



HONORING ANDY

JEAN AND ANDY KUMOSZ'S GENEROSITY HELPS WOMEN BREAK THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION

Dr. David Galbis-Reig (L) and Jean Kumosz

Whenever Jean and Andy Kumosz planned a vacation, they invariably had the same conversation about where to go.

“I wanted to be in the mountains and he wanted to be on the beach,” Jean said of her late husband.

They would eventually agree on a locale—Hawaii, the Caribbean, England or Andy’s home country of Poland—realizing it ultimately didn’t matter where they went. The adventure was about traveling with each other.

“We’re two opposite people,” Jean said. “But opposites attract. And two opposites make a whole.”

Their yin and yang personalities—Andy outgoing, Jean reserved—were complementary forces that clicked from the evening they met. Their connection fostered a long, successful marriage, and a devotion that proved vital as Andy struggled with the disease of alcohol addiction.

Andy fought his addiction head-on while Jean served as his advocate and caring partner. She drove him to the Emergency Care Center, remained by his bedside in the Intensive Care Unit and closely monitored his response to various medications. Over several years, Andy was in and out of the hospital for treatment of the alcohol use disorder about 17 times, she says, including treatment out-of-state. He found the best care close to home, at Ascension All Saints. There, Andy was cared for by a staff

of nurses and Dr. David Galbis-Reig, Medical Director of Addiction Services.

“The care Andy received at All Saints was far superior to any other facility we went to,” Jean said. “Dr. David really went above and beyond.”

The Kumoszs showed their appreciation for that exceptional care through multiple gifts to All Saints Foundation.

“I know Andy felt blessed that he could support the addiction care program,” she said.

Breaking the Stigma

Andy, who passed away in 2016 at age 66, battled not only with the disease of alcohol addiction, but the stigma that’s so often attached to substance use disorders. Negative perceptions about addiction and misinformation about the causes of substance use disorders make treatment and recovery more difficult.

Fortunately, the stigma is decreasing, according to Dr. Galbis-Reig. Compared to several years ago, he now hears fewer moralizing statements and value judgments and more discussions about addiction as a chronic disease.

“Most diseases have behavioral components, but just like no one chooses to have diabetes or heart disease, no

one chooses to have the disease of addiction,” he said. “This disease is mostly hereditary. It is not a choice.”

Society’s long-held judgments and stigmas can be erased with education, advocacy and prevention, he said. But these changes in mindset can take time, especially for those who incorrectly think the disease is simply a matter of choice, he said.

“I have yet to meet someone who says that when they were younger, they wanted to have the disease of addiction when they grew up,” he said.

Addiction is painful and difficult for everyone it touches. Jean and Andy’s friends and family provided love and support, but it was impossible for them to know exactly what the couple was enduring. A few loved ones asked Jean why she stayed in the relationship.

“If he had cancer, would I leave him? No. So why would I leave him because he had the disease of addiction?” she said.

Dr. Galbis-Reig commended Jean on her unwavering dedication and her willingness to learn so much about substance use disorders.

“Her commitment to Andy was incredible,” he said. “She did an outstanding job of caring for the man she loved.”

Self-Made Man

Jean was fully devoted to her husband, with whom she fell in love at age 18. Attracted to his smile, foreign accent and kind personality, she was impressed by his gentle nature and strong work ethic. With just a dollar in his pocket, Andy had emigrated from Poland at age 14 along with his brother. He studied hard, learned English and graduated from Horlick High School in 1969. The brothers owned and operated Z & Z Machine Products in Racine for more than 30 years.

“It wasn’t an easy road for them,” Jean said. “Everything they accomplished they did on their own. Andy was truly a self-made man.”

Women of Worth

Andy and Jean navigated the twists and turns of a life burdened by addiction, and now their generosity is helping others in Racine whose journeys face similar detours.

After Andy’s passing, Jean honored his memory by making another donation to the addiction healthcare program at Ascension All Saints, designating it for the area of greatest need. Numerous loved ones also contributed memorial gifts in Andy’s name.

At the same time, grant funding for Women of Worth (WOW), a family-centered substance abuse treatment program at Ascension All Saints, had concluded. Staff

were seeking additional revenue to keep the program up and running. Without additional funding, several WOW services would be cut, drastically reducing the program’s scope. The Kumosz’ gift enabled the program to continue in its full capacity for an entire year.

“A higher power definitely played into the timing of the gift,” said Galbis-Reig.

Working in collaboration with local community partners, WOW is the only family-centered substance abuse treatment program in Racine and Kenosha Counties geared specifically for women. Now in its fourth year, the innovative outpatient program addresses interpersonal trauma, parenting skills, work and educational needs and physical health. It strengthens women’s decision-making skills, improves birth outcomes and bolsters the well-being of families. More than 140 women have been enrolled in WOW, which boasts a successful completion rate 13 percent higher than the national average. Additionally, all babies born to program participants have been born substance-free.

Andy’s Legacy

As WOW continues to empower women and improve their sense of self, Galbis-Reig believes the objectives of the program align well with Andy’s life mission.

“Andy was all about helping other people,” he said. “WOW has helped people stay out of the hospital, kept people employed and kept families together. I believe Andy is quite happy at how many people he and Jean have been able to help through this program.”

Andy’s legacy continues in all the women and families WOW is helping today and will help tomorrow. They’ve been given hope from a caring man who knew exactly how it feels to lose one’s way.

“He had a problem he couldn’t beat,” Jean said. “He ultimately couldn’t help himself, but he hoped to help others.”



Andy in 1969 (left) and Jean and Andy visiting her parents in the early 1990s.