

Safe from A1

had been in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) for many years, passed away. Booher's family, aware of the group's mission, happily agreed to let Safe Haven use his property.

"They understood what it was about," Anderson said.

Current plans are to see the Booher House's first residents sometime in June.

For Anderson, establishing transitional housing specifically for women was partially motivated by a concern for child welfare.

"Since they also are usually the caretaker for the children, if we serve them first, that would be better for the kids," she said. "They get their mommy back."

Safe Haven also intends on giving local Cottage Grove women priority, an important move considering the tendency for environmental factors to trigger relapse.

"When somebody gets out of recovery and they have to go back to where they come from, they're going into a really toxic environment and their chances of staying sober or staying clean are very small," Anderson said.

Alcohol and drug abuse are statistically conspicuous problems in Oregon.

Data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration indicate that Oregonians seek treatment for alcohol addiction more than



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The house at 850 E Quincy will serve as a sober-living environment for recovering women addicts to transition back into a healthy lifestyle.

any other substance, and in 2016 Oregon had the fifth-highest rate of alcohol abuse in the nation.

Opioid abuse has also been a rising problem and Oregon rates reflect a national trend of increased opioid addiction and misuse. Opioids can be found in both prescription pain relief medications and illicit forms such as heroin and non-pharmaceutical fentanyl.

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a national public health emergency, citing an estimated 130 or more people per day dying from opioid-related drug overdoses. The National Institute on Drug Abuse

(NIDA) reported 344 overdose deaths in Oregon that same year.

Though the state reports rates well below the national average, Oregon Health Authority has called the situation an "opioid crisis," estimating that an average of five Oregonians die each week from overdose.

Overall substance abuse remains a problem as well. Data from authorities at NIDA and the Centers for Disease Control confirm that men make up the larger half of total addicts and the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality states that men are more likely than women to use almost all types of illicit drugs.

Although men tend to have higher rates of use and dependence on illicit drugs and alcohol, many studies point out that women are equally likely to develop a substance abuse disorder and may even be more susceptible to craving and relapse.

Unique challenges arise for recovering female parents as well, which include being able to find child care and developing anxiety or depression due to child separation.

These issues become especially evident for women in cities like Cottage Grove, where transitional housing options are slim or non-existent.

"We're hoping that we can serve women in Cottage Grove whose children are in Cottage Grove so

that they can stay in contact with them," said Anderson.

The Booher House is meant to provide some respite from such challenges. At \$500 per month for room, board and utilities, recovering women will be afforded a nurturing environment to adjust to a sober lifestyle.

"Basically, we won't have any formalized services," Anderson said. "We'll be a safe place for them to live and a place to go to ask 'Where can I get this done,' and 'Where can I get that done?'"

House rules also institute structure into the lives of the residents. As part of the rental agreement, residents are expected to perform house chores such as cleaning and yardwork on

a rotational basis, retain a job or educational pursuit and regularly attend 12-step meetings.

Stipulations will even include social conduct within a certain level of decorum.

Predictably, strict prohibitions and rules regarding drug use and testing underlie the conditions of residency as well.

Because residents are required to have completed a recovery program prior to signing a contract, Anderson predicts the transition will be relatively smooth for some.

"They will have probably worked some of the steps and they'll be familiar with the routine," she said.

Safe Haven does not place a time limit on the term "transitional," making the length of stay for a resident subject to their own rate of success in moving forward.

"It might take them a year to get stuff done," Anderson said. "Especially with the job market, they may not be really successful in finding a job right off the bat."

While Safe Haven puts the final pieces into place, Anderson is optimistic the house will provide a much-needed addition to the community.

"I think we could fill up a hotel," she said of Cottage Grove's transitional housing need. "And if we made one for men, there'd be even more."

In a year or so, Anderson predicts another house could open for men and eventually even housing which can accommodate women with their children



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