

# RECOVERY

*The official newsletter of the  
Fletcher Group Rural Center Of Excellence*



## *Building Rural Recovery Ecosystems*

**ADVICE FOR THE  
YOUNG AT HEART**

**2**

**INDOOR TIPS  
FOR THE HOLIDAYS**

**3**

**OUTDOOR FUN  
FOR THE FUN OF IT**

**4**

## AN INSIDE JOB

 **Fletcher  
Group**  
The Fletcher Group Rural  
Center of Excellence

*by Founder and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ernie Fletcher*

“Recovery’s always been one day at a time,” says Susan Binns, founder of five recovery homes and Tennessee’s NARR affiliate in Nashville. “Now it’s one moment at a time.”

RH staff know the crises of relapse and overdose. But those are compounded now, particularly in rural areas, by cost overruns due to PPE and quarantining, deficits due to lower occupancy, and what Binns calls “The Call”—news that a resident has tested positive, putting all activities on hold and setting prevention efforts back to zero.

As for residents, sheltering in place rides heavy on those who need in-person support. Winter brings additional challenges. But how to see our way through without the traditions to help us: Thanksgiving’s commemoration of family, Christmas Day’s celebration of giving, and New Year’s festival of rebirth?

It’s been, for all of us, a year like no other. But, like a holiday candle, it’s often in the darkest night that the human spirit shines brightest. Those in recovery know from experience that loneliness can be the catalyst for a deeper connection to our authentic selves. As Binns puts it, “Recovery’s always been an inside job.”

Might there be more wisdom and creativity around us than we imagine? Those who’ve fought their way to sobriety have already been where the rest of us now find ourselves—in an unfamiliar world far removed from what we knew the year before. They know also the isolation we dread and that the only way out is through connection, with ourselves and with others.

More than ever before, now is the time to draw close, listen carefully, and add new depth to our relationships. “Yes, there will be less,” says Binns. “But there can be enough. And if we can survive, we can live.”

# Be a kid again!



## ADVICE FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

### Take Care of Yourself

First things first: How are *you* doing? Feeling exhausted? Discouraged? What are your own triggers and responses? Remember: Self-care's not just for clients. Meeting your own needs is what makes you fully available to others. You have the right to rest and recharge like anyone else.

### Remember Who Brought You Here

You'll be urging others to contact family, friends and supporters, but take a moment to do the same. The reassuring voices of those whose shoulders you stand on can soothe, center, and re-inspire you to stay the course and remain true to your mission.

### Be In The Moment

And feel what you feel. There's no shame in acknowledging how hard it is. Pretending otherwise can actually make things worse. Urging people (including yourself) to feel what they don't—"the joy of the holidays," for instance—can cause people to hide their feelings and retreat into themselves. Listening, rather than cheerleading, is often best.

### Plan Ahead

At times like these, it's all hands on deck. Plan for the holidays now by consulting closely with all your staff, clients, and supporters. Even if they have nothing to say, you've opened the door for conversation. Talking with them transparently and from the heart prepares everyone to work together and support one another.

### Focus On the Basics

Nutrition, exercise, and rest. The most basic elements of wellbeing are essential no matter the season, but especially when stressors and temptations rise as they often do during the winter holidays.

### Maintain Healthy Routines

Minimize stress by eating, exercising, and sleeping at regular times. Good hygiene and a morning relaxation technique or meditation can also help set the stage for a day that's less stressful and more productive.

### Have Fun!

"What we really need is more laughter and joy," says NARR Board Member Susan Binns. Instead of waiting for it, go get it by finding out what residents enjoy, both individually and as a group, and set time aside for it each day. Joy and laughter, of course, are involuntary and can't be summoned on command, but there's still a lot we can do to set the stage and give it a nudge.

### Think Outside The Box

"There's always a way," says Binns, "and talking is the way to find it." When it comes to having fun or celebrating the holidays, don't be shy about asking residents for new ideas. And the more the merrier. They'll feel more included and involved and the creativity of their ideas may surprise you!

### Don't Give Up

As the old saying goes, "This too shall pass." Stay true to your mission and be assured that good results will accrue over time. When the darkness recedes, you and those you serve will benefit from a knowledge base and skill set made larger by the challenge.





# INDOOR TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

## Talk Together

It may not be the "real thing," but Zoom, Skype, Teams, Jitsi Meet, and Google Meet do let us talk with and see each other while sheltering in place. But remember: Because it's not natural yet for all of us, a bit of discipline and scheduling may be needed to make sure it happens. Optional: Especially if your “bubble” is bigger than one or two people, you may want to connect to a larger TV screen so people are easier to see.

## Eat Together

Here are two ways to do it: 1) Your virtual companions cook the same recipes so you all share the same meal while online. 2) Each party cooks an abundance of just one dish that's then delivered to others for a virtual “potluck.” Optional: Everyone dresses up in suits and gowns to dine by candlelight on white tablecloths.

## Play Together

Popular online apps like “Jackbox” offer fun trivia games and other options that can be played between families and residents from different recovery houses, for example, a men's house versus a women's house.

## Tell Stories Together

Each person has five minutes to tell, or read, a short story for dramatic or comedic effect, followed by an open discussion. Optional: Each resident draws a name from a hat, then tells a story about meeting or interacting with that person in a way that built trust and understanding.

## Sing Together

Those willing can take turns singing or performing a favorite song—either with actual instruments or karaoke backup.

