



## LAW STUDENTS IN RECOVERY

Law school is stressful. Every lawyer remembers the challenges of his or her first year of law school. Law students in recovery face these arduous demands plus the challenges of remaining in recovery.

My experience was at the University of Oregon, where three years ago I began law school at age 40. Although I had more than 10 years of sobriety at that time, the considerable stress inherent in a cross-country move; leaving friends, family, and support groups behind; and beginning graduate studies presented a formidable undertaking.

Imagine my surprise when, a mere few weeks into classes, a classmate made a comment that I understood to indicate her involvement in AA. I made a casual comment about my personal situation and before I knew it she was introducing me to four other students in my class section who were in recovery.

This was early in my first year of school. Our stress and anxiety were at the highest possible levels, yet now I had a group of peers with whom I spent many hours every day, people who could understand how I might be feeling and reacting – in ways that might be significantly different from most of our classmates. Soon we forged a bond that extended into our daily interaction at school. With recovery time ranging from a few years to over a decade, we were able to form a recovery community that supported each other during class time and after hours as well. In addition, a Eugene attorney and U of O alum provided much support and encouragement to members of the group – including inviting us to attend weekly 12-step meetings in his office.

We became a close bunch during that first year, but we became even closer during our second and third years at U of O Law. Even though we were no longer in every class together, we saw each other several times daily, stayed in touch by email, and attended the weekly Eugene lawyers' meeting as a

group. In time, we were able to do some outreach to other students, with the help of the administration and the Dean of Student Affairs. It was particularly rewarding to welcome other students who were thinking about addiction issues, comfort them, and invite them to become part of our group. In the words of one student:

*These friends have helped me maintain a sense of balance, remembering that recovery must be a priority if I want to get through law school with a sense of sanity and well being. That's invaluable when the stress of law school causes people to isolate and lose sight of what's truly important. Having access to friends in recovery reminds me that people with past addictions can not only get through but also excel in law school. It's inspiring to see my peers remain active in recovery while also hitting the books.*

Law school has been an experience of extremes in both difficulty and reward. Outside of the classroom, I have been introduced to many of the most exceptional people I have met in my life. Several of these people are the ones I have supported and been supported by in our recovery during this arduous endeavor. My life experience has been enriched by these close friends in ways that I had not imagined possible.

There is support for law students in recovery. If you are interested in additional information, contact Meloney Crawford Chadwick at 503-226-1057/1-800-321-6227 or [meloneyc@oaap.org](mailto:meloneyc@oaap.org).

AA Duck Michael