

## Delray couple who met in recovery dedicated to helping others stay clean

By PILAR ULIBARRI de RIVERA  
*Palm Beach Post Staff Writer*

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Delray Beach is known not only for tourism, festivals and beautiful beaches, but in recovery communities nationwide, it's known as a place where people struggling with addictions seek solace and support.

It is in the latter realm that Harold and Dawn Jonas have created a niche for themselves.



**Dawn and Harold Jonas relax at KoffeeOkee, an alcohol-free nightclub on Northeast 6th Avenue that they own and operate. Dawn also opened a residence for women in recovery and Harold started sober.com, an online recovery and resource center.**

Dawn, who has been sober for 21 years, opened a live-in sober house for women 11 years ago.

"I always wanted to help people," she said.

But her tendency to get too involved sometimes led to heartbreak.

"We've been to too many funerals to get too attached and we've learned that people are predictably unpredictable," Harold said.

"Certain people used to call Dawn the Band-Aid Kid because she was always trying to help people, and the hardest thing for her has been not to personalize it."

It's something that Dawn, 51, knows and has tried to curb.

"Now I believe God put me here to be a vehicle to help," she said.

Harold, too, has been a vehicle. The 52-year-old got a bachelor's degree in theater and education in Vermont as a young adult, but he struggled with drug use so many years, he missed out on a lot.

After he got sober 20 years ago, he decided to pursue a master's in counseling and psychology from Antioch University in Ohio. He earned the degree online. He then earned a doctorate in addiction studies from International University in St. Kitts.

Then, seven years ago Harold started sober.com, an online addiction and recovery resource center, which has grown every year.

And then there is the couple's joint venture, KoffeeOkee, a swanky alcohol-free nightclub in a building they bought on Northeast 6th Avenue about one year ago. The Jonases, who have been married 19 years and have four children between them, started the place as a coffee shop.

"Our original goal was to change people's coffee habits," Harold said about trying to get folks to switch from the national coffee chains. "That's hard to do and it didn't work for us."

Some of their customers had been bugging them to bring in a disc jockey one night. So, on New Year's Eve last year they had a party at KoffeeOkee. Dawn, who studied interior design at the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale, did the decorating.

"Most of the people that came were in recovery and that's how we got our identity," Harold said. "That's where the market took us."

And it's what they knew.

Now, they offer counseling once a week in their pebble-lined outdoor lounge. They also have open mic nights, karaoke and live bands.

"It's really hard to get people up to a microphone without alcohol," Harold said. "But when they do and they let all their inhibitions go without it, it can be very therapeutic."

The couple also support local artists in recovery by displaying their art.

"There is so much untapped talent with local artists in recovery," Harold said.

They'd like to see KoffeeOkee make enough money to run itself, but their motive is not money.

"There is a vibe here of people helping people," Harold said. "We know they don't have a lot of money and that cup of coffee is really important to them."

The Jonases know just how important the club's social and supportive atmosphere is to people in recovery because they've been there themselves.

In fact, they met in a support group. It was about 20 years ago. Harold was at a local Narcotics Anonymous meeting where Dawn was the speaker. Harold listened as she told her story.

"I saw this hot woman and she was in recovery," Harold remembered. "The pursuit was on."

Not to mention, when Dawn introduced herself to the audience, she told them she was from Philadelphia, a tidbit of information Harold used as an ice-breaker. He, too, is from Philly.

"I recognized him as soon as I saw him," Dawn recalled.

As it turned out, when Dawn was 7, she and Harold were in the same summer camp.

"He was the first boy I ever kissed," she said. "I didn't see him for 24 years after that."