

RECOVERY

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



The Phoenix

**WHAT PHOENIX IS—
AND ISN'T**

2

**HOW IT
WORKS**

3

**SO MANY
RESOURCES!**

4

RECOVERY IS A TEAM SPORT

by Founder and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ernie Fletcher

Though the recovery journey is unique to each person, all have one thing in common—the need for meaning and community.

The Phoenix, a fast-growing non-profit, helps those in recovery find strength in each other by harnessing the transformational power of connection. Its virtual classes and events are especially helpful in rural communities where resources may be lacking.

Its core principles also align with the model of recovery housing the Fletcher Group Rural Center Of Excellence promotes across rural America. We, like The Phoenix, apply a “Community As Method” approach whereby active participation with peers drives individual change and goal attainment.

Like our "Recovery Ecosystem" model, The Phoenix is showing that cycles of drug dependency can indeed be broken, lives rebuilt, and families reunited.



WHAT PHOENIX IS—AND ISN'T

Though launched with an emphasis on adventure-based sports like hiking and rock-climbing, The Phoenix non-profit now offers over 200,000 members everything from weight-lifting, cycling, and strength training to book clubs, yoga, and music instruction. That's because, as their website says, "'We lift more than barbells. The real weight we lift is our hearts, minds, and spirit.'

Connection Through Activity

The Phoenix now has members in all 50 states as well as Canada and the U.K. It's growing so fast, in fact, that it hopes to have one million members by 2025. The organization's peer-led sober activities, including 450 in-person and virtual classes each week, are led by 250 staff members as well as 1,500 volunteers who are trained and empowered to run their own Phoenix events within their local communities. All classes and activities are free of charge. The only requirement is that new members be sober for at least 48 hours before joining.

A Better Chance At A Second Chance

The Phoenix is particularly proud of its work with over 150 American prisons. A partnership with Edovo, a communication and education consultant, provides tablet computers that inmates can use to access Phoenix programs.

Three Elements

The Phoenix therapeutic model is comprised of three elements. The first—a **Sober Social Network**—encourages members to help one another in their journey to recovery. The second—**Meaningful Activities**—provides a platform for connection and belonging. And the third—a "**Restorative Culture**"—provides a physically and emotionally safe environment that's supportive, inclusive, and easily accessible.

Proven Outcomes

According to Phoenix, members report significant gains in physical health, mental health, and social support. Of those who were new to The Phoenix in 2022 and who also reported being new to recovery:

- 83% said they were still sober three months after their initial engagement
- 78% felt increased connectedness
- 87% felt more hopeful
- 83% felt a stronger sense of self-identity
- 83% felt increased meaning in life
- 82% reported feeling more empowered



“
*We lift more than barbells.
The real weight we lift is our hearts, minds, and spirit.*”



The Fletcher Group's April Webinar was hosted by Dr. Beth Collinson, Phoenix Senior Manager of Research and Evaluation, and Chelsea Dueitt Burge, the organization's National Partnerships Manager. To watch their April 6 Webinar, click the button below.

[CLICK HERE](#)



HOW IT WORKS

The Phoenix has shown that activities undertaken together in the right environment with the right attitude can positively affect recovery. But how exactly does it work? In the Fletcher Group's April 6 Webinar, Dr. Beth Collinson, Senior Manager of Research and Evaluation, began her explanation with an acronym—"CHIME"—for Connection, Hope, Identity, Meaning, and Empowerment.

Connection comes first, said Collinson, because it breaks through the isolation so many individuals with a substance use disorder experience. Feeling connected to others who support their recovery then opens the door to **Hope**—the belief that recovery is possible. "Just as a lack of hope can be a barrier to recovery," says Collinson, "the presence of hope can be a strong motivator for people to remain sober." Next comes **Identity** in two forms: self-identity and social identity. "People in recovery often need to disassociate from groups or peers with whom they previously drank or used drugs. To do that they need a new, holistic identity." Next comes **Meaning**. Activities and events like those facilitated by The Phoenix can facilitate a new meaning in life that in turn leads to **Empowerment** so that people can shape their journey in accordance with their own unique skills and interests.

Three Forms Of Recovery Capital

Another way of understanding the process is through the lens of "Recovery Capital"—the idea that people need a wide variety of internal and external resources to sustain recovery. According to Collinson, there are three interacting types—Community Capital, Social Capital and Personal Capital.

Community Capital, says Collinson, is the soil from which the others grow. For that reason, it's important to know, especially in rural communities, what services, supports, and activities are locally available as well as the barriers to accessing them, such as stigma and discrimination. **Social Capital** refers to one's friends, family, relationships, and peers while **Personal Capital** refers to how people feel about themselves, their health and wellbeing, their soft and hard skills, and their hopes and dreams for the future.

Collinson notes a stark difference between financial capital and recovery capital. "With money, the more you spend the less you have. But with recovery capital, the more you spend the more you get." That's because the greater your engagement, the more your capital grows.



But engaging in meaningful activities for the first time can be daunting; 40 percent of those receiving SUD services report do not engage with community resources following treatment.* And those who do can spread themselves too thin.

"Studies show that quality is much more important than quantity and that connections tend to strengthen over time through activities that have deeper, long-lasting meaning."

Being introduced to and assisted by an actual person—rather than simply handed a list of resources—is also important.

• Moos and Moos (2005)

SO MANY RESOURCES!

The Phoenix prides itself on being a free resource available to everyone. As its website says: "Whether you're ten years sober, just starting down the path to recovery, or supporting someone in their recovery journey, you'll find The Phoenix a welcoming place." The only cost of membership? "Forty-eight hours of continuous sobriety and a promise to treat each other with respect and understanding."

So What's Available?

For starters, The Phoenix offers over 450 in-person and virtual classes each week. Virtual classes and events can be live-streamed in real time or streamed on-demand from The Phoenix content library. And because so many Phoenix members, volunteers and staff are in long-term recovery themselves, new members benefit from a wealth of lived experience that's also available to friends, allies and family members.

A New App Perfect for Rural Communities

Thanks to the new Phoenix App, classes and events can now be accessed anytime from anywhere. That's especially helpful in rural communities that lack the resources found in urban areas. A handy one-stop shop for all things recovery, the new app allows users to:

- Register as new members
- Access a nationwide calendar of in-person and online activities, including on-demand content
- Reserve your spot ahead of time to join virtual and in-person groups based on interests and location
- Work with others to establish new events and communities
- Use direct messaging to give and receive real-time support
- Geo-locate other members who might be attending the same concerts, shows and sporting events*
- Use the *Sobriety Journey* feature to track and share your progress with others
- Download archived content, presentations and testimonials, including the new *Rise, Recover, Live* podcast
- Take a one-hour training to 'pay it forward' as a Phoenix volunteer
- Partner with other organizations such as Oxford House

* This feature is not live yet, but coming soon.

CHECK IT OUT!

To use the new Phoenix App, simply scan this QR code or visit their website at thephoenix.org



Classes and Activities Offered by The Phoenix

- Arts and crafts
- Book clubs
- Basketball
- Boxing
- Camping
- CrossFit
- Functional fitness
- High-intensity interval training
- Hiking, running and trail running
- Indoor rock climbing
- Kettlebells
- Meditation and mindfulness
- Mountain biking
- Music
- Road biking
- Rock and ice climbing
- Skiing, snowboarding and snowshoeing
- Social events
- Strength training
- Watersports
- Weightlifting and powerlifting
- Yoga