



Spotlight on Rebecca Burge Cooper, BA'83

Rebecca Burge Cooper succeeded in converting a personal health crisis into a successful business that has helped numerous men and women on the road to recovery, just as Rebecca was able to achieve through strength and determination.

While a college student, Rebecca began experiencing a number of eating disorders, ranging from bulimia to compulsive eating. Unhappy with this situation, Rebecca studied the disorders and soon found her way to recovery. She was always happy to help others learn what she had learned. "I started helping people on an individual basis so they could work out their own issues behind eating disorders," said Rebecca. "I found that very gratifying."

She worked her way through college part-time at the Corps of Engineers and as a waitress in Myrtle Beach in the summers to supplement her scholarships. After graduation she accepted a position as a computer programmer in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Rebecca was then transferred to California to do the same type of work. "It was good work and good pay," said Rebecca, "but I needed something to be passionate about. I was still working on my own eating disorders, so that was of great interest to me."

In California she enrolled at Pepperdine University where she earned a master's degree in clinical psychology. "Staffers at Pepperdine told me there was no proven way to help people fight these disorders," said Rebecca. "They said to me, 'Maybe it is up to you to find these methods yourself.'"

After graduation, things just started falling into place. Local recovery centers began sending her clients. She knew that many drug and alcohol users also had eating disorders and shared many of the same issues. Recognizing that the area needed an outpatient center to help these people, she founded Break Aweigh™, where out-of-area clients can reside in structured, semi-structured or unstructured environments depending on the level of care necessary while attending outpatient programs. As a step-down residence, Rebecca's House is a supportive, encouraging sober-living-style living environment with healthy, safe foods. Residents are assisted with healthy menu planning, cooking and grocery shopping.



Rebecca developed Diets Don't Work®, a structured program based on cognitive-behavioral theory, solution-focused theory and educational

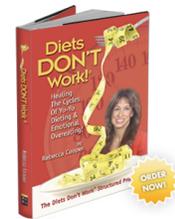
awareness. The Diets Don't Work® program is 12-step compatible. It provides individual sessions, outpatient programs aftercare, support groups and [referrals](#) from licensed therapists and other professionals who are experienced in dealing with eating disorders and food addictions.

"My goal is to help people internalize healthy eating habits," said Rebecca. "I help them stay away from their disorders while bettering their lives, going back to their jobs, etc.

"You have to take care of yourself as you would others you love. A lot of this has to do with coming back to proper self-care," said Rebecca. "Pay attention to external controls, and try to make this a long-term commitment."

In addition to founding the Laguna Niguel, California-based Diets Don't Work®, Rebecca is president of 21st Century Wellness Inc. In October 2004 she was one of five women honored as a Rising Star in Business at the First Annual Stellar Women's Awards Dinner. The event was established by WomanSage© and sponsored by the University of California at Irvine Medical Center.

For more information about Rebecca's organization and book, visit www.RebeccasHouse.org and www.DietsDontWork.org.



Rebecca owes much of her success to her Barboursville High School math teacher, Ernestine Capehart (BA'66, MA'76). After Rebecca's grandparents died when she was 16, Capehart took her into her home when she had nowhere else to go. "She changed my life," said Rebecca. "She showed me what an intelligent, capable woman could do, and what I could do with my own life."