

Weekend Leaders

Leo Dhont, Wisdom Years and Couples Weekend Leader. Leo has been involved in Victories since he did the Break Through Weekend with the founders, Buddy Portugal & Bob Mark, in 1994. Leo has been a LCSW for over 50 years, and has worked almost exclusively with couples and relationships for the last 25. He received his Imago Relationship Therapy certification 25 years ago; training with the originator, Dr. Harville Hendrix. For the past 2 years he has been involved in a Master Class training with therapists from all over the world called Encounter Centered Couples Therapy, with it's originators - Hedy & Yumi Schliefer. For over 20 years, Leo and his wife, Peggy, facilitated "Getting the Love You Want" workshops for couples.

Kevin W. FitzPatrick, L.C.S.W., Psychotherapist, BreakThrough Leader, Shadow Weekend Clinical Advisor, Board Member. Kevin has been involved in Victories since 1987. He has lead BreakThrough Weekends since 1991 and is the co-creator of the Shadow Weekend, which he's co-facilitated since 1996. In his private psychotherapy practice he counsels individuals, couples, groups, and families and has consulted with schools, businesses and hospitals. As part of his mission to empower through healing, Kevin has a particular interest in and commitment to working with men. He presented at all of the Chicago Men's Conferences, Oakton Community College Men's Day, and the Second International Men's Conference in Austin, Texas. He has an undergraduate degree in Psychology from Monmouth College and a Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Illinois, Chicago. Kevin and his wife Ellen have been married since 1980 and have two grown sons.

Niles Frantz, BreakThrough Weekend Leader. Niles has worked on the public relations team at the national headquarters of the Alzheimer's Association in Chicago since 1993. He earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from Temple University, Philadelphia; is an avid reader, a pretty doggone good guitar player, and loves cats. Niles has been married since 1993. He is committed to his own personal growth - most recently developing a strong interest in Vipassana meditation - and to assisting others on their journey(s). Niles participated in the Breakthrough Weekend in October 2001, and has completed both the Wisdom Years and Shadow Weekends.

Jacques Gourguechon, Wisdom Years Weekend Leader. Jacques attended the BreakThrough Weekend in 1986, the the Shadow Weekend in 1993, and Wisdom Years Weekend in 1998. He began staffing in 1994 and has staffed BreakThrough, Shadow, Wisdom Years, and Couples Weekends. Jacques became a Wisdom Years Weekend leader in 2016. Jacques also assists with the Personal Growth Groups after the Wisdom Years Weekends.

Mark Hagen, BreakThrough and Shadow Weekend Leader. Mark is a manufacturing professional currently serving as head of engineering and business development for an aerospace and defense contractor in the western suburbs. He spent the previous 15 years building a successful manufacturing company from the ground-up. He is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Mark experienced his Breakthrough Weekend in 2003 and has staffed or facilitated numerous Victories weekends and programs. Mark became a BreakThrough Weekend leader in 2012.

Ryan Hagerty, BreakThrough Weekend Leader. Ryan is a Shareholder with the law firm of Asher, Gittler & D'Alba, Ltd., a firm specializing in the practice of labor and employment law. He is a graduate of Illinois State University and DePaul University College of Law. Ryan attended his first Breakthrough Weekend in December 2003. He is firmly committed to the notion that one's training never really ends. He has also actively staffed Introduction to Psychodrama, and facilitated several Personal Growth Groups. Ryan was a member of our Board from 2009-2014. Ryan and his wife, Monica, have been married for over 12 years and have two daughters.

Ron Himmelman, MD, Wisdom Years Weekend Leader, Board Member. Ron completed dual undergraduate majors in pre-med and philosophy at the University of Minnesota, where he also received his M.D. degree. He served his residency in internal and emergency medicine at Cook County Hospital. Ron currently practices emergency medicine at Skokie Hospital, part of NorthShore University HealthSystem. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Emergency Medicine.

