NCADD Founder - Marty Mann

Marty Mann was an alcoholic. Plain and simple. She admitted it and once sober she dedicated the rest of her life to help others who suffered from the same crippling, often fatal, disease. Educating an ignorant public drove her every day to eradicate the stigma of addiction. Marty knew what is meant to feel despair and what it was like to be alone. When her health returned and friends noticed her new radiance, she simply remarked, “You let God in and He comes out of you.”

Marty came from privilege, born in 1905 into a wealthy Chicago family and attended the best private schools. Married at 22, divorced at 23, Marty was a drunk at 24, around the same time her father lost his fortune. Marty moved to NYC and soon enjoyed an admired reputation for handling her drink; she developed a high tolerance for alcohol consumption, often an early symptom of alcoholism.

Attractive, intelligent, engaging with a sharp wit and a flair for parties, things came easy for Marty and drinking was increasingly part of the picture. Life events soon took her deeper into alcoholism. She quit her job as an editor and moved to London after her grandmother died and left her a small inheritance. Marty was even more the life of the party in a new city across the Atlantic. However, soon she experienced memory blackouts and got drunk on lesser and lesser amounts of alcohol. Marty became frightened. Despite her strong will power, she could not stop drinking. Then, in 1934, Marty fell from a small balcony during a party. She never knew if she fell or jumped. A fractured leg, a broken jaw and traction for six months did not stop her from continuing to drink. Out of money, jobs gained and lost, Marty wound up in a secluded corner of Hyde Park in London, sipping booze from a bottle. She was close to hitting her bottom.

Marty moved back to New York and soon was committed to a psychiatric hospital in nearby Connecticut. It was now 1938 and while there, Marty was treated by a psychiatrist, Dr. Henry Tiebout, who had the compassion and insight to give her a copy of a new manuscript: Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). This book’s message sunk in and Marty began to live its principles. Her

journey towards long-term sobriety finally took shape. A remaining lifetime of hope and joy followed.

As the first woman to recover from alcoholism in AA, Marty became known as The First Lady of Alcoholics Anonymous. Her first sponsor, Bill Wilson, was a co-founder of AA and he unabashedly supported Marty's advocacy. Ever strong-willed, she began to develop sharply focused beliefs about the disease she was learning to conquer by not drinking.

Marty believed in and dedicated herself and NCADD to three primary principles:

- Alcoholism was a disease, that the alcoholic was a sick person.
- The alcoholic can be helped and is worth helping.
- Alcoholism is a public health problem and therefor a public responsibility.

The world would soon experience Marty, the pioneer. On October 2, 1944, the National Committee on Alcohol Education (NCAE) was founded in a modest office suite on the upper east side of Manhattan. Marty's dream became a reality. She sought to educate an ignorant society and fight the stigma too often associated with alcoholism. Addiction destroyed individuals, families and communities. When featured on NPR's **"This I Believe"**, narrated by the legendary Edward R. Murrow, Marty spoke of "Twice I Sought Death".

Up until the time of her death in 1980 after suffering a stroke, Marty worked tirelessly on behalf of victims associated with addiction, both alcohol and drugs. Individuals, youth, parents, friends, workplaces, as well as the medical community benefitted from her courage to tell her own story and the journey of addiction. Marty travelled countless miles across the country to spread the message that addiction was a disease that could and must be treated. She was appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to serve on the National Advisory Commission on Alcoholism; she testified numerous times before Congress.

As recounted in the Biography of Mrs. Marty Mann - The First Lady of Alcoholics Anonymous **,** Marty was living proof that people suffering from addiction are capable of long-term recovery**.**

Her example showed:

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That life without alcohol and drugs was worth living.

- That successful treatment for alcohol and drug addiction gives people a chance to find peace, embrace the gift of life granted through long-term recovery and give back to their communities in truly amazing ways.
- That her vision of people in local communities finding the help they need and deserve through the National Network of Affiliates was truly an inspiration.

Marty's vision and commitment to help fellow addicted persons continues to be the fabric of today's NCADD. Many people who work, volunteer or reach out to find help at NCADD either at the National office or at one of more than 100 affiliate offices across the country, often enjoy the serenity Marty experienced in her lifetime simply by opening their hearts to the joy of recovery.

In her husky voice, powerfully articulate, we can still hear Marty saying, ***"Alcoholics are not bums… they are sick, and can recover from this disease just as from others."***

Marty Mann knew what she was doing when NCADD became a reality in the mid-1940's. Today, our founder's legacy lives on in NCADD's Mission and our work, as NCADD brings hope, help and healing to millions of individuals and families every year!