

# Streetwise Lessons

## Men's Center helps purge addictions

BY JAKE THOMAS  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

For nearly two decades Trent Horsley woke at 5 in the afternoon, gulped down a carton of milk and a pastry and turned all of his attention towards two simple goals: using

Greg Stone, who has managed the program since its inception, explained that the men referred to the program by Multnomah County Department of Community Justice have one last chance to get clean, or risk serving out a long jail sentence.

"They come here voluntarily, but the voluntarily part is: Come to treatment, or else," said Stone jokingly. "So I call them 'voluntarily mandated.'"

Stone said that there is no neat profile of patient at the center. Some

after the counseling sessions he could now do something as simple as weigh the pros and cons: Sure, he would have money, but he would likely use some of the drug that would knock him off course.

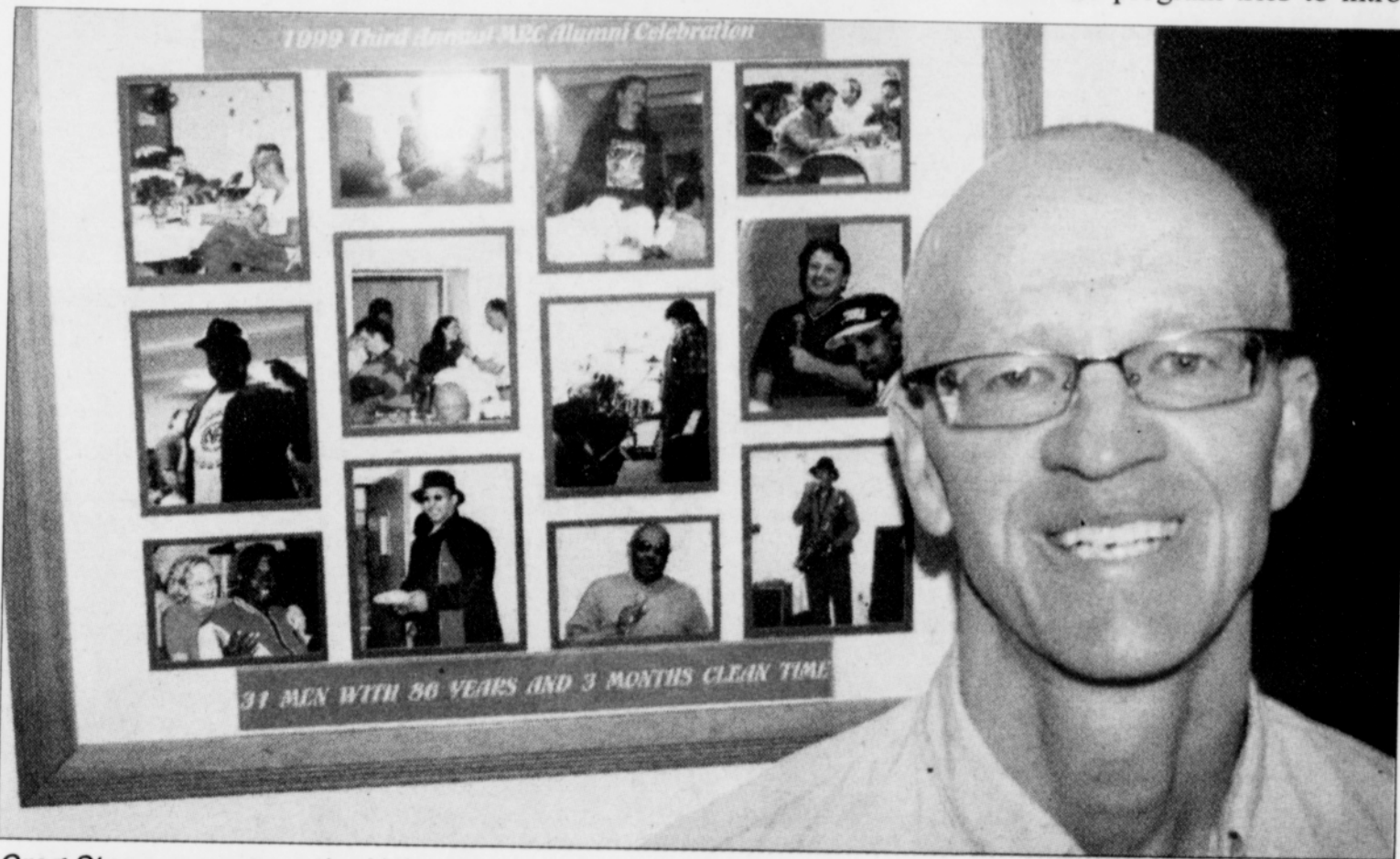
For some patients, like Horsley, staying away from familiar social circles can be a challenge, as the program requires you to drop contact with old friends.

