

# The Martha's Vineyard Times

## Battling abuse on Martha's Vineyard

By Whit Griswold

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The 13th Annual Water Tasting by the Sea was held at the home of Richard and Nancy Friedman on Oyster Pond in Edgartown on Thursday, July 29. As impressive as the sight is, the far-sighted but close-to-home mission of Vineyard House, the beneficiary of the evening, is even more so.



Mark Jenkins, president of the Vineyard House board, spoke of the breadth and consequences of alcoholism in the community, and the need to combat it. Photo by Lynn Christoffers

Vineyard House operates three houses — two for men and one for women — "for Island men and women in need of a safe living environment while they are in the early stages of recovery from alcohol and drug addiction, and who need support while renewing responsibilities to themselves, their families and the community," according to their mission statement. The goal of fundraiser is to thank the friends of Vineyard House, raise awareness for the organization, and raise money to cover operating expenses.

In brief remarks, Mark Jenkins, president of the all-volunteer board, greeted the crowd of approximately 300 by first thanking the Friedmans, the volunteers who made the show go, the donors of auction items, and providers of food and water.

Mr. Jenkins reminded the crowd of the extreme importance of Vineyard House's function on the Island, where substance abuse is the biggest public health issue. He then noted the

new logo on the aprons of board members, short and to the point — "A way home."



Board members John Early and Mary Nada have played primary roles in the 13-year history of Vineyard House. Photo by Lynn Christoffers

Mary Nada, of Boston and Chilmark, joined the board of Vineyard House in 1998, less than a year after it opened. "My husband had retired, and I agreed to retire as a social worker, but I knew I had another chapter of work in me," she said. "I thought I'd help raise money — because I can. I'm not shy about asking."

Citing the stigma of alcoholism, Ms. Nada called the efforts to support those who suffer from the disease as an "underdog" cause. "We don't have a public affinity group, like a museum, a university, or a more publicly acceptable disease," she said, reiterating that alcohol abuse is the most prevalent disease on Martha's Vineyard.

"It's been difficult for us to bring out our success stories and to market our mission as effectively as we'd like, because it's a sensitive issue," Mr. Jenkins said. "There are many people on this Island who are the beneficiaries of Vineyard House, but for understandable reasons, don't want to go public.

"It's amazing, the amount of success stories we've had — frankly, the miracles. Mothers who have been reunited with children, husbands with wives. It's not just the individuals themselves we are helping, but also their families, their employees, the Island community as a whole."



Some attendees were content to chat in the shade of the tent while others strolled across a meadow for a closer look at Watcha Pond. Photo by Lynn Christoffers



Corbin Buchwald, age 7, wets his whistle with something tasty. Photo by Lynn Christoffers

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