



DECEMBER ALUMNI NEWS

Alumni Spotlight: Vaughn

Clean Date: 4/18/2025

What do you love most about French Creek and Alumni?

What I loved most about French Creek was the feeling of finally not being alone. There was something powerful about building strength and hope alongside people who understood my struggles because they lived them too. We learned to look past the small things that made us different and focused on lifting each other up. That connection changed me. What I love about Alumni is how we never let each other face life alone. Whenever I'm struggling or need guidance, I know I can turn to the group and feel heard. And even if someone doesn't know exactly what to say, they'll still help me find the right direction. That support gives me hope and strength every day.

What advice would you give to newcomers of Alumni?

In the early stages of rebuilding our lives, we sometimes must step back from certain relationships to protect our recovery. My advice is to learn about Alumni. Whether you call, text, or send a message in the group chat, there's always someone ready to support you. Personal struggle or simple conversation—either way, you won't face it alone. This Alumni doesn't just feel like family... it is my family.

What do you do to continue to stay sober?

First, I thank my Higher Power for giving me another day of sobriety. Each morning, I ask for guidance, and I make sure to use the tools I learned along the way. Even the ones that felt silly during treatment have their purpose. Staying busy is key—work, school, hobbies, chores, anything that keeps my mind focused on growth instead of taking that first drink. Every small effort counts.

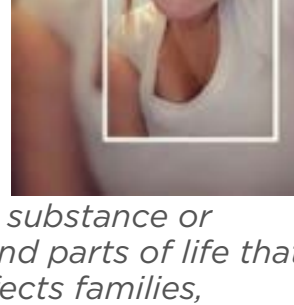
What sober activities have you done so far?

I haven't done too much yet, but the highlight by far was the Alumni gathering in October. I got to meet up with old friends and meet some new ones. We hit LaNova's in Buffalo for pizza and wings—aka the best pizza in all WNY! We talked about everything from daily life to horse racing. Then we headed to Fright world, "America's biggest indoor scream park," where we screamed, laughed, and had one of the most exciting nights of the whole season.

Congratulations to Vaughn on his 7 months of sobriety 🎉 We are incredibly proud of you and grateful to be part of your recovery journey. Your strength and determination inspire us all. Keep shining!

Staff Spotlight: Ashley

With hard work and dedication This month, we are thrilled to highlight Ashley, a remarkable addition to French Creek. As one of our BHA Ashley's kindness and compassion resonate throughout our community, thank you Ashley for being a big key to French Creeks success.



"My name is Ashley LeAnne Potts; I am 31 years old. To tell you a little bit about my story and how by the grace of God I am where I am today, I will start with this; Addiction takes more than most people can see from the outside. It takes up our time, our energy, our health, and our peace of mind. It takes our ability to trust ourselves and to show up fully in our relationships. It can take away opportunities, dreams, and the sense of who we are without substance or behavior. For many, it takes moments we can't get back—promises broken, and parts of life that feel blurred or lost. Addiction doesn't just affect the person who uses it; it affects families, friendships, and our children. For me I had to lose a lot before realizing that there was a way out. I started using at the age of 12, and by 18 I had known life on the inside and for many years I went through jails institutions, and even death. With support of the Women 's and children's program in Erie Pa I was able to start healing, regain my self-worth, and take my life back, one minute at a time. My clean date is April 11, 2023. Surviving and healing in recovery has been a process of rebuilding piece by piece. It meant learning to sit in pain instead of running from it and choosing to face what once felt impossible. Healing did not happen all at once; it came in small moments of clarity, quiet courage, and continued effort. Through it all, I learned that healing is not about forgetting the past but about growing beyond it. I am still becoming, still learning, and still rising—and that is recovery. I have obtained so much, full custody of my two younger children. I have become a Certified Recovery Specialist and am working on my Certified Family Recovery Specialist Certification. I have plans on becoming a substance abuse counselor in the future. Currently I work at French Creek Recovery as a Behavioral Health Technician, and I have so much love and passion in my everyday work. I love giving back what was so freely given to me."



Alumni Event 11/26/2025

Friendsgiving & Ambassador Speakers

Last month, we had a fantastic time at French Creek in Meadville, PA. It was wonderful to spend time with our alumni, everybody had an amazing time, we're grateful for the moments we shared and look forward to seeing you at the next event!

French Creek Christmas Party

Please remember to RSVP



12 Days of Sober Holiday Tips

On the First Day of the Sober Holidays: Set Your Sober Goals

To have a sober holiday, kick off the season by setting clear goals. What do you want to accomplish this holiday season? Whether it's staying sober at your family gathering or saying no to that one party invite, set a goal and track your progress.

