



# KOLMAC

# ALUMNI

## NEWSLETTER

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### Welcome Letter from our Founder

*I would like to welcome you all to this first issue of the Alumni Newsletter. It is part of our effort to do a better job of staying in touch with our alumni, both to keep you informed about developments at Kolmac as well as to get your ideas about ways to improve our program.*

*Significant events of the past year include the opening of our office in downtown Baltimore and the expansion of our program for young adults in our Gaithersburg and Towson offices. We are also in the process of setting up Alumni Advisory Groups in all of our offices to gather program improvement ideas.*

*I look forward to keeping in touch with you through this column in the upcoming months.*

George Kolodner, MD  
Co-Founder and Medical Director



### My Journey to Recovery

BY TROY W

I am Troy W, a grateful graduate of the Kolmac Clinic. While in treatment, I lost my job (along with my insurance benefits), and was unable to fund the cost of my continuing care. The Kolmac Foundation supplemented my clinic fees and I now hold the esteemed honor of being the first graduate of the Kolmac Clinic to receive scholarship funds from the Kolmac Foundation. The Kolmac

Foundation is a non-profit organization, independent of the Kolmac Clinic, and is solely funded by contributions and donations.

The Kolmac Foundation was formed in December 2006 through an endowment of \$20,000, left in the will of former patient Joanne Luotto. Joanne, a doctor and researcher with NIH, was not able to find sustained success in her recovery until she found the Kolmac Continuing Care Program. She created the Foundation after witnessing many patients drop out of continuing care because they could not afford it. The first Kolmac Foundation grant was given in June of 2007 (to yours truly) and since that date over 200 grants have helped Kolmac patients achieve long-term sobriety.

Managed by a Board of Trustees, the Kolmac Foundation is wholly staffed by volunteers. The Board of Trustees is comprised of former patients, supportive family members and treatment professionals, all of whom serve without compensation. The Kolmac Foundation has raised over \$200,000 since its inception and most of the funds are raised by and generated through former patients after they complete treatment. Most of the donations are \$100 or less. *(continued on page 4)*

## Note from the editor

*This is the first of what will be our quarterly newsletter. It is intended for the ongoing communications of the Kolmac Alumni. Our aim is to support the recovering lives of the alumni, to comfort those who continue to struggle to find their way, and to inspire those wishing to be of service to those who may be suffering.*

*The content is provided solely by and for Kolmac Alumni, and is not reviewed or revised by the Kolmac Clinic. The Kolmac Alumni Newsletter Editorial Board has the sole responsibility for the content of the newsletters. We invite all comments, suggestions and contributions. You can submit your thoughts to [alumni@kolmac.com](mailto:alumni@kolmac.com) write to Silver Spring Clinic, attention alumni. We will in the future be joining hands with all alumni, from all of the clinics. Welcome and we look forward to hearing from you.*

AJ Mitchell  
The Kolmac Clinic

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## We encourage you to participate in the Kolmac Alumni Association

The Kolmac Alumni Association is a membership organization formed to provide continued support for patients who have either completed Kolmac Clinic's Intensive Outpatient program, or Continuing Care Program or for current continuing care patients. Membership is granted regardless of length of recovery, substance used or level of recovery support. The Association does not judge any members' approach to recovery. The primary goals of the alumni are to enhance fellowship opportunities, broaden member support and increase community involvement. In the spirit of "giving it back," members are encouraged to speak wherever their experience demonstrates that treatment works and recovery is possible. Alumni members may also serve as mentors to those beginning on the road of recovery and work with the Kolmac Foundation by making treatment available to those in need of financial help. In undertaking our mission, each member remains mindful of one's anonymity in all communications and contact outside of the membership meetings.

For more than 35 years, the Kolmac Clinic has treated individuals with addiction and associated mental health issues. We know that in isolation, recovery is not possible. The nature of the disease of addiction requires ongoing support to guard against relapse. As Kolmac Alumni, you can help individuals recover by providing a platform for families of recovering people to interact with each other and by serving as a recovery ambassador in our community. We would like to hear from you and hear your ideas about the following possible alumni outreach activities:

- Workshops and retreats
- Participating in social events
- Fundraising
- Participating in a speakers bureau
- Mentoring the newly recovering
- Contributing to the Kolmac Foundation\*
- Participating in community recovery projects
- Contributing to an e-newsletter

If our mission interests you, please contact me at:  
(301) 589-0255 or [alumni@kolmac.com](mailto:alumni@kolmac.com)

## My Experience with Suboxone

BY FRANK W

When I first contacted Kolmac Clinic and told them that I wanted to detox on an outpatient basis, I didn't know what to expect. I have fought opiate addiction throughout most of my adult life. This wasn't my first treatment for opiate addiction. I have been in rehab four times before this one. I suffer from chronic pain and had several operations on my spine 10 years ago. My latest relapse started out using Ultram. I was told this was a non-addicting synthetic narcotic and I looked forward to some pain relief. I soon learned, unfortunately, that Ultram was addicting and I started requiring more and more of it to relieve the pain and to avoid going into withdrawal. Ultram led me right back to abusing other opiates. My life was miserable and I made the decision to get back into treatment.



