



Raleigh South

CONNECTION



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Sobering reality



PHOTO BY RON PAGE

Chris Budnick, director of programs at The Healing Place of Wake County, left, chats with John Thomas Miller at the Raleigh facility. Miller joined the program in 2001 and has been clean and sober for six years and now works at the facility.

Facility offers place to heal

By Ron Page

Contributing Writer

It's more than a shelter. This is a place where people find the lives they've lost.

It's called The Healing Place of Wake County - a handsome, rambling brick building with an inspiring sense of hope.

Located at 1251 Goode Street, just off Lake Wheeler Road in Raleigh, this non-profit rescue and rehabilitation facility is modeled after a program in Louisville, Kentucky.

It offers free, long-term, peer-run, 12-step based residential recovery programs for homeless adults with alcohol and drug addiction.

Clients are from all walks of life, all races and all stages of

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- Drew Fish, Fuquay-Varina

recovery and their stays range from one night to graduation from the program after several months.

The campus is a group of dormitory-styled buildings unique in style that's a part of the mission that moves residents through the phases of recovery.

As they do, they gain more room and more freedom to the point where they can leave the premises and eventually return to a meaningful and productive

life.

The men's facility opened on January 15, 2001, and the women's facility, located at 3304 Glen Royal Road, opened on January 16, 2006.

Records show that more than 2,200 men, women and children are homeless and many live on the streets in Wake County each night.

The Healing Place professional staff and residents serve an average of 140 men and 49 women per day, on an around-the-clock basis.

Residents have an essential role at The Healing Place. They check in overnight shelter guests; assist in food preparation; provide laundry and security services; and maintain the

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building and grounds. They also manage the Clothes Closet, front desk service, and serve as drivers and runners.

There's a multitude of recovery steps for those on the road back. Seventy per cent of them will be sober a year after they make it through and achieve a level of recovery that marks them as "Silver Chippers."

John Thomas Miller is an example. "I came to the program in 2001," he said. "I finished in 2002 and I've been clean and sober now for six years. "It's wonderful."

"And he works here," added Chris Budnick, director of programs for the Men's Facility, who was checking out several sleeping facilities at the time.

"Yes," Miller smiled. "I do the floors here. I'm part time."

But sobriety is no easy task

Here's a look at the step-by-step plan towards recovery used by The Healing Place:

Overnight Emergency Shelter – Thirty-six beds are available here with an additional 20 mats available during severe or below-freezing weather. No commitment is required for overnight, but if a homeless addict commits to recovery, he must attend specific classes to be guaranteed a bed.

Sobering Up Center – An addict can be safely detoxed in this supportive environment of a 22-bed center, a viable alternative to emergency rooms, jails, and the street. It allows residents who are sober to have an impact on those who are in detox. Most of the men spend three to five days in detox. If a man chooses sobriety, he moves into the Off The Street program.

Off The Street Program – An addict must complete this first step to sobriety before entering the motiva-



PHOTO BY RON PAGE

The Healing Place in Raleigh affords many a second chance in life.

tional phase, when addicts learn about the disease of addiction. Attending classes guarantees a man a bed each night. He then advances in the program based on the number of Alcoholic Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, and Narcotics Anonymous meetings he attends – usually 12 to 15 meetings a week as he learns about the physical and psychological realities of addiction. Off The Street generally takes eight to ten weeks.

Phase I Recovery Program – A resident typically spends four to six months in this phase. Recovery is unique for each person, as residents help maintain the facility. Their job assignments range from basic maintenance to clerical duties or cafeteria duty.

Others are responsible for building and grounds maintenance, laundry duty or Clothes Closet, which provides the men with donated clothing. Others work in office support or as van drivers. Each man in recovery attends the Life Skills course offered through Wake Technical College to learn how to find a job, save money, and move into independent housing.

Phase II Transitional

Program – This is the final stage of the program. Thirty-six beds are reserved for those people who have "worked" all of the 12 steps of recovery, completed their class work, and have been sober over six months. In this structured, supported environment, residents receive help in gaining employment, opening a bank account, resolving any outstanding legal issues, and finding independent housing.

Depending on their needs, Phase II residents may stay three to five months. They also may sign up for a 90-day volunteer contract to teach recovery dynamics in exchange for free room and board and a weekly stipend.

It's here that a new way of life begins.

Moving towards the final stage of sobriety, a recovering addict has more privileges as well as increased responsibilities. Phase II residents can sign in and out when leaving the property for work, leisure, or an overnight pass. They must also spend time with men coming in off the streets, which reinforces the changes that recovering residents have made in their

own lives.

As to saving taxpayer dollars, The Healing Place brochure outlining its program, cites the following: "At only \$25 per day per client, our unique program addresses the root causes of addiction through education and, by reducing the costly services of tax-supported organizations such as emergency medical treatment, saves taxpayer dollars. The Institute of Medicine cites that 'successfully treating alcohol problems costs 10 times less than the current cost of alcohol abuse to society.'"

Drew Fish lives in Fuquay-Varina today, remembering days in the past when he followed through the steps of The Healing Place program as one who it is designed to help.

"It changed my life forever. They didn't ask for a penny," he said. "You help yourself -- We'll help you!" is the way it is put." Fish today stresses that he is eternally committed to any and all services offered by the program, helping to spread the word to residents of Southern Wake County.

"Volunteers, participants and support are always welcome," he said.