



The Florida Bar Family Law Section HEALTH & WELLNESS COMMITTEE

AN INTERVIEW OF TWO MEMBERS: JOHN FOSTER AND ANTHONY GENOVA

ADDICTION & RECOVERY: IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH

1. How did you become involved with Addiction and Recovery?

- a. **John:** My son, John Wayne, Jr., became addicted to drugs and alcohol when in his teens. After several years of in-patient facilities, out-patient services, counseling and other efforts, my son finally became serious about his recovery in December 2011. I supported his recovery. For instance, I attended his Narcotics Anonymous ("NA") meetings and was fortunate to become friends with many of his friends in recovery and to observe first-hand the unbelievably strong network and support-group that NA has to offer folks wanting to recapture their lives from the Beast of Addiction. It was at my son's NA meeting in December 2012 that I, as a proud father, was honored to give my son his one-year medallion for having been clean for one year; however, I learned the hard way that, although an addict may find his or her way to recovery, the Beast of Addiction lies in wait for some momentary resurfacing of the addict's powerlessness over his or her addiction. Indeed, in July 2013, my son relapsed from his recovery, he overdosed and he died. The Beast of Addiction had taken my son from his family and friends.
- b. **Anthony:** Like John's son, I became addicted to drugs at an early age. I began practicing criminal defense in Miami in March 1987. While I was incredibly successful in my trial practice, it had the opposite effect on my addiction.

In March 1997 I signed a contract with Florida Lawyers Assistance at the insistence of an astute Circuit Court judge I was practicing before at the time. I would be on contract with Florida Lawyers Assistance for 13 years. However, through no fault of FLA, my recovery did not begin until December 21, 2001 in Federal prison. On that date, in a friend's jail cell, I gave my life to Jesus Christ. That was the last time I thought about using cocaine, where prior to that date, that's all I thought about.

2. You each took different paths to Addiction & Recovery; why or how do you maintain your passion for recovery?

- a. **John:** I have been asked this a few times. Usually, the question is, "*Well, you had a son who had made his way to recovery but who relapsed and did not make it through his recovery—how can you still have a passion for recovery?*" The answer is easy. My family, my son's young daughter and I had lost my son to the Beast of Addiction and recovery gave our son (and gave my young granddaughter's father) back to us for a year and seven months. While in recovery, my son was instrumental in leading several young friends to recovery.



John, continued:

I have kept track of those friends and I even surf with a few of them, and I can say without equivocation that these young men and women have found successes and a life that could not have been (and would not have been) achievable without recovery. I have learned and seen first-hand that, while addiction is death, **Recovery is Life.**

- b. Anthony:** On December 21, 2001, God not only healed me from my addiction, but at that moment I was healed from numerous physical and emotional diseases, including but not limited to, asthma, obesity, anxiety and panic attacks, just to name a few. I was released from prison in early 2003. Within a few weeks I was awarded sole custody of my son who was in first grade at the time. The IRS accepted an offer in compromise on a tax liability which exceeded one half million dollars, despite the fact I had just been released from prison. I was able to pay pennies on the dollar over the course of two years in order to have that enormous debt lifted off my shoulders.

I gave God all the credit and all the glory for these incredible miracles. My son and I immediately joined a local church called Central Christian Church in Coral Gables. I was asked to begin teaching the adult Sunday school class in December 2003. I delivered my first sermon on Father's Day 2004. In 2005 I delivered a sermon from a verse in John 14 where Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and **greater works** than these he will do." I preached about the man in federal prison that brought me to the Lord, and I invited him to the church that morning. He did not know I was preaching about him. It was wonderful for congregation to get to meet this man!

In 2005 I launched a Christian recovery program in this church which is still going strong today. I have been an Elder in this church since 2006, I preached numerous times, and I still teach the adult Sunday school class every other Sunday.

I met my beautiful wife in 2009 and married her on Valentine's Day 2010. On November 1, 2010, the Florida Bar reinstated my law license unconditionally. My gratitude to God, and the overflow of love that he lavishes on me every day, is what maintains my recovery.

3. What are your current connections with Recovery?

- a. John:** I channel my passion for Recovery by remaining involved with in the recovery world. Recovery is indeed a way of life. I am fortunate to sit as Vice-President of the Board of Directors of Turning Point of Central Florida, Inc., a 501(c)(3) entity that provides out-patient services to persons suffering with substance abuse and to the families impacted by that Beast. I am one of the founders of Mind, Body & Soul Recovery, LLC, through which we own and operate four (4) sober-living homes in the Orlando area for men who wish to reside in a clean and sober environment with like-minded and supportive men while committing themselves to a recovery way of life. I and others



John, continued:

founded The Mind, Body & Soul Recovery Foundation, a 501(c)(3) entity that will be committed to raising funds for Recovery. For instance, this Foundation will likely assume responsibility for promoting and managing the annual 5K/10K Recovery Run (in Orlando) and the annual Surf-for-Recovery Retreat (in Costa Rica) that have historically been promoted by another company that I helped create called The Mind, Body & Soul Surfing Club. I also serve as Vice-Chair of the Health & Wellness Committee of the Family Law Section of The Florida Bar; a committee designed to promote the health and wellness of members who passionately serve Florida's families in their family-law matters.

And, last but not least, I frequently speak on the topic of Addiction & Recovery, and I always remain free to talk with parents or family members of loved ones who are struggling with (or have been taken by) the Beast of Addiction, who just need to talk with someone who has walked down that path and who may have some information about some available resources. I know that, when I first started down this path many years ago with my teenage son, I was a stunned father who had to embark upon a search for resources and answers-answers that ultimately fell into God's hands.

- b. Anthony.** My "current connection with recovery" is my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It manifests itself in many ways. For instance, beginning September 2003, I have been a monthly guardian and speaker at St. Luke's Addiction and Recovery Center in North Miami. After being released from prison, while still under contract with Florida Lawyers Assistance, I volunteered my time as an FLA monitor for young lawyers struggling with addiction. I'm on the Board of Directors of Lawyers to the Rescue which provides, free legal services to the homeless community through Camillus House in Miami. Once a month, we spend a Saturday morning speaking with these clients, in a suit and tie, helping them with their very serious issues. I handle all of the family, dependency and domestic violence issues that arise within this program. I have numerous pro bono cases through this program which I've been handling for several years. I rarely miss an opportunity to speak to groups about addiction and recovery, in recent years I have been asked to preach at three churches outside of my home church.

I am honored to be on the Executive Council of the Family Law Section, and I am honored to be on a Florida Bar Grievance committee as well. This past Friday I received notification that I may sit for the upcoming Marital and Family Law Board Certification exam. I'm extremely honored and humbled to sit for this exam.