



"The path to restore your life"

Pathways Behavioral Services' Sober Living-transitional Housing Proposal January 31, 2006

Pathways Behavioral Services respectfully proposes an agreement to the Justice Systems Appropriations Committee to provide the following as it relates to our transitional housing project (the Junkman/Knoebel Center) for people in early recovery from substance abuse:

- 1. Pathways would house as many as ten parolees at any one time providing they met our acceptance criteria and follow all house rules and expectations.
2. Pathways will agree to provide this service based on a negotiated reimbursement rate which both Pathways and the Justice Systems Appropriations Committee finds reasonable.

Junkman/ Knoebel opened in October of 2001 and since that time has housed 71 parolees. Currently 8 are in residence with another expected soon. Twenty percent leave within the first 30 days and the rest stay an average of five months. They are eligible to stay as long as a year. All of these referrals have completed an in-prison substance abuse treatment program while incarcerated.

Respectfully,

Handwritten signature of Chris Hoffman

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**Junkman/Knoebel serves people struggling with addictions**

By GLORIA ALEFF, Courier Correspondent

WATERLOO --- Voices --- bits and pieces of conversations --- reveal hard realities.

I started using drugs when I was 13 ... I couldn't stop drinking. I tried ... I was 19 the first time I went to prison ... My life was like death. Alcoholism. Drug addictions. Desperate, wounded lives.

The themes resonate with Ashley Cobb, 24, of Waterloo. Because her story is similar. "I started on meth, then cocaine, when I was a teenager," she says. "I dropped out of high school, went into drug treatment and played the game. Got out and went back out. I lost everything to support my drug habit."

She stole her grandparents' credit cards. Fed up, they filed charges. Cobb went to jail in April 2004. "I was locked up for 42 days. I felt totally abandoned," she says. Changes were required. "What I was doing, I couldn't keep doing," Cobb says. Recovery, by definition, begins at the bottom.

The Waterloo woman moved into the Junkman/Knoebel Center, a transitional house designed to give residents a place to start. The haven is a division of Pathways Behavioral Services in Waterloo and offers people a way out. "We give them the opportunity," says Meryle Muller, case manager and coordinator. "But it is always their choice."

**Leading by example**

Residents are screened carefully before getting a bed, and living at Junkman/Knoebel means accepting house rules.

Sex offenders are barred. The center accepts men and women, but sexual relationships are prohibited. Violence and theft won't be tolerated.

Residents must get a job within three weeks, abstain from drugs and alcohol, attend house meetings and go to Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous sessions. "The hardest thing I have ever had to do was kick out a man who tested positive for drugs on Christmas Eve," Muller says.

He also knows the pain created by drug and alcohol addictions. "My life was like a train wreck. I wanted my life to end in my first year in recovery." Muller was 32 and considered suicide. He changed his mind after realizing the rope he held was too long for the low bridge he was standing on. "God must have had other plans for me," he says.

Muller, now 52, has been clean since. The Dumont native holds a degree in social work from Wartburg College and pursues a simple goal. "Life in recovery is doing the right thing," he says.

Cobb is learning.

"Meryle has a way of talking. He has street smarts. There is an immeasurable amount of meaning in everything he says." Even so, in an environment where residents combat internal, personal demons in close quarters with others in the same struggle, conflicts happen.

Tony Grider, 43, a cook in prison, prepares many of the evening meals. "I told the guys to wash the dishes or I quit cooking. They didn't, and I quit for 3 days," he says.

Grider, who has been in prison five times in 14 years, is willing to work through house issues. "For the first time in years, I have a home, and I want to do what is right," he says.

Probation officer John Harrington visits his charges at Junkman/Knoebel. "They have been to my house. Now I go to theirs," he says. Harrington supports the center's model because it seems to work and because it's cost-effective. "The jails and prisons are full," he says. "I want to give people a chance to correct their lives. We have had good success with people living at Junkman/Knoebel."

Residents pay \$100 a week. By comparison, taxpayers fork out up to \$30,000 annually to keep a person behind bars for a year, Harrington says.

### **A new beginning**

Junkman/Knoebel opened in October 2001. Pathways purchased the building on West Fourth Street from Allen Hospital, which used the space as a women's health clinic.

"It was ideal for the 25-bed residence we needed," says Chris Hoffman, Pathways executive director.

Then the real work began. "Buying the building was the easy part. Keeping it open requires money and passionate people," Hoffman says.

Junkman/Knoebel has an annual operating budget of slightly more than \$126,200. "This year," Hoffman says, "we have a \$6,400 deficit." And that is before heading into winter and facing expected higher heating bills.

"Our two furnaces are 25 years old. Grants for financial assistance are hard to get for an existing building," Hoffman says.

Muller goes to a food pantry on Mondays to pick up canned goods. He buys perishable items. "On a good week, people bring leftovers from funerals and weddings," says Dick "Sully" Sullivan, president of Pathways board of directors.

Junkman/Knoebel residents maintain a buddy system. Rick White, 37, the father of two girls, is available to Kyle Gelder, 23, who moved in earlier this month. "My biggest challenge here is getting used to house rules. I don't like structure," Gelder says. "Rick was one of my first buddies. When I complained, he listened and told me how to better handle my problems."

Individuals, though, are responsible for their own recovery with help from a sponsor. Frequently, that person is in recovery themselves. White's sponsor is Bill Murphy, 43, of Waterloo. "I lived at Junkman for 15 months," Murphy says. "I came in lost, living a life of 25 years of bad decisions." When he left, he crafted what is known at the center as Murphy's Law. A plaque hangs on the living room wall. "If you're not here after what I'm here after, you will be here after I leave."

Cobb, the 24-year-old Waterloo woman, thinks she is on the right course now. She is a student at Hawkeye Community College. And she is drug free. "I have been clean since I moved in three months ago," she says.

And that is a voice not heard in awhile.

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The National Institute on Drug Addiction (NIDA) suggests the following for **best practices** in treating substance abuse:

- **Prison-Based Treatment Programs**

Offenders with drug disorders may encounter a number of treatment options while incarcerated, including didactic drug education classes, self-help programs, and treatment based on therapeutic community or residential milieu therapy models. The TC (therapeutic community) model has been studied extensively and can be quite effective in reducing drug use and recidivism to criminal behavior. Those in treatment should be segregated from the general prison population, so that the "prison culture" does not overwhelm progress toward recovery. **As might be expected, treatment gains can be lost if inmates are returned to the general prison population after treatment. Research shows that relapse to drug use and recidivism to crime are significantly lower if the drug offender continues treatment after returning to the community.**