions ... find another way and keep moving forward.

I believe humor is a human gift. We are the only creatures on this earth who possess this gift and I think we should use it as often as possible. When we watch children, the fascination is how effortlessly they play and laugh in ways that we have often forgotten how to do.

With the simplest things and their imagination, they are able to experience the true beauty of life as they laugh, smile and play with ease. Our daily responsibilities dictate certain adult actions, protocols and adherence but it is my belief that in the midst of all this we gotta’ remember to laugh, smile, and find the humor of life.

Gil Gadson, Editor
HealthyMindsPhilly.org
A friendly resource to support and improve the wellness of all Philadelphians.

Features include:
• A free, 24/7 online behavioral health screening
• Sign up for a free Mental Health First Aid training to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of mental illness or substance use challenges

Office of Behavioral Health Services
CBH Member Services 888-545-2600
Behavioral health services for Medicaid recipients

BHSI (Behavioral Health Special Initiative) 215-546-1200
Addiction services for the uninsured and underinsured

Phila. Recovery Community Center 215-223-7700
Offers services that help people deal with their addictions in a safe and supportive community-based setting

DBHIDS.org/NetworkofCare
An online, one-stop-shop resource guide for people interested in seeking behavioral health services.

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LOCATE For crisis help in your area.

1. Einstein Medical Center (includes services for children)
   1 Penn Blvd
   Germantown Comm. Cntr
   215-951-8300

2. Mercy Hospital
   501 S. 54th St
   215-748-9525

3. Pennsylvania Hospital
   (Hill-Mercer)
   8th and Locust St
   215-829-5433

4. Temple/Episcopal Hospital
   100 E. Lehigh Ave
   215-707-2577

5. Friends Hospital
   4641 Roosevelt Blvd
   215-831-2600

DISCOVER
The Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) offers resources, services, and advocacy through a strong partnership with a network of healthcare providers to help people, whether they are uninsured or underinsured, lead a fulfilling life in a supportive community free of stigma.

We believe everyone has a right to realize their fullest potential to determine their own destiny within their community, fully recover from mental illness or addiction, and use strength and resilience to overcome adversity.

CONNECT DBHIDS: 📲 888-545-2600
www.DBHIDS.org