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New Boston Mayor Talks About His Recovery from Alcoholism

Martin J. Walsh, a Boston mayoral candidate and a recovering alcoholic, defeated City Councilor John R. Connolly in a historic tilt to succeed Mayor Thomas M. Menino, according to *The Boston Herald*.

Throughout the campaign, Walsh, a state representative, has been very matter of fact and public about his 18 years of recovery from alcoholism. His campaign included staff members and volunteers who are in recovery.

Some supporters have given Walsh their medallions that mark when they stopped drinking or using drugs. Walsh keeps them in his pocket for good luck. He says he will return them after the election next Tuesday.

"They gave them to me out of a sense of pride, a sense of accomplishment for the struggles we've all been through," he told the newspaper. He said the support of those in recovery is helpful to him on a personal level. "They give me the emotional strength to keep moving," he said.

Walsh generally does not raise the subject of his drinking while on the campaign trail, but he will answer questions about it, often saying he is grateful for second chances. He is blunt about how he drove drunk and blacked out. "My drinking went from good to bad to ugly," he said. "I was thrown out of a Bruins game, passed out at a bar. There was just guilt and shame and constant disappointment."

He got into detox and was able to turn his life around, and now helps others struggling with substance abuse. His candidacy has motivated others in recovery to support him, shedding their anonymity to do so.

"With Marty, we don't have to hide it anymore," said Peter Barbuto, an addiction treatment consultant who earlier in his life stole money to maintain his drug habit. He volunteers for Walsh, who had coached him in Little League.