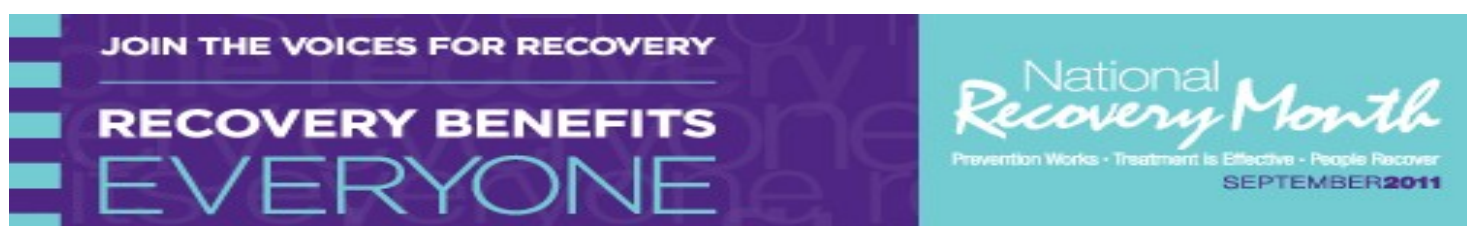


The Southwest Coalition Presents The 7th Annual Rally 'Round Recovery

When: Saturday, 09/17/11 9:30am-2pm

Where: Bicentennial Park-201 W Jefferson St, Joliet



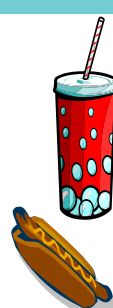
FEATURING:

- ★ Tommy Connolly
- ★ State & Local Officials
- ★ Guest Speakers
- ★ Jim Nesci & The Cold-Blooded Creatures
- ★ The Health Resource Fair
- ★ Music & Other Entertainment

FREE:

- ★ Admission
- ★ Food & Soft Drinks
- ★ Raffle Gifts

While Supplies Last



“Recovery Month, now in its 22nd year, highlights individuals who have reclaimed their lives and are living happy and healthy lives in long-term recovery and also honors the treatment and recovery service providers who make recovery possible.

Recovery Month promotes the message that recovery in all its forms is possible and also encourages citizens to take action to help expand and improve the availability of effective recovery services for those in need.”



Pictured above: Senator Linda Holmes, Senator AJ Wilhelmi, Will County State's Attorney Jim Glasgow, Guest Speaker Russell C. and attendee Abbey G. (Photographs courtesy of Kallan Elias).

2011 Rally 'Round Recovery Spokesperson Tommy Connolly



From homeless to Hollywood, Tommy Connolly has a great story to tell. He also has some good anecdotes about being in the cast of last year's Fox drama, *The Chicago Code*, and roles with William Macey, Kelsey Grammer, Kate Winslet and Laurence Fishburne.

Connolly's personal story is as good as any in films or books. The best part is that he is living a good life; he is in recovery from addiction; and he is willing to share his story to help others.

He will take a giant step forward in his recovery when he steps out as emcee at the 7th Annual Rally 'Round Recovery on Saturday, September 17, sponsored by the Southwest Coalition for Substance Abuse Issues. "This is my way of saying 'thanks' to the people who helped me and to God who saved me. I want people to know that their addiction problem is not unique. I want them to know that recovery is possible."

After losing 28 years to addiction and depression, Connolly reflects, "Life is too short to leave anything on the table. I'm making up for lost time. I barely remember the 1990s." For Connolly, busy includes acting, working as a stand-up comedian with an upcoming performance at Zanies, and frequent performances with Comics for Convicts Faith Outreach, a group that brings laughter, hope and faith to men and women in Illinois prisons. He writes *Every Day is a Gift*, one of the 100 top-rated blogs on addiction and is working with Amazon on the publication of *Soul Parole*, a book from his blog. He also is busy with his own recovery and helping others.

Although he did not follow the traditional path to the theatre, Connolly credits his life experiences with his ability to act. "When you are an alcoholic or addict, you become so many people. You are a chameleon. You do what you have to do to survive. I was a full-blown alcoholic at the age of 17."

It was his step-sister, an actress and model, who urged him to get his photos out to a casting agent last August. He had a job offer the next week and the rest is Connolly history.

He recalls filming *Shameless* with William Macey, who plays an alcoholic. "It was so weird for me to be 'on the other side.' I can remember when I was homeless and living in my car and eating garbage."

When asked if he is nervous about acting in a scene with Kate Winslett, he explains, "No. My panic was always when I was alone with myself. My mind would race and I would drink to handle the barrage of thoughts."

It was through his recovery process that he was asked to get involved with the rally. "If I can help one person to get help, then my lost years were not wasted."

For a boy who grew up in Mokena and now makes his base in Plainfield, Will County is home. He is committed to giving back with proceeds from his upcoming book going to area agencies that work with substance abuse treatment, mental health and the homeless. A long-term goal is to bring his story to teens via a program in schools.

Recalling a comedy show he did at Stateville prison, Connolly remembers seeing a couple of guys he met in recovery and realizing that his life might have taken a different turn, "Addiction is a deadly business. It is an equal opportunity killer. It doesn't care if you have a \$100 bill in your pocket or dust bunnies. It wants you dead.

"Recovery is ongoing work. My words, my blog, my book are aimed at dispelling that stigma of addiction and depression, which often go hand in hand. I want to encourage people to choose recovery. It's possible. I know."

