



## **Here to Help: An Interview with Vince Parrish, L.C.S.W. Physicians Health Program, Field Coordinator**

For 25 years, the Tennessee Medical Foundation's Physicians Health Program (PHP) has been pulling Tennessee physicians out of the depths of addiction, mental illness and paralyzing burnout. Dr. Roland W. Gray, PHP Executive and Medical Director, is pleased to announce that Vince Parrish, L.C.S.W., has joined the TMF as PHP Field Coordinator. In this new position, Vince will monitor contractual compliance and serve as a recovery "coach" for physicians in the program.

**Q.** *Vince, how will you be working with the Physicians Health Program as Field Coordinator?*

**A.** Recovery is a long-term process. There are some really wonderful treatment facilities around the country that do a great job with various addictions and behavioral problems. But after treatment, there is a period of vulnerability for many physicians when they re-enter their medical practice and/or hospital and re-join their families. The tools physicians learn in treatment do not always equip them for all the changes they need to make in their professional or personal lives. They can be caught off-guard by the problems of daily life and the damage they may have left in the wake of their illness. Physicians generally feel great after treatment, armed with tools such as anger management, conflict resolution skills and prayer to deal with their personal demons. But remember, no one gets to treatment on a winning streak. There may be residual feelings of anger, suspicion and skepticism from those closest to the physician, his/her family and colleagues. The human dimension and wreckage of addiction have sometimes not been completely resolved in treatment.

We want to help physicians acknowledge the success they experience through treatment and prepare them for the problems which will inevitably surface in daily life, so that their recovery isn't derailed. It's a mistake to think of the recovery process as a sprint, it's a marathon and whatever additional support we can offer physicians will make their recovery more successful. I will meet with physicians on a regular basis after successful treatment, to offer this support and monitor their compliance with the contractual obligations they undertake with the PHP.

**Q.** *What interests you most about this work?*

**A.** For a number of years I worked with the Regional Intervention Program (RIP), a parent education program for young children with behavioral problems. After returning to school for a Masters in Social Work, I managed Saint Thomas Hospital's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). That's where I met Dr. David Dodd. He brought a new dimension to my work and a sense of hopefulness to situations that often seemed insurmountable.

I find the same quality in the Physicians Health Program under the direction of Dr. Roland Gray. I worked with a number of PHP physicians when I had a private practice. The PHP has an excellent reputation in the recovery field, earned through many years of experience. We've learned what constitutes quality treatment and how to target problems, tailor a recovery program for specific needs and mentor and advocate for physicians who do what we ask of them.

I was very fortunate that my own addiction was successfully addressed in 1986. I have seen public attitudes shifting over the last twenty years; we now recognize that addiction is treatable and people are not disposable. It's an exciting time to be part of this program.

**Q.** *What do you like to do when you're not at work?*

**A.** I love to spend time with my family, my wife Janie, daughter Lindsey and her husband Scott. The newest addition to our family, 2 year old grandson Drew keeps us all on our toes. I'm an avid reader, and have been known to jog occasionally.

Physicians can easily access the TMF Physicians Health Program by calling (615) 467-6411 or writing the TMF, 216 Centerview Drive, Suite 304, Nashville, TN, 37027. All communications to the program are strictly confidential.