

Alcohol Center offers Warm, Friendly Residence

by Donna Behrend

"After looking at your records and past offenses and recognizing that nearly all crimes on your record are alcohol related, we hereby refer you to 90 days in the Warm Springs Alcohol Center, effective date March 30, 1979."

So begins the "sentence" of an abusive drinker. More than just an alternative to a jail cell, a stay at the Warm Springs Alcohol Center can be a turning point in the life of an alcoholic.

The center, which is located in the heart of the campus area, offers a warm and friendly atmosphere and a home away from home where a person can rest and put his life back together. The center has come a long way in the last year. A new diet and fresh program ideas have given the center a confident new profile.

Residents have structured time, some free time, but plenty of constructive time to reflect on their personal situations. Information sessions as well as group and individual therapy sessions encourage residents to look their lives in the face. Services at the center are available to anyone in need of help, male or female, tribal member or non-member.

SETTLING IN

Most clients are referred to the alcohol center by county or tribal courts with treatment mandates. Some are referred by the clinic or other health services and a few are self-referrals.

Upon arrival at the center, each client undergoes intake procedures with one of two staff counselors and receives helpful orientation by a resident. He is informed of rules and regulations and what is expected of him as a resident. Each resident is assigned daily responsibilities

and duties, such as vacuuming, mopping and washing dishes — whatever chores are required to run a home.

The responsibility of running the center smoothly lies on three resident committee members who are elected by other residents. Those duties range from orientation and settling grievances to planning trips and issuing bedding.

Once a client becomes familiar with his new environment, he then begins attending the two information sessions offered daily. Topics of discussion range from how to deal with anger to flower arranging and poetry writing. The great majority of the sessions, however, deal with recovery. They are a time for image-boosting and positive feedback, for which alcoholics thirst.

Twice weekly, each client must see his counselor on an individual basis, and attend small group therapy sessions where no more than eight people are in attendance. Also, each person is required to be present at two Alcoholic Anonymous meetings held at the center each week.

TEN-DAY STRETCHES

A new pass system, based on ten day stretches, has been established for the residents. A new resident cannot leave the premises for the first ten days except to go to the doctor or attend group functions. At the end of ten days, the person is evaluated by two staff members and a residential committee member. If the evaluation is positive after ten days, the client is then allowed to leave the building, but only with a resident who has been there longer than twenty days. After ten more days and following another evalua-

tion, if positive, the client can leave unaccompanied during free time only, and weekend day passes are issued. Again, after ten more days and after positive evaluation, the clients are free to leave during free time and are allowed overnight-weekend passes.

At the end of the thirty day period, the client is urged to seek employment, or if already employed, return to that job. "While they're in a safe environment," says Alcohol and Drug Program Director Steve Bekofsky, "we try to get them into good working habits and change their life patterns." If a resident works the day shift, there are evening therapy sessions offered and if they work the swing shift, the sessions are given during the day. No client is allowed to work on the graveyard shift.

CHEMICAL-FREE DETOX

Bekofsky has introduced an entire new diet to residents by purchasing nothing but "whole foods", or what many of us refer to as natural foods. Many clients turned up their noses at the soy margarine, whole wheat pastas and flour, and honey to name just a few of the new additions. But since its introduction six weeks ago, Bekofsky and several staff members have noticed that clients are more energetic and sleeping better.

Bekofsky's theory, which he also introduced to the Sweat-house Lodge in Salem, is that the "drinker's body is already detoxing chemicals, why add more chemicals with the food they eat." All food is prepared from scratch and their pantry proves to be the envy of many housewives.

Center cook Barbara Bobb has easily adapted her cooking skills around the whole-food theory. Bekofsky is proud of her

efforts and encourages her to use new ideas and recipes. Barbara is presently working seven days a week, producing 21 meals per week on a stove that is in need of repair.

Another gripe among residents is that the "pop machine" was removed and replaced with a fruit juice machine. "I don't know why they took it out," said one resident. "I just wish they would hurry up and get juice in the new machine." A few residents travel to the store for their supply of sodas, lining them up in their windows for refrigeration.

Antabuse is still used at the center, but the method for distribution has changed. If any referral agency stipulates that a person take antabuse, then the center issues the medication. However, if a person is self-referred, the counselor and client decide if antabuse is the way to go. Some people decide not to take it at all," says Bekofsky. "We feel that antabuse is for impulse drinkers, but it is a valuable tool to help them stop drinking. We try to teach them responsibility for their own sobriety," he concluded. There are about 40 people taking antabuse now.

COMMUNITY CLOSE BY

The residents have projects that help them earn money for field trips. Recently, the residents went smelting on the Sandy River, giving 200 pounds of their catch to elders in the community. They also held a car wash last weekend, earning them \$26.00.

Reverend Allen Elston visits the center weekly for spiritual sessions. All clients are urged to "get involved and seek spirituality," says Bekofsky. "We would like them to worship in a way with which they are comfortable. Local tribal elders also present information to the

clients. Bekofsky welcomes any other religions to offer information to the group.