## Stream A Live Concert Together

Many local and nationally known musicians have shows now that can be streamed to your house for the holidays. Lyrics sheets can be distributed to sing along.

## Laugh Together

Laughter's contagious, even when there's no joke. Thanks to the Laughter Yoga Movement launched by Laughter Guru Dr. Madan Kataria, there are now laughter clubs in 108 different countries. Get more info at [laughteryoga.org](http://laughteryoga.org).

## Create Together

In your "bubble" at home or with a larger group on Zoom, you can make hand-made Christmas Cards, Thank You Notes, and masks or bake cookies with creative shapes and fanciful icings.

## Journal Together

Assembled residents can spend a preset time (a half hour?) writing down whatever they've been thinking, feeling, needing, or missing, then (if comfortable doing so) can read their journal for others to respond to and discuss.

## Call Together

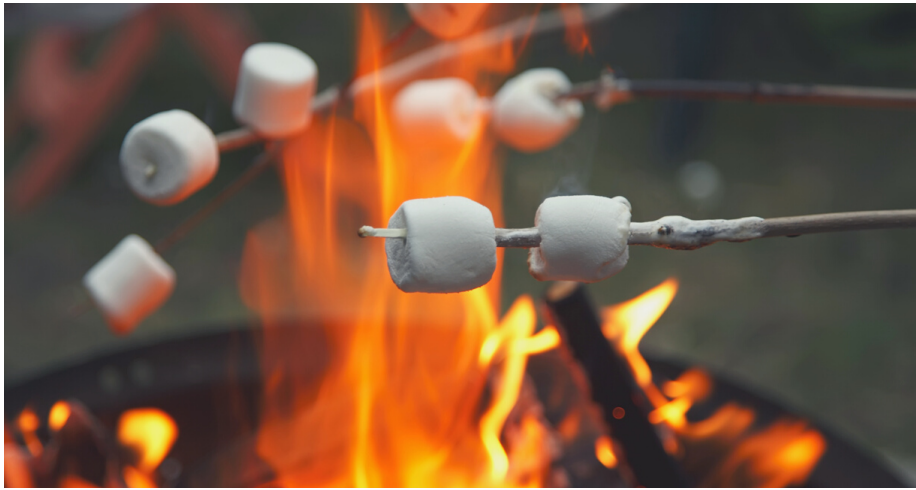
Residents can set up an in-house "Call Center" and spend the next hour or two calling family members, friends, former residents, and anyone else who could use a friendly chat.

## Watch Together

Charles Shultz knew what being an outsider felt like. His Peanuts Cartoon Strip was adapted into 45 animated specials. Ranked number one is 1965's *A Charlie Brown Christmas* followed the next year by *It's The Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown*. Other fun choices: *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (both the 1966 original and the 2000 Jim Carrey remake) and *Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol*.

## Be Silly Together

You can also try making up games no one's ever heard of. For example, assemble your group and ask each person to perform a follow-the-leader impromptu exercise: pushups, running in place, musical chairs, calisthenics, sit-ups, a slow-motion running competition, or whatever comes to mind.



# OUTDOOR FUN FOR THE FUN OF IT

Because most virus transmission occurs indoors, just stepping outside can make things a lot safer. But how to keep warm in winter climes? Here are some ideas.

### Share a Meal Around a Fire

An outdoor patio heater or fire pit together with throw blankets can make winter not just tolerable but sublime.

### Walk, Hike, Or Run

Fund-raising pledges can even be solicited while creating good pr for your program. “Trudging,” for example, is a routine team-building activity at all the Recovery Kentucky centers originally launched by Fletcher Group Founder Ernie Fletcher when he served as governor.

### Ride Bikes

See if local bike shops can donate to the cause. Or ask a local bike enthusiast to help locate used bike parts and teach residents how to assemble them.

### Go Ice Skating

Do it outdoors on a local pond or indoors on an ice rink that hopefully will waive fees or offer a discount.

### Build A Snowman

Is there any better way to be a kid again?

### Walk A Dog Or Ride A Horse

Ask your local animal shelter if residents can walk their dogs for a day. Or see if a local stable would let residents visit and saddle up for an afternoon. Offer to repay the favor by hauling hay or cleaning stables.

### Go Snow Tubing

A little hill and a bit of snow is all you need. Inner tubes work great as do the tops of plastic garbage cans.

### Rake Leaves or Shovel Snow

Elderly neighbors will never forget the kindness. Newspapers, TV, and radio also love this kind of story.

### View Christmas Lights

Your “bubble” of residents is safe together in a car. Or you can walk to a designated light display sponsored by your local botanical garden or corporate campus. At some, you can even tune in on radio for a guided tour.

### Go Christmas Caroling

Knocking on doors and soliciting refreshments is out, but the wonder and delight of hearing Christmas carols sung outside your house is still as magical as ever. Carrying a sign that identifies your facility or program can generate great publicity and—who knows—perhaps a donation at a later date.

### Revel In A Bonfire

Fire is magical and can be used to signify the discarding of old habits and the phoenix-like birth of new meaning and purpose. (Be careful, though, to burn only wood. Inhaling smoke from trash, particularly plastic and chemical products, can be harmful.)

### Mix and Match

Combine activities to make a full day of it. For example, a trudge can begin at your facility, traverse through town to promote awareness of your group, and end with a fire pit or bonfire at a local park or open lot where carols can be sung, thermoses of hot chocolate shared, and marshmallows roasted. Does it get any better than this?