

Self-help for addicts - Homeless detox center in works

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By Todd Cohen

RALEIGH – Ground has been broken for a center for homeless men with substance-abuse problems that organizers hope can become a model for similar facilities in other North Carolina communities.

The Healing Place, which will open in February 2001, will provide a recovery program and support for up to 165 men with the goal of helping them return to the world of work.

Modeled on an innovative center in Louisville, Ky., the facility will consist of three buildings totaling 41,000 square feet that will be built on 4.5 acres on the campus of Dorothea Dix Hospital.

The nonprofit project is being financed with contributions that include \$2 million from [Wake Medical Center](#), \$1 million from Wake County, \$600,000 from the Wake County ABC Board; \$200,000 from [CP&L](#); and \$100,000 each from the [A.J. Fletcher Foundation](#) (which publishes Nonprofitxpress) and from [Capitol Broadcasting Co. Inc.](#), both of which also provided in-kind support.

The project will include a non-medical detoxification center for up to 25 men; an emergency shelter for up to 40 men; a motivational program that can provide short-term shelter for up to 30 men; a recovery program for up to 70 men; and community activity, kitchen and dining facilities, as well as administrative offices.

“It’s a residential facility where people can live while practicing self-help principles,” says Dennis Parnell, the center’s executive director.

“It’s a self-empowerment program that takes men who are still actively using alcohol or drugs, and mixes them with people who are further along in their sobriety,” says Parnell, a recovering alcoholic and drug addict who was homeless 14 years ago. “The program is built on perks and consequences, which are imposed by a democratic society. The staff is minimal. The men run the facility.”

After his recovery, Parnell returned to school, earning a master’s degree in social work at East Carolina University. Before joining The Healing Place, he was substance abuse specialist on the trauma team at Wake Med.

For information, call Parnell at 919-838-9800.