

A Better

WAY

A newsletter by and about those in Recovery

June 2005

Take Me Out to the Ball Game

What about those Willis Sox!

The Recovery Sober League Willis Center team has been tearing up the turf every Sunday afternoon at Beaverbrook field in Worcester.



Sober Recovery League Willis Center Team

The team is 3-2 so far this season, but the emphasis is not simply on getting a winning score. More important than winning is the team's success in learning to work and play together.

Carlos Ortiz, team captain, is committed to the lessons of teamwork that are so valuable for the team.

Support the Willis Center recovery team- drop down to Beaverbrook field on Sunday afternoons and cheer our folks on to the best win ever- the successes of recovery.

Sail Away With Me

Summer Sober Boat Cