

north shore news

LETTER: Having a voice means knowing when to listen

North Shore News

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Dear Editor:

Re: [Neighbours Oppose New Group Home \(http://www.nsnews.com/news/neighbours-oppose-new-group-home-1.1762947\)](http://www.nsnews.com/news/neighbours-oppose-new-group-home-1.1762947), Feb. 15 front-page news story.

"Mentally unstable, potentially violent addicts . . .?"

As an individual who has now been sober for just under three and a half years, I can tell you that recovering alcoholics are a group of our society that should be embraced and not feared or scorned or rejected.

For one thing, we are a sensitive crowd . . . which is why we turned to alcohol to numb our pain in the first place. But this also makes us sensitive to others as well, which is one reason why Turning Point has the stats to back up their program that they do.

We actually care about what others think of us. A lot.

Secondly, every single person in this world has issues of some sort. For some it is alcohol, for others it is drugs, cigarettes, sex, gambling, debt, social media, gossip, relationships ... control (as in wanting to dictate who can live in their areas and who cannot), the list is endless.

Only when you are perfect should you be judging others. Until that day, how about you focus on your own . . . stuff?

Thirdly, every program of recovery is based on the same principles. Principles which, unfortunately, are hidden in programs that people turn to when their lives have become unmanageable.

If every person in this world practised these same principles, the world would be a damn near perfect place.

And lastly, if you are really so terrified of these people in your neighbourhood, then talk to them. Listen to their stories. Look into their eyes and feel where they have come from.

I can promise you that if you actually have the courage to do this, compassion and empathy will melt your fears.

Because 100 per cent of the people in those programs are there of their own free will, they are trying. They are trying their very best. And they make much better neighbours than the narrow-minded fear-based cowards who aren't even willing to give them a chance.

As for, "What's the difference between Iran and here?"

Part of having a voice in any community is not only knowing when to speak up, but also when to be quiet and listen to the other voices as well.

Mike Clucas
North Vancouver

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