

BMD *from A7*

Weeldreyer said was representative of the increasing efficiency of the group.

"We've been doing this for so long now, since 2012, that it has become a much tighter, well-run event. We're really getting better at producing it," she said. "We had a great time and we hope everyone else did too."

At-risk residents find 'Safe Haven'

(Originally printed Oct. 23, 2019)

This May, Cottage Grove Safe Haven opened the city's first transitional home for women recovering from addiction. Five months in, the nonprofit is still looking for more residents.

The 'Booher House' — named after Darrell Booher, the former owner of the house who was also in addiction recovery — came to the nonprofit amid a challenging search for property in the Cottage Grove area. After Booher passed away, his surviving family, aware of the group's mission, happily agreed to let Safe Haven use his property.

Safe Haven board member Billie Bird is the current 'house mother' at the Booher House.

"There's nothing else like it in Cottage Grove," she said of the program.

Though the project has garnered a degree of local popularity and support, only two women in recovery currently reside in a space which can house up to six.

Resident Heather Thompson is the first to use Safe Haven's services.

Earlier this year, Thompson had her own business and was engaged to be married in Tacoma, Wash., when her brother's sudden death at age 29 brought her back to her hometown of Cottage Grove. After attending the funeral, she felt compelled to stay in town.

"I couldn't find it in my heart to leave my family because they were so devastated," Thompson said.

Thompson fell into a pattern of smoking marijuana to excess and keeping her pain suppressed regularly with alcohol. It wasn't her first experience with substance abuse and

its return caused a rift between Thompson and her fiancé in Tacoma. Before long the two were split.

Desperate to extricate herself from the situation, Thompson chose the solitude of homelessness over the steady downward trajectory of her social environment. For a month, Thompson lived and detoxed in her car, sleeping in parking lots.

In a desperate bid for help, Thompson appealed to social media for support or guidance. In a turn of fortune, someone posted the phone number of Safe Haven.

Thompson was vetted over the phone and stayed in a warm bed that night.

Now, she says, her children have told her that she speaks more positively about life since her sober living began.

"My kids are very proud that I got clean," said Thompson.

Thompson is currently back to work pursuing her career as a nursing assistant.

"I can see it going a lot of good places for me in the future," she said.

A few days after Thompson took up residence in the Booher House, Leah (her last name has been withheld) became the house's second resident.

Nearly a decade ago, Leah's son died of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, an incurable and progressive neurodegenerative disease that causes gradual loss of muscle control. He succumbed to the disease within a year of his diagnosis.

By her own admission, Leah was no stranger to alcohol abuse, but the loss of her son catalyzed the habit into something more deeply pathological.

"Ever since then I've been trying to drink myself to death," she said. "I found this place when I was at my wit's end. This house and AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) have given me a whole new outlook on life. It used to be the tunnel was dark. Now I see light at the end of the tunnel."

With only two residents, the nonprofit is operating in the red on a monthly basis and fundraising efforts have not been as fruitful as they would have liked. Ideally, Safe Haven will soon take on four more women.

"There's a drastic need in Cottage Grove for this,"

said Leah. "And if they can help me turn my life around, they can do it for just about everybody."

KNND settles into new home

(Originally printed Sept. 11, 2019)

For the second time since its inception, local radio station KNND has found a new home in Cottage Grove.

The move marks a deeper imprint for the station in the city, an imprint which has already met the test of time as the station has long retained local appeal.

"Most radio stations, you listen to them and they're either getting syndicated programming from across the country or it's all just canned stuff," said station owner Cameron Reiten. "But here, we have live programming seven days a week."

First broadcasting in 1953 from the rodeo grounds on Highway 99 under the callsign KCTG, the station later moved downtown around 1975 to 321 E Main Street, where it had stayed until recently.

"It was a good arrangement over the years. It worked out well," said Reiten, who has owned the station since 2013. "Over the years, it had been remodeled, changed and fine-tuned until it was a very smoothly functioning studio."

Last year, however, the station's lease with the Odd Fellows was up and the fraternity opted to do some work on the building. After conferring with their counterparts in the Metro area, it was suggested that

the rent price was unreasonably low and it should be raised to a level the group felt was more consistent with current market conditions.

"Two to three times more than what I was paying," said Reiten.

Fortuitously, Richard and Brenda Conklin, owners of the AGS Automotive building on Main Street, had been trying to sell their building since the passing of Brenda's father, the previous owner, two and a half years earlier.

"Nobody wanted to buy it," Richard said. "We tried everything to sell it and nobody would buy it."

Richard saw an opportunity and offered the building to Reiten at a greatly reduced price.

The purchase was a significant move not just for the station, but for Reiten himself.

As a 16-year-old high school intern, Reiten began his career at KNND in 2003.

"I wanted to get into radio. I've always had a love for all things radio and electronics," said Reiten. "When I was a kid, I'd tear stuff apart and put it back together and fix stuff."

With the move completed the station can turn its attention to a plan that has been in motion since last year: KNND FM.

Broadcasting on FM will enable the station to increase advertising revenue and reach a broader client base.

"So I think the future for this radio station is really bright," said Reiten. "Not

See KNND 10A

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