When I arrived at Kolmac, staff decided to put me on a drug called Suboxone. I had never heard of this before but later learned that it contained buprenorphine and naloxone. Buprenorphine is a synthetic opioid, but you don't get "high" from it. Naloxone blocks the effects of all opiates. If Suboxone is injected, naloxone will block the effects of buprenorphine, leading to withdrawal symptoms in a person with an opioid

addiction. When administered under the tongue, naloxone does not affect the effects of buprenorphine. Suboxone kept me from going into withdrawal and allowed me time to get a support system in place so that I was more likely to succeed in sobriety.

I started coming to Kolmac in December 2009. I still come every week for Continuing Care. I also go to a least 2 Narcotics Anonymous meetings a week. I started off taking 32 mg of Suboxone but have dropped down to 6 mg a day. There is some controversy in NA whether you can call this clean time. At first I wasn't counting it as "clean" time since I was still taking it, but I have since come to the conclusion that I don't really care what other people think. It's my sobriety and I am doing very well. It helps with chronic pain and I don't have any cravings. I don't have the desire to increase the dose like I would with other opiates. I can now focus my attention on all the good things in life. My relationship with my wife and children has never been better. Maybe one day I will decide to quit taking it but for now, I see no reason to test my sobriety.

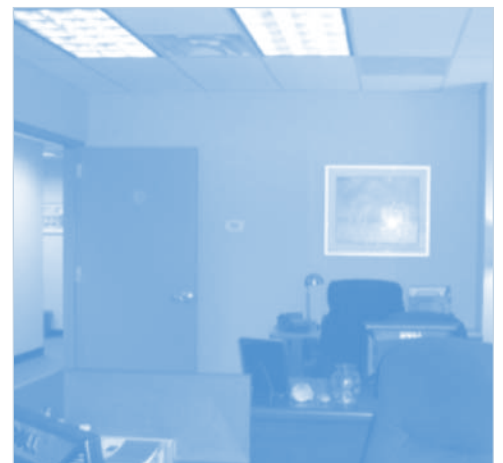
## Constantly Growing in Recovery

BY JEREMY H

(CONTRIBUTOR ARLENE C)

As we grow in our own personal recovery, our facility is growing as well. Kolmac Clinic of Silver Spring moved from Spring Street to its new location on Fenton Street this past spring. The new location is 4,289 square feet, 264 more than our previous location. We are no longer attached to a residential building, so the lack of foot traffic and neighbors provides us all with a better sense of privacy and anonymity.

The Fenton location also offers Kolmac a lot more "practical" space. We no longer have the excessive space of bathrooms, patios and kitchens that were wasted at the previous location. Kolmac now has the space it needs to better facilitate patients and staff. Another benefit to Fenton Street is the age of the building. Our Spring Street location was often plagued with various maintenance issues that come from operating in an older building. Today we have newer, cleaner and more modern comforts. As we learn to live life on life's terms and not on our own, the walls that kept us back for so long are finally giving us more room to grow.



Interior of the new space at the Kolmac Clinic in Silver Spring

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## Meditation and Recovery

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BY SCOTT P

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*"By accepting our powerlessness over thoughts, we quit fighting our own experience."*

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**W**hile meditation is common to many of us in recovery, what meditation means varies greatly from person to person. For individuals who attend the Heart of Recovery meetings ([dc.heartofrecovery.org](http://dc.heartofrecovery.org)), meditation is a simple technique with a potentially profound impact on our lives and our sobriety.

Heart of Recovery's technique is a form of mindfulness meditation that uses breath to anchor our awareness in our body and in the present moment. We pay attention to the process of breathing.

When we first begin paying attention to our breath, we find that thoughts arise and distract us from our object of meditation—the breath. When this happens, we label the thoughts "thinking" and return our attention to the breath. Over and over we get distracted, notice we are distracted, and then return our attention to the breath.

We begin to see that we are powerless over the arising of thoughts. We place our awareness on our breath and suddenly a thought arises and we abandon our breath and follow the thought. It might be a happy thought. It might be a sad or angry thought. It might even be a painful thought. Regardless, we get hooked, we follow it, and we fuel it. We get lost in the thought. In mindfulness meditation, we train in strengthening our ability to stay present, to stay in the moment even when faced with powerful, seductive, or

painful thoughts. We begin by strengthening our ability to notice when distracting thoughts arise and then we strengthen our ability to let go of the thoughts and come back to the present.

By accepting our powerlessness over thoughts, we quit fighting our own experience. Meditation permits us to be present to our own lives and in the lives of others. Moment by moment and breath by breath, we do the next right thing.



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**(Continued from *My Journey to Recovery* on page 1)** There are currently more than 35 active patients receiving funding. This is over 5% of Kolmac's current active patients in continuing care.

There is still a need for financial support to help existing program participants continue their care, and to help them obtain and maintain a substance-free lifestyle. The Kolmac Foundation would be grateful for your support, no matter how modest. All

donations are tax deductible and one hundred percent of your gift goes to helping patients. Your contributions can be submitted either by visiting our website at [www.kolmacfoundation.org](http://www.kolmacfoundation.org), or by selecting "Donate" from the Kolmac Foundation Facebook home page.

I personally want to thank the Kolmac Foundation for helping to make a difference in my life and in the lives of so many others.