On the Second Day of the Sober Holidays: Practice Gratitude

Take a moment to reflect on what you're grateful for, big or small. Gratitude can help you keep a positive mindset, even when things get stressful. Plus, a positive outlook is one of the best tools for maintaining sobriety! This prompts you to reflect on your gratitude's every day, it changes the way you see the world and the habit makes you feel better!

On the Third Day of the Sober Holidays: Find Your Sober Tribe

Surround yourself with a sober support network. Whether it's family, friends, or a group therapy session Remember, you're not alone in this journey, and reaching out to others can provide the encouragement you need.

On the Fourth Day of the Sober Holidays: Have an Exit Plan

Know when it's time to step away. If you're at a party or event that's making you uncomfortable, having a plan to leave early can help you avoid temptation. Whether it's a quick excuse or having your ride already lined up, an exit strategy is key. Just don't try to go up the chimney.

On the Fifth Day of the Sober Holidays: Avoid Triggers

Be aware of situations that might trigger cravings—whether it's certain people, places, or smells. Having a plan in place to navigate these situations will keep you feeling in control and confident. Stay away from the ones who laugh and call you names, don't play their reindeer games!

On the Sixth Day of the Sober Holidays: Keep Busy with Hobbies

Find activities that keep you engaged and distracted. Whether it's a winter hike, baking cookies, or starting a new hobby, staying busy can prevent you from focusing on things that could jeopardize your sobriety. Did you know that an average craving only lasts about 20 minutes? Redirect your mind and attention and get into the zone and you'll forget all about it!

On the Seventh Day of the Sober Holidays: Be Kind to Yourself

The holidays can be tough, and it's okay not to be perfect. If you slip up, don't beat yourself up. Recovery is a journey, and showing yourself, kindness is crucial for maintaining long-term sobriety. Just drinking or using less over the month is a huge win. It happens one day at a time, and tomorrow is another day with a fresh start.

On the Eighth Day of the Sober Holidays: Keep Alcohol-Free Drinks Handy

When you're at a gathering, have a non-alcoholic drink in hand. It's a great way to keep from feeling out of place. Whether it's sparkling water, a fancy mocktail, or just a cup of tea, it'll help you stick to your sobriety. There are a ton of non-alcoholic beverages out there now to try, the number of non-alcoholic spirits and beers has taken off like a rocket lately!

On the Ninth Day of the Sober Holidays: Stay Mindful of Stress

Stress can be a major trigger, and we all know how stressful the holidays get. Practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques, like deep breathing, meditation, or yoga, to keep your mind and body calm.

On the Tenth Day of the Sober Holidays: Reward Yourself

Celebrate your victories! Whether you've made it through a tough holiday event or stuck to your sobriety goals, treat yourself to something special. At Affect, we believe in rewarding yourself through contingency management, so use that to stay motivated! The gifts just keep on giving!

On the Eleventh Day of the Sober Holidays: Stay Active

Physical activity is one of the best ways to keep your body and mind healthy. Go for a walk, try some holiday yoga, or get outside and get moving (bundle up if it's cold where you are!). Staying active will boost your mood and help you fight cravings. it's proven that sunshine and fresh air generate even more dopamine when you're getting endorphins from moving – the feel-good chemicals that drugs and alcohol have disrupted.

On the Twelfth Day of the Sober Holidays: Stay Connected to Your App

And on the twelfth day of the holiday season, my true love gave to me... the gift of recovery—strength, support, and the courage to enjoy a sober, joyful season! stay focused on your sobriety every day of the year. You're making new habits, and habits are formed with little actions every day.

Wrapping it up

You've made it through all 12 days of sober holiday tips! Remember, staying sober during the holidays doesn't have to feel like a battle. With a solid plan, a little humor, and some support, you can handle anything that comes your way.

Stay strong and enjoy the season—on your terms! We're with you all the way, just like a personal partridge your own pear tree!

Help Is Available

If you or someone you know needs help because of an addiction to drugs or alcohol, call and speak to a qualified professional at French Creek Recovery in Meadville, Pennsylvania. They will be able to answer any questions or concerns you may have. The professional staff will provide you with the tools you need as they guide you through your recovery process so you can live a sober, clean, and healthy life.



Join the French Creek Alumni Community

Stay connected and support each other through the French Creek Alumni Community app. Whether you're looking for advice, struggling, or just want to share your journey, our community is here for you. Check out our monthly alumni events and contests.

Ready to get started? Scan the QR code to download the app and join fellow alumni and staff today!

Calling All Veterans and First Responders!

Join the Virtual Veteran Muster organized by Tactical Recovery, a Veterans & First Responder Support Service. This weekly virtual meeting provides a space for veterans and support members to connect, share experiences, and receive support.



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Please feel free to reach out to me for anything, it could be just to have a talk or a quick check-in to see how everything is going, available 24/7.