



SPEAKING OUT

by Patricia Taylor



There has been a sea change in the way Americans believe policy makers should be addressing addiction issues.* They want to see changes in laws, policies and attitudes so that addiction is treated as a health issue — not a law enforcement one. They want prevention, education, treatment and recovery programs to be supported.

We salute the growing numbers of people in recovery and their family members who are combining forces to tell their stories of renewal and hope. By raising their varied voices, they are demonstrating that we look like America.

The voices of families tell the bigger story of addiction. When families come together, there can be even a greater pay off in recovery support and political voice. One example is Tracey Lee-Cohen who, with her mother Nancy and her son Bill, movingly testified as a family before the California legislature. Now Tracey chairs Recovery Advocates for Treatment in California. They have experienced and shared the power of families telling stories of hope together.

Lifting the veil of silence about a family member's addiction helps deal with the social stigma these families experience. It can be a long road to

educating oneself and others, and family groups are flourishing around the country as people come together in mutual support.

The personal stories that growing numbers of families are sharing with health care professionals, policy makers, clergy, friends and neighbors has heightened awareness that this stigma still exists, even for people who have successfully sustained long-term recovery. In focus groups in Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts, people said they felt very strongly that community education that is focused on the family experience of addiction and recovery would have diminished their own difficulties with these experiences.

Across the country, people in recovery, family members, friends and allies are coming together, speaking out and organizing. They are letting people know about the pain that addiction to alcohol and other drugs can bring to families and the hope that recovery offers. They are giving permission to others to speak out as our country moves forward to achieve a just response to addiction.

*According to research by Peter D Hart Research Associates and Coldwater Corporation for Faces and Voices of Recovery.

Patricia Taylor is the Campaign Coordinator for Faces & Voices of Recovery. For more information about this advocacy for recovery go to www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org



WHEN NATURAL DISASTERS HAPPEN

by Tian Dayton, Ph.D.

In the wake of multiple hurricanes in September, it is critical to remember that little children have big ears. If there is added tension in the house they pick it up, and they can become anxious.

REMEMBER: Explain the chaos to the children in the house in a way that they can understand. If you don't, they will come up with their own meaning and that can be scary-making.

Don't maximize disaster scenarios, focus on what you can do to stay safe and let them know that the problem is temporary.

Let them talk about, draw about or otherwise express what they are experiencing.

Stay stable, they are relying on you to make them feel safe.

Let them "help". Children (and adults) seem to experience less trauma if they can do something. If there is a positive step to take, even if it's just packing a box, pack the box.

IN ADDITION: If you are an ACOA yourself and have experienced the kind of family trauma that is so often a part of addicted/traumatized family systems, you may be somewhat hyper-reactive to situations that trigger a sense of helplessness or chaos. HALT-don't get too hungry, angry, lonely or tired. Get rest, nutrition, seek out support with others and keep your emotions out of the danger zone.

Tian Dayton, Ph.D.

Author, Trauma and Addiction www.tiandayton.com