

Virginia Collins  
Pir2Peer Recovery Center  
LD 1714

My name is Virginia Collins and I am a woman with 19 years of recovery from the use of alcohol and drugs. My addictions began in my early 40's as I sought alcohol and drugs to ease my emotional and mental health issues. My career as a paralegal came to an end with my first arrest of OUI and from there my life spiraled out of control. In 8 years, I went from a woman and mother who never had a traffic ticket to a convicted felon with 4 OUI's, having served a total of 2 years in county jails. I received my oldest daughter's wedding invitation in Penobscot County Jail where I was serving a 9 month sentence for my 4th OUI. Since my stay in PCJ in 2004, I have not picked up a drink nor used a drug to alter my consciousness or life experiences. I utilize 12 step programs regularly to include AA and NA to maintain my clean and sober lifestyle.

I also have the privilege of being the Executive Director of Pir2Peer Recover Center located in the Katahdin Region of northern Penobscot County, Town of Medway. Pir2Peer stands for "People in Recovery" to Peer (others) and was founded by 3 local women in recovery (and I am honored to be one of them), who finally said NO MORE to the unparalleled increase in overdose deaths in the Katahdin Region as well as Penobscot County. With state funding initiative support from Opioid Director, Gordon Smith, and an annual \$50,000 state contract for delivery of recovery services, P2P opened its doors in January 2020 in Millinocket. Within 2 months of our opening, Gov. Mills issued a Corona Virus closure order in March 2020 which caused P2P to close its doors. However, because addiction does not understand a "shut-down order", P2P remained available via the internet and maintained a 24 hr., 7 day per week presence via our website utilizing our GO-TO-Meeting platform, providing IN-PERSON contact (not just voice) to share recovery. There were many sleepless nights as this service soon became known state-wide and our call volume increased substantially. In May, 2020, and under a required mask order, P2P reopened its doors to center services and continued to maintain the Go-To-Meeting platform for program meetings as well as recovery coaching.

Pir2Peer relocated in September, 2022 to RT. 157, Medway which is 20 miles southeast of Millinocket. Our Millinocket facility became too small to comfortably provide for an increased need for meetings and recovery services as well as maintain a social atmosphere. Also, a Medway location would ease the burden of finding some form of transportation from towns such as East Millinocket, Medway, Woodville, Chester, Mattawamkeag, Sherman, Patten (all part of our Katahdin Region service area). A purchase offer for an amazing building with grounds was made to P2P by a Medway resident and businessman whose family suffered a recent loss to substance use disorder. On September 1, 2022, Pir2Peer Recovery Center purchased 2323 Medway Road, and a new journey began in bringing our mission to provide those in the Katahdin Region seeking recovery with a personalized path through coordinating services, resources, and referrals that work with each person's unique situation. Our goal is to help people recover not just sobriety, but also rebuild people's self-esteem so they become vital to themselves and their communities.

Pir2Peer Recovery Center provides a broad range of recovery services and supports to include:

Identifying resources for housing, detox, residential and outpatient rehab;

Recovery coaching: one to one help during one's recovery journey to identify what your goals are and helping to finding resources to achieve those goals through coordination of counseling, MaineCare, financial needs, housing and other resources;

Assist with getting one back into school or getting a GED;

Assist with identifying one's skills, help someone learn new skills, and assistance with creating or updating a resume;

Provide meeting space for recovery programs such as AA, NA, as well as community therapy programs such as weekly paint therapy nights;

Culturally alert to the Wellbriety recovery path offering recovery services tailored to the individual offered by culturally trained Center personnel;

Community garden space; and

Free transportation to and from the Center utilizing our 8 passenger van which was a collaborative effort with Darlings Auto in Bangor and Pir2Peer to bridge the barrier gap of the Region's lack of transportation.

Pir2Peer Recovery Center is a community of dedicated people in recovery who seek to reverse addiction statistics in our great Katahdin Region through being a part of the communities we serve and that is being accomplished through Pir2Peer Recovery Center. We still have much work to do and that is why, plain and simple, we need increased and continued funding to combat addiction in the Katahdin Region. Please enact LD 1714 so that our great state is also a healthy, state.