

Another director resigns

"What are we going to do?"

"You are some of the finest people. I feel honored and privileged to know you. But you're dying."

"Alcohol is killing people a lot faster than need be. The life expectancy need not be 42 years. It should be twice that."

Resigning Alcohol Program director Jeanette Murray expressed deep concern for the people of Warm Springs as she outlined her reasons for leaving. After only three months as director she has tried to implement programs for the people's benefit but realized the magnitude of the problem to be too great for her.

Murray, in a going-away speech, cited some of the problems, "some easily handled, some requiring training, some requiring staff commitments and some pointing to community involvement" explains health branch manager Bob Jackson. The main problem, he asserts is "the community expecting a small group to make a great change."

The alcohol problem in Warm Springs cannot be managed by a small group. It is everyone's problem. Only community members can alleviate it says Murray, "No one can do it for you. You have to do it for yourselves."

Even with the enormity of the task at the Alcohol Program Murray felt her work and any efforts she made were stifled by a lack of support from management. "Administration wouldn't back me. I was left without any authority...I was beating my head against a brick wall." Suggested changes were met with resistance.

So, another director resigns. Who do the clients needing

help go to now?, she asked. Because there are often close relationships among the people of Warm Springs many do not seek help from the Alcohol Center. A more neutral party is needed, Murray explains.

"I see we are back where we started from," public works director Jeff Sanders estimated. "The number of director ships is almost equal to the number of clients. The enemy appears to be ourselves—staff, management and commitment to the program. The real enemy, though, is alcoholism."

Acknowledging that alcoholism is a very real problem and there is no one to act as guide to alleviate it Charlotte Herkshan after Murray's announcement asked "What are we going to do

Not wanting to leave the Alcohol Program and Warm Springs without any direction Murray had some suggestions to make for the program.

She recommended that the Tribe utilize experts in the field of alcohol treatment. They are greatly needed.

Also, speaking to the Alcohol Advisory Board and the community, Murray expressed the need to "decide what you really want to have." Define the needs, whether or not a full-treatment program is what is really wanted. "This has to come from inside," from the people.

"Decide what you can realistically have." Sometimes, Murray says, ideas cannot be realistically implemented.

It is necessary, too, "to determine treatment philosophy and set it down in writing." It has been stated in writing that alcoholism is a treatable disease and that



Spilyay Tymoo photo by Shewczyk

Providing resident patient care and out-patient care the Alcohol Program has a \$200,000 budget, not enough for adequate coverage of the alcohol program, says resigning director Jeanette Murray.

education must be provided for the community and clients. "That's all it says." Clearer direction must be given through a specific philosophy, recommended Murray.

Important is the need to develop a strong outpatient program, she emphasizes. Families must be involved to help.

A strong intervention team is essential. There are loving, caring, concerned people who are willing to understand a person and offer solutions. Staff training is needed to meet this goal.

One of the strongest recommendations offered by Murray is the establishment of a half-way house where people

can come after treatment. It would offer an opportunity for the client to reorient into the community. The client could move forward in a protective place.

As far as providing an effective full-scale treatment program on the reservation at this time Murray sees little hope for its success. There is no "Internal source to stop alcoholism on this reservation. I think there's a lot of help needed."

A major factor limiting the program is money. Three people currently would like to enroll in the Serenity Lane alcohol treatment program, completed successfully by a

dozen people on the reservation. The money is not available.

With a \$200,000 budget there's not enough money for adequate treatment of those who need it. Much money could be made available,

explains Murray, through various programs. Even a loan program for those wishing to attend a treatment center would be better than nothing at all.

Finally, Murray stresses, Tribal Council has made a commitment to the program, assenting that the Alcohol Program is a service, not just an employment program.

Road to sobriety long but rewarding trek

by Donna Behrend

The life of an alcoholic is often unpleasant and tough. He finds it difficult, if not impossible, to manage his life. The alcoholic is often late for or absent from work, calling in with countless excuses why he

can't make it in; the alcoholic is often without enough money for essentials, without family and friends, without self-respect—in actuality, he is suffering from the effects of a disease over which he has little control without professional help. He is in the control of alcohol.

To combat the disease and its symptoms, many people in Warm Springs have opted to get professional treatment. In many cases, people have gone to Serenity Lane in Eugene. Even though Serenity Lane is not the only treatment center used for outside referrals, its success rate is astounding. Over 20 people have gone to Eugene within the last two years—all but two have successfully completed the program. The road to sobriety is long and arduous, but for one of the program's participants interviewed by Spilyay Tymoo, the struggle was well worth the time and effort. Though willing to speak with me, he stressed confidentiality and wished not to be identified.

"Legal problems got me into the program," said this recovering alcoholic. "I wanted to stop drinking anyway." Several bumps with the law hastened the Tribal Court's decision to refer him to an alcohol treatment center. Also, a physical examination showed some liver damage. "That really scared me." Also, it has been determined that the average mortality rate of American Indians is 45 to 50 years of age. "I plan to live twice as long as that."

"I was a weekend drinker, I lived for weekends." Though this person says his current job was not affected by his

drinking, he remembers previous jobs where he would call in to work on Fridays with an excuse and the not come in on Mondays. Though he was ordered by the court to go through a treatment program, he feels his treatment was successful. "Many people are court mandated, so they walk through the program just to satisfy the law. . . Once I got there, it really opened my eyes." Also, "the program gives you an outright view on how you can be if you drink everyday."

Because alcoholism is a disease and not a "bad habit" and alcohol causes a toxic chemical to be released in the body, the disease concept of alcoholism is accentuated at Serenity Lane. "Facts are given on what alcohol does to the body." In addition, hints are given on "There's no such thing as a social drinker. You drink to get drunk," says this recent graduate. "People are insane when they're drunk," he says.

Behavior modification is important as well as changing social circles and finding new interests. "It's stressful to be around drinkers. Their attitude towards drinking is so different. You really find out who your 'friends' are. 'Friends' avoid me because they think I'm going to preach to them about the disease concept."

Because he wasn't drinking anymore, this person found

new directions for his weekends. "I do things now that I neglected before." He reads, attend A.A. meetings and is active in aftercare programs. Most importantly to this person, though, is his rediscovery of God and His power.

Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) has identified 12 steps of A.A. The first and most important, is for the person to admit they are powerless over alcohol—that their lives have become unmanageable. The second step is that the person has to come to the belief that a Power greater than themselves could restore them to sanity. Whether that "Power" be God, family or friends, it is essential that that Power be recognized and dealt with. "To recover, we do need to work on the mental, physical and spiritual areas of our mind and body. I participated in Bible studies and attend church now," something that has really helped.

"A person has to really want to make changes in their life and be willing to sacrifice, for a program such as this to be effective. . . It's a choice of life or death. Alcohol shortens your life and deteriorates your body. . . I married my sobriety 'til death do us part, even though it's one day at a time. By living one day at a time, I know I'll live longer, he said with a proud smile.

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