"It's truly your job to choose the change," he said.

But the program tries to intro-



PHOTOS BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
Bill Moore reaches back to his own life experiences to help others kick drug addictions at the Volunteers of America Men's Residential Center on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.



Greg Stone manages the Volunteers of America Men's Residential Center, drawing addicts back into mainstream life.

cocaine and coming up with money for more cocaine.

"It's you; it's all about you," said Horsley, 48, on what it's like to be an addict. "Nothing would mean nothing to me."

He spent time in prison and watched his relationship with his wife become strained as his habit tightened its grip on his life. But after spending time in prison and "shucking and jiving" his was through a recovery program he landed in a program run by the Volunteers of America that turned his life around.

For nearly 20 years, the Volunteers of America has run the Men's Residential Center aimed at drawing addicts back into mainstream life.

In a two-story building off of Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard 52 men live under the same roof while counselors attempt to purge from them any desire to get high.

The staff scurries around the kitchen making that day's lunch of sloppy Joes while patients participate in counseling sessions.

have low-level property and person-to-person crimes on their records. Some are middle aged and gray-bearded. Some are in their 20s. But all are mired in addiction.

One of the most basic ideas behind the program is that addicts will be addicts until they change deeply ingrained thought patterns.

"Basically, you're trying to reframe their thinking skills so they intervene," said Stone, which often means getting addicts to consider the consequences of their actions and how it might impact others.

Horsley admits that some of the stuff he first heard in the program sounded "corny," but has helped him out when he's been tempted.

While attending church or going to the store with his wife, he's been approached by people involved in the local drug economy hoping he can hook them up. Recently someone wanted to do \$100 worth of business.

Back when Horsley thought of nothing but his next fix, he would have jumped at the offer to score some quick cash and drugs. But

duce patients to a new network of people. Alumni of the program are free to drop in anytime for meals or just to chat.

Bill Moore, a former drug dealer who finished the program in the

1990s, comes back almost every day to talk to patients struggling to make it through.

"It will work if you let it work," said Moore, who sold drugs for years and originally entered the program with the intention of merely cutting back on his own drug use so he could have more to sell.

Stone said patients being able to see and interact with someone who got sober and found steady work from the program can help them see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Throughout the center, you can't walk a few feet without seeing some sort of photo of patients and alumni smiling together in photos often

with plates of food in front of them.

But next to a poster Stone calls the "Alumni Hall of Fame," which boosts former patients who are doing well, is another board he deems the "Plaque of Death," which features the names of people who died during treatment. A few empty slots lie ominously empty.

Only 20 percent of the people who enter the program end up making it, and there's been countless times he's been threatened or had to defuse tense situations. However, Stone remains optimistic.

"It's a challenge," he said, adding, "It's also an amazing transformation."

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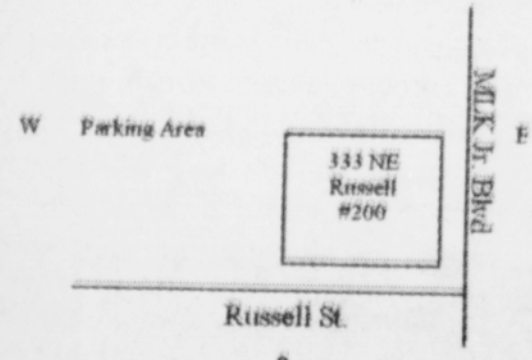
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