

# RAYS OF HOPE

SPRING 2025



Harbor Hall  
Foundation  
Supporting the mission of Harbor Hall

## “This Path Opened and I’m Excited to Make a Difference”

Harbor Hall is thrilled to announce that Barbara Weston has accepted the role of Chief Executive Officer. She brings a wealth of professional experience as well as deep personal empathy to this position.

“My dad was an alcoholic,” Barbara shares. “As a child, I spent countless hours in support groups and meetings. To be honest, I resented it, and resented him as a result.”

Barbara’s mom, a fiercely independent psychiatric nurse, fascinated Barbara with intriguing stories of her work. Those set the hook for Barbara to pursue a nursing degree. She says, “I did well with nursing, but fell in love with the behavioral health side during my psych rotation.”

When she graduated, she saw an ad for Brighton Hospital, an addiction treatment facility. Her family history cast its shadow over that opportunity. “I knew I would either love it or hate it,” Barbara says. “Fortunately, I loved it.”

She actually loved it 29 years worth. Over that time, Barbara came up through the ranks, first as a staff nurse, then nurse manager, clinical manager, director of clinical operations, and finally hospital administrator.

When a former mentor contacted Barbara about the position at Harbor Hall, she was interested. “My husband and I were living separately during the week because we each had jobs that were hard to replace,” she says. “He lived in Mancelona and I lived in Brighton. Harbor Hall represented an option we had not considered. I came for a visit and immediately felt at home. Both Brighton and Harbor Hall share a similar philosophy about how to achieve effective recovery. Harbor Hall feels familiar philosophically, but also different enough to be exciting and challenging. I am committed to helping patients find another chance at Harbor Hall.”



Barbara knows that recovery is essential for family members, too. “Through work and personal experience, I have realized that families are also sick as a result of this disease,” she shares. “My dad never really accomplished sobriety. Ultimately, he committed suicide. I learned to see my dad in a different light...as a good person with a bad disease that caused destructive behaviors. As a result, I am passionate about helping people understand the disease and provide the support that is so essential.”

“ Substance abuse disorder is a disease. There are no quick fixes. At Harbor Hall, our clients can immerse themselves in healing. That’s important, because to me, recovery is not about learning to quit. It’s about learning not to start using again. That requires time, and the ability to re-form healthy decision making skills. — Barbara Weston, Harbor Hall Chief Executive Officer

# "I Didn't Really Want to Die. I Just Didn't Know How to Live."

Sean grew up in the Detroit area, watching his family model a "live hard, play hard" lifestyle. This approach followed him to Arizona State University. Unfortunately, things didn't quite work out as planned.

"I took a job as a bartender to help pay for school," Sean recalls. "Being behind a bar made it way too easy to get alcohol. For a while, I was a functioning alcoholic. I could do my job, but I couldn't go a day without a drink."

There was no graduation ceremony for Sean. Instead, things became more serious as his drinking habit descended into addiction. "My life got really dark," he confesses. "I was depressed. I started using alcohol as a means of self-destruction. I was literally hoping to drink myself to death."

Harbor Hall Executive Director Barbara Weston says Sean is not alone. "Alcohol by definition is a depressant," she notes. "Although it can create temporary euphoria, it also decreases inhibitions so that the individual is more likely to act impulsively. Someone in the throes of a serious addiction often feels hopeless and as if 'they would all be better off without me.' In the event that you have someone already contemplating suicide, alcohol can be the lethal final ingredient."

Sean's turning point came when he returned to Michigan and realized that he really didn't want to die. He just didn't know how to live.

"I tried Alcoholics Anonymous because I knew I couldn't return to sobriety on my own," he says. "I tried a few different treatment centers, but nothing clicked. It was like I was just going through the motions. There was no real engagement in the process."

Someone at one of those programs referred Sean to Harbor Hall. In December 2019, Sean made the trip to Petoskey and entered residential treatment. "It didn't take long to figure out that I had finally found the answer," Sean shares. "Harbor Hall had the serious, structured and transformative recovery program that I needed but hadn't been able to find."

Sean made Petoskey his home and started to work for the U. S. Postal Service in 2021. He remains actively involved in the Harbor Hall recovery community, giving back to the place that helped him reclaim his life. According to Weston, that's also an important component of recovery. "Giving back to the community is a great way to stay grounded," she observes. "Without social connection, it is easy for the individual to fall back into troublesome thinking patterns that eventually lead back to active addiction."



“

Harbor Hall did a lot more than just help me stop drinking. It helped me rediscover hope and purpose. I found a future I was willing to fight for, and now I'm living it.

Sean



# Ensuring Continuity of Care

If you've ever driven in the mountains, you appreciate guard rails. Peering at the perilous drop on the other side makes you thankful to have a barrier between you and catastrophe.

The Harbor Hall Foundation functions a bit like those guardrails. Through our work with donors like you, we provide funds that help keep services affordable and available. That's critical when there is a challenging path to navigate.

Harbor Hall experienced one of those challenges recently. Many of Harbor Hall's patients are on Medicaid. When it became harder to qualify for coverage, the census dropped briefly and income decreased. However, the expenses didn't drop. The staff didn't change. The buildings didn't close. The Foundation was able to bridge the gap between income and revenue until Harbor Hall navigated this unexpected path.

The recent ice storm provided another example of a potential calamity. Harbor Hall lost power for many days, as did most of the community. Fortunately, there was

no significant storm damage. But there could have been. And damage from falling trees is not cheap to repair, as many homeowners have found out.



"The most important thing we do is ensure continuity of care," says Tim Kepford, Foundation board president. "People come to Harbor Hall when they've reached the bottom. We never want to turn them away because we've had to raise prices to cover unexpected costs."

Harbor Hall residents are expected to pay for their treatment, and that funding covers day-to-day operations. The Foundation provides essential funding for special projects such as renovations and upkeep that exceed the capacity of the competitive rates that are charged.

"Thanks to our donors, we were able to help Harbor Hall get through the federal funding hiccups smoothly, without incurring any debt," Tim said. "No one was turned away. Everyone who came received the help they needed."

## Board of Directors

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Thank you for helping the Foundation provide financial guardrails for Harbor Hall. Your support ensures that unplanned emergencies don't create a barrier to treatment.



**Harbor Hall  
Foundation**  
Supporting the mission of Harbor Hall

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## Simple Ways to Support Harbor Hall



WEEKLY  
**CAR WASH**

If you love a clean car, you can keep things tidy and support Harbor Hall at the same time. **Stop by United Methodist Church** and let the friendly volunteers treat your car to a hand wash and dry.

Your donation will allow Harbor Hall staff to find creative, engaging opportunities that get clients engaged in social and recreational activities off campus.

**EVERY SATURDAY • 11am-4pm**  
1804 E. Mitchell Road, Petoskey



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and making a secure gift.

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