

Raleigh center offers refuge from substance abuse

The Healing Place in Raleigh broke ground Aug. 21, 2013, on a new community garden.

RALEIGH, N.C. — Chef Chris Lawrence runs the kitchen at [The Healing Place](#) in Raleigh, where he feeds dozens of homeless men who are recovering from substance abuse.

He has something in common with them.

After 30 years of abusing drugs and alcohol, Lawrence arrived at The Healing Place seven years ago.

“I was scared. I had no hope,” he said. “At that point in time, I didn't want to live.”

Lawrence went through the rehabilitation program at the facility and got a job a year later. Then the Healing Place hired him to run the kitchen.

Chief Executive Officer Dennis Parnell says Lawrence is one of the many success stories. From cooking the food to teaching in the classrooms, the people getting help are also helping themselves.

About 70 percent of the clients who complete the program are sober a year later. Parnell says that's three times the national average for recovery programs.

“It's a hand-up, rather than a hand-out, program,” Parnell said

Homeless advocates from Africa and Japan are visiting The Healing Place to learn why it works so well.

Parnell says it offers hope to the residents because they “see other people that have gone through the same experience.”

That's why Lawrence arrives at 5 a.m. every day, even though he doesn't start working until 7 a.m. He spends a couple of hours visiting with residents at breakfast.

“I'm here to share my story with them to let them know that hey, what happened to me can happen for you,” he said.