



Fr. Michael Goetz Library Learning Commons Teacher's Book Review



Nice Recovery, Susan Juby Reviewed by Ms. Cosgrove, January 16th, 2013

I believe that most people when they think of alcoholics, imagine middle-aged people who started drinking socially as adults and who became addicted soon after. Research supported this view to a large degree, several decades ago. The typical patient in recovery, for alcoholism, in the 1980's was male, fifty-three years old and had started drinking as a young adult. In the 1990's, the age dropped to thirty-six and still male, but addicted to a combination of drugs and alcohol. Then it all changed. Research indicates that the average patient in treatment around 2005 was now male or female, under the age of twenty-five and had starting abusing substances, including alcohol, at the age of twelve or thirteen. The good news, it seems, is that alcoholics are seeking help at an earlier age. The bad news is that they are much sicker when they do so.

This memoir is the story of a young girl, Susan Juby, an award winning writer of Canadian young adult fiction. It chronicles her descent into alcoholism, starting with weekend drinking binges with her friends in Grade 7 and 8, as a way to escape her shyness and find a group of people who would be her friends. It is told with startling honesty and sometimes humour. As the story unfolds, you increasingly feel like you are about to witness one accident after another, involving multiple victims and life-threatening injuries. However, just as you think that this woman has fallen into an abyss from which she will never escape, something startling happens, sending her to her first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Her road to sobriety is a difficult one and the challenges she faces scared me more as a reader, sometimes, than the despair and humiliation of her life as an alcoholic.

This is an excellent book. It is a true story written by a gifted writer. I could not stop reading it. I felt like I was the author's cheerleader, yelling words of encouragement from the sidelines. I thought, like so many people, that I knew about the disease of alcoholism, but I learned that I knew very little about the chemistry of addiction and the success rate achieved by so many of the treatment and recovery programs available to alcoholics and their families. This is truly a book about stumbling into a very deep and dark hole and climbing back out of it, into the light.