Many feel the location of the center often hinders constructive therapy. If it were located in "the country" the residents could plant gardens, flowers and possibly raise small animals. In addition, the residents require respect and privacy. "Many people come into the building who aren't connected with the alcohol program," says McConville. "The clients don't like to be eyeballed."

A concern expressed by a few residents of the center is that people seem to be afraid of them. "People think we turn into something else when we're in here," said one person. "But when they visit the house, they see we're the same people that they see at the store, the long-house and throughout the community."

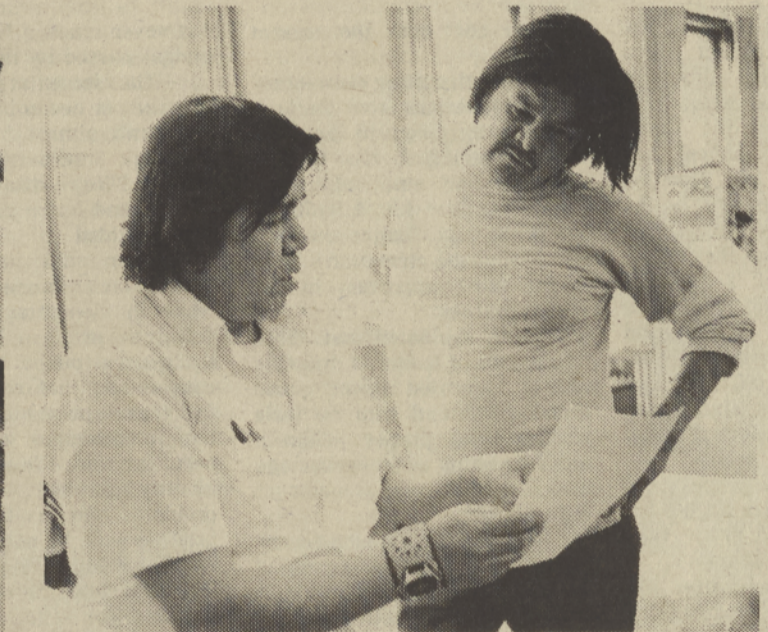
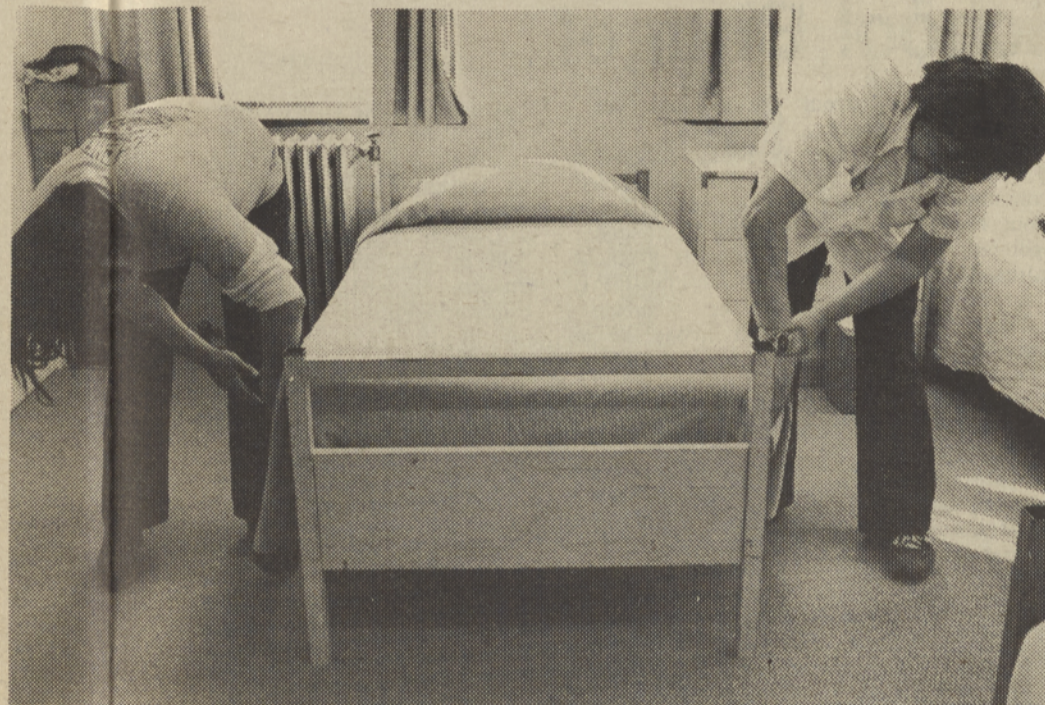
Whenever a client leaves the center after staying the prescribed time, other residents find it difficult to say "goodbye". They become close friends while in the center together and have gone through things that many of us will never experience. There are many "good licks", "hope you maintain your sobriety", and "stay away from the booze".

The center has seen many "repeaters". But, according to Art McConville, treatment director, more self-referrals return than court referrals. "They are comfortable with the mini-community here, and want to fit in," he says. "Many of them come back because they have no place else to go."