Paul Kachoris, M.D., FAPA, FAPA, FAACP, FAAT, Psychiatrist, BreakThrough Leader, Shadow Weekend Clinical Advisor, Board Member. Paul is a Board Certified Child, Adolescent, and Adult Psychiatrist, as well as Board Certified in Pediatrics, in private practice, who works with children, adolescents, adults, couples, families, and groups. He is a student of men's issues, an expert in play therapy with children, and a psychiatric consultant to School District 65 in Evanston-Skokie, Illinois. Paul received his undergraduate and medical degrees from Indiana University. He is a member and Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, a member and a Life Fellow of the American Academy of Child/Adolescent Psychiatry, a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and a member of the Illinois Psychiatric Society where he serves on the Illinois Council of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Paul has served on the Victories Board since its inception in the mid 90's. He has been leading BreakThrough Weekends since 1990 and co-leading the Shadow Weekend since 1996, a weekend which he co-created in 1995.

Phil Kirschbaum, LCSW, Wisdom Years Weekend Leader. Phil is co-founder of Gurnee Counseling Center, where he currently practices psychotherapy. He has over 30 years of experience in working with adults, adolescents and children. His specialties include marital therapy, adolescent and family therapy, trauma recovery, performance enhancement using EMDR, recovery from loss, and mind-body work integrating meditative practices into the treatment of depression, anxiety and stress. He completed his master's degree at the Jane Addams College of Social Work and advanced training in behavioral medicine at the Harvard Mind-Body Institute. Phil regularly provides training and consultation to businesses, schools, churches, and community groups on varied topics that include parenting, building healthy marriages, stress and anger management, leadership, group development, and overcoming trauma and loss. He is a member of the National Association of Social Workers.

Alan M. Levin, JD, MA, LCSW, Wisdom Years Weekend Leader. After retiring from a successful career as a labor and employment relations attorney, Alan received his master's degree in social work (clinical concentration) from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration. He is currently a psychotherapist both at Turning Point Behavioral Health Care Center in Skokie, where he is also a clinical supervisor, and in private practice (in Evanston and downtown Chicago) in which he focuses on the issues of lawyers and other professionals in high-stress occupations (www.CareForLawyers.com; www.EvanstonTherapy.com). He is a member of the National Association of Social Workers and of the Chicago Bar Association. Alan completed his undergraduate degree at Yale University and legal studies at the University of Chicago Law School. He is a past board chairman of the Center for Advancing Domestic Peace. He served on the Victories Board from 2003-2015.

Michael Levitt, Wisdom Years Weekend Leader. Having first been introduced to Victories back in 1999 during a particularly difficult period in his life, Michael soon thereafter decided the best way to give back to the organization and to the community at large was to volunteer his time and energy to Victories. Since 1999, Michael has participated in all of Victories' weekends, taken many leadership trainings, staffed Breakthrough and Wisdom Years weekends, and went through the training to become a Wisdom Years weekend leader. Michael is constantly amazed at how much is given back to him for the efforts he puts in to giving to other men in need. Michael has lived in Skokie for the past 15 years with his wife Jean. He is the proud father of two sons who are now both in their twenties and the step-father of a young woman who is a student at the University of Miami in Coral Gables. Cats and their antics and all kinds of music keep Michael occupied in his spare time.

Robert Mark, Ph.D., Psychotherapist, Co-Founder of Victories, Emeritus Board Member, Wisdom Years Weekend Leader. Bob is a clinical psychologist with a successful private practice. He also serves as a consultant to the executives of Fortune 500 companies. Through innovative programs, like Mindsprouts (creative problem solving) and Psycho-Chi (mind-body-spirit awakening), Bob has helped individuals, couples, and corporations for over 40 years. He and Buddy Portugal co-founded Victories of the Heart, which was one of the earliest groups in the men's movement. While no longer leading weekends, Bob remains active and supportive of Victories' mission, assisting in training new Weekend Leaders. Bob has been married for over 46 years and has two married children and three grandchildren.

Phil Metres, Ph.D., Wisdom Years Weekend Leader. Phil is a licensed clinical psychologist with a private practice in Northbrook, Illinois. He has been conducting body psychotherapy work for 19 years and has long had an interest in men's issues. He is a Fellow of Midwest Institute for Somatic Psychotherapy and a former member of its Board.

Rich Milne, LPC, Personal Growth Group Leader. Rich has sold commercial printing in the Chicago area since 1975. As an avocation from 2004-2011, Rich trained in Heart-Centered Hypnotherapy, Breath therapy, and psychodrama. During that time, he assisted and then co-facilitated Personal Transformation Intensive™ Weekends. He also completed Level 1 training in Internal Family Systems therapy. In 2011, he earned a Masters in Community Counseling. Rich has been involved with Victories since 2009 assisting and leading Wisdom Years Weekends, staffing Breakthrough Weekends, and facilitating Personal Growth Groups. Rich also participates in a peer support group for the Wisconsin Truth Project at a prison in Racine, WI. Rich is married and is a grandfather.

Peter Myran, BreakThrough Weekend Leader, Personal Growth Group Leader, Board Member. Retired. Pete received his computer science education from DePaul University and worked as a software engineer and IT Manager in the financial services sector for 30 years. Pete attended his first Victories program, the Wisdom Years Weekend, in 2006. He enjoys co-leading the weekend staff trainings. He is passionate about supporting the PGGs as they develop into thriving, long-lived groups. Pete has been married for 35 years, has a wonderful grown son and is a proud grandpa.

Tom Ostler, BreakThrough and Shadow Weekend Leader, Board Member. Tom is a senior IT manager for a national water utility company located in Northbrook, Illinois. He attended University of Illinois at Chicago and Illinois Institute of Technology. Tom has been active in every program of Victories, beginning with his own BreakThrough weekend in 2001. He is a member of the Board of Directors, sits on many of Victories committees, and facilitates many trainings. He became a BreakThrough Weekend Leader in 2010 and a Shadow Weekend Leader in 2013. Outside of Victories, Tom's interests include creative writing, cycling, music and dogs. He and his wife of 29 years live in Arlington Heights.

George Rieger, Wisdom Years Weekend Leader, Evanston Open Circle Facilitator. George attended his Wisdom Years Weekend in 2006, the BreakThrough Weekend in 2014, and the Couples Weekend in 2016. George began staffing the Wisdom Years in 2009 and became a Wisdom Years leader in 2015. He also is a staff member on the Couples Weekend, alongside his wife Ellen. George started the Open Circle in Evanston in 2013, and he also leads the Personal Growth Groups for Wisdom Years weekends.

Ron Rooth, BreakThrough Weekend Leader, Board President. After a 34 year career as a successful finance and operations executive, Ron is now shifting his experience, talent, and passion to helping executives in various stages of leadership. Simply put, Ron will continue to excel at facilitating people toward higher levels of empowerment, engagement and fulfillment - as vice president and executive coach with the Robinson Resource Group. Prior to his current role, Ron served in senior finance and operations roles – including CFO and/or CEO and board member at both large and small businesses including Fonterra (USA) Inc., Emmi Solutions, Exelon's Enterprises, infiNET Solutions, and Searle Pharmaceuticals. Ron began his career at Arthur Young & Company (now Ernst & Young). Ron is a CPA and Registered Business Coach® earning a BS in Accountancy from the University of Illinois at Champaign. Ron has been married for over 30 years and has two grown daughters and a dog.

Joe Seldess, BreakThrough Weekend Leader. Joe is a psychotherapist in private practice and has been active with Victories as a participant, staffer, and leader for nearly 20 years. Joe has made invaluable contributions to the design and implementation of Victories programs, particularly the BreakThrough Weekend.

Fred Smith, BreakThrough Weekend Leader. Fred attended his BreakThrough Weekend in 2002 and the Shadow Weekend in 2013. He began staffing in 2006 and became a BreakThrough Weekend leader in 2016. Fred also assists with the Personal Growth Groups after the BreakThrough Weekends.

Donald Spitzer-Cohn, Psychiatrist, MD, Wisdom Years Weekend Leader, Board Member. Don is a psychiatrist with a private practice in Northbrook, IL. He has extensive experience with individuals, couples, and family therapy. Don's interest and expertise in men's issues brought him to Victories almost 20 years ago. In addition to leading the Wisdom Years program, Don was for many years a BreakThrough Leader. Current areas of interest include men and money, retirement, growth, and finding happiness and meaning.

Bruce Zimmerman, BreakThrough Weekend Leader. Bruce is an adjunct faculty member at Dominican University, facilitating seminars on Work & Leisure and Ethics. He and his wife of 32 years live in Deerfield where their three grown children went to school. Bruce has been active in various Victories programs beginning with his own BreakThrough weekend in 2007. He is a member of the Board of Directors and became a Personal Growth Group leader in 2010. In addition to Victories, Bruce is active in the Masons and Scottish Rite. He earned his BA at the University of California, Santa Barbara, his MBA from the Kellogg School at Northwestern, and his MLIS at Dominican University in River Forest.