

Healing Place goes entrepreneurial

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With the help of the A.J. Fletcher Foundation, the **Healing Place of Wake County** is set to expand its earned-income activities in an effort to offset the costs of growth.

Through a new division, dubbed THP Enterprises, the nonprofit plans to sell food and excess donations the group can't use, as well as offer online training courses designed to broaden and improve substance abuse-related health care throughout the state.

The **Healing Place**, which provides residential rescue and rehabilitation services for Wake County men and women who are homeless and addicted to drugs or alcohol, recently received a \$100,000 grant from the Raleigh-based Fletcher Foundation to launch its new efforts.

The nonprofit will use the two-year grant to fund THP's director position, which it hopes to fill in January, bringing to \$350,000 the total the foundation has awarded the group since its inception in 2001.

"It's another way of ensuring the **Healing Place** can continue doing what it's doing," says Barbara Goodmon, president of the Fletcher Foundation. "If a nonprofit can bring in some of their own revenue, that's a stream they have more control over."

The **Healing Place** operates a 180-bed facility for men and a separate 98-bed facility for women, and both are at capacity, says Dennis Parnell, the group's executive director.

Additional revenue is needed to cover the group's \$2.5 million annual budget, he says.

"I believe it's a wise plan to look at alternate ways to fund nonprofits," says Parnell. "The idea is to supplement our fundraising efforts by raising our own money through an enterprise arm."

The **Healing Place** currently has a limited earned-income operation, which brought in about \$30,000 during the first 11 months of this year.

Some of that came from sales from the group's concession wagon, which operated at the N.C. State Fair, with the remainder coming from "warehouse sales" that resell donated items in excess of what the nonprofit can use.

Through THP, Parnell hopes to increase earned revenue to \$250,000 to \$500,000 over the next three to five years by expanding those two operations and adding a distance-learning business, he says.

“We provide extremely effective recovery methods and we’re extremely cost effective,” he says. “The distance-learning platform will provide different avenues for recovery.”

THP plans to offer direct services like peer mentoring, as well as online classes designed to replicate the **Healing Place**’s best supervisors, says Parnell.

All three business operations will employ **Healing Place** graduates and participants whenever possible, he says, but also will provide a way to involve the group’s volunteer base.

“It gives exposure to our mission and at the same time can bring in revenue and helps us organize volunteers,” he says.