But those venturing out into the community have the center's message ringing in their ears. As Bekofsky expresses it, "Each person has a lot of power to stay sober." The Warm Springs Alcohol Center exists to reinforce that power.

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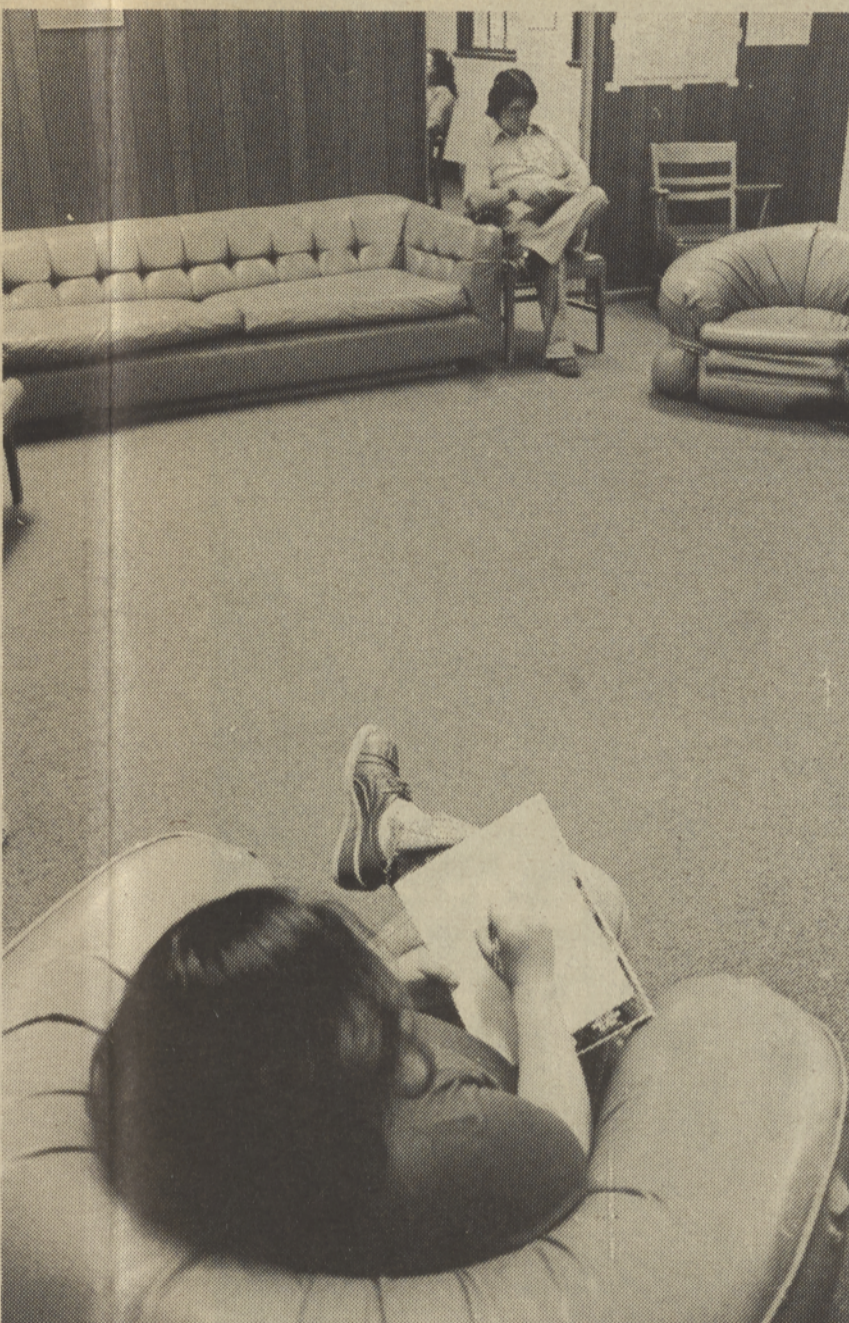
Photos by Cynthia Stowell



Warm beds, whole food and good company are not far away for local alcoholics. And they come complete with a comprehensive recovery program that helps put problems into perspective.



MEETING OF MINDS — Group sessions can cause residents of the Warm Springs Alcohol Center to retreat into their personal thoughts or establish warm communication with their peers — or both. Senior resident Peter Reed shared a moment of understanding with counselor Billie Jo McConville.



Life at the Warm Springs Alcohol Center has many faces. There is always someone new checking in and receiving a casual but helpful orientation to house rules or a friendly hand with bed-making (top pictures).

And there are also "good-byes" to be said to residents who have completed their treatment. One "information session" found residents writing farewell letters to a friend who was leaving (lower left).

Free time is spent in a number of ways. Washing cars to earn spending money (middle left) and shooting some pool (near left) are popular activities.

Meal time is a friendly time when residents get together and share their dining room with guests from the community (below). Meals are also a matter of controversy currently as only "whole" or natural foods are prepared in the center. One resident eyed the alfalfa sprouts suspiciously (above), then tried some. "They kind of make my eyes twitch," he said with a frightened look.