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Marguerite Baptiste, Emily Bennett, Mandi Magistrelli, and Heather Fahey share their stories of recovery at Bridgewell Johnson Street. (Jackie Manno)

Four voices of recovery in Lynn

September 23, 2025 by [Jackie Manno](#)

LYNN – Heather Fahey had been drinking since she was 13. Throughout her 20s, she simply described herself as a “party girl,” but she eventually realized that searching for the nearest liquor store at 9 in the morning was not normal.

“I lost a lot of friends, a lot of family. I lost myself. I didn’t enjoy life,” Fahey said.

In 2022, Fahey found out she was pregnant with her 2-year-old son Grayson, while she was almost six months along. She joined Bridgewell Women’s Program at Johnson Street upon realizing she needed more long-term treatment after Grayson was removed from her custody.

Bridgewell Women’s Program at Johnson Street is a six month residential treatment program for women with substance use disorders. The program incorporates individual and group counseling, alcohol and drug education, vocational planning, self-help meetings and recreational activities to provide structure and encourage personal responsibility.

Once women graduate from Bridgewell’s Johnson Street location, they often transition to Bridgewell’s Lotus House Family Supportive Housing Program, which supports the women in building independent living skills, healthy relationships, and connections in the community in order to reduce substance use relapse.

After Fahey regained custody of Grayson, she graduated from Johnson Street and moved into the Lotus House. However, she relapsed after a peer in an Intensive Outpatient Program offered her drugs. She attributed the relapse to a subconscious desire to self-destruct after her life was going a “little too well,” and then came back to Johnson Street.

Now sober for a personal record of 15 months, Fahey said something “clicked” within her the second time around, and everyone else around her noticed something different about her as well.

“I need to do more soul-searching. I never want to do this again, but knowing what I know now, it’s what I needed,” she said.

Fahey said her main takeaway from Bridgewell has been learning self-awareness and personal accountability in a way that doesn’t trigger feelings of self loathing.

“I can live an honest life now. If I do something wrong, I can admit to it and move on. It’s just so much better than what life was like,” Fahey said.

Mandi Magistrelli said while she had potential and did well in school growing up, she struggled with low self esteem as a teenager, which led to attempts to escape her feelings with substances. Now at Bridgewell Johnson Street with her 5-month-old son Mateo, she said the structure and supportive environment has been key to her recovery.

“If I wasn’t here, I don’t think I’d be healthy. It was a good thing to have no time to think and just be in my head. The rules are in place for a reason,” Magistrelli said.

She added, “These women have carried me. From others who have been moms, to just women who are encouraging each other. We’re all in this together. Even if there’s people you’re not friends with, you still learn to respect them, and that’s a coping skill.”

Magistrelli has made progress by having her own bank account and job, and she closed her DCF case to ensure her custody of Mateo. She was also appointed as a house manager role at Bridgewell, which is something that has improved her confidence.

“I didn’t really have a voice before. I was very shy, quiet, and insecure. And now, I don’t hate myself. I like myself. My friends here don’t want anything from me. They’re not looking for anything. I’ve learned how to listen and to be a good friend myself without substances involved,” Magistrelli said.

Marguerite Baptiste has been at Bridgewell Johnson Street for six months with her aptly named 8-month-old daughter Hope. She said that the structured program has taught her healthy coping mechanisms and effective communication, especially with navigating personal guilt that can often lead to a cycle of substance use.

“Substance use is a sickness; it’s not a moral issue. It doesn’t make you a bad person. For a lot of people, what keeps them out of recovery for so long is shame, which makes them want to use, which causes more shame. Being here, it’s not just about not using drugs; it’s about addressing the root of the issue, facing the truth and knowing there’s nothing wrong with you; you just didn’t have the tools before,” Baptiste said of the importance of destigmatizing recovery.

Once graduated, Baptiste will then pursue a Master’s degree in mental health counseling.

“You can read as many books as you want, but it’s just never going to be the same as somebody who has had lived experience. I don’t think I would have been the same therapist had I not experienced this part of my life yet,” Baptiste said.

Clinical Director Lina Adballa has also gone through recovery herself, and she attested to the importance of Bridgewell’s supportive environment.

“There’s something unique about having others who are going through the same experience. They can relate on a deeper level,” Adballa said.

Unlike many recovery treatment programs, Bridgewell’s Johnson Street location allows up to four children in the house. Adballa said this is highly beneficial because moving women to another rehabilitation setting in order to reunite with their children could disrupt their recovery process.

The moms in the Bridgewell program agree that in order to be the best parents they can, they need to choose recovery for themselves.


Emily Bennett lost both of her parents to addiction. She was at Johnson Street from July 2024 to February 2025, which she said was her first attempt to get professional help after running into legal issues.

“When I went in, I was totally hopeless. I was just done with life. I lost contact with everybody. I didn’t care where I slept, where I ate. I just cared about using. I lost all contact with reality,” Bennett said.

“But this is the first place I came where I was around other people who were trying to heal. A whole network of recovering people has given me support to stay strong where I am today. I didn’t think this life that I have now would ever exist again. I never thought I would get back on my feet and have a normal life again, but if I didn’t do it the hard way, I wasn’t going to survive,” she added.

Bennett is now in the process of getting her driver’s license, and she has a full time job.

“I hated every day, but I owe everything to this place. It’s not fun when you’re doing it, but it pays off,” she said.



Jackie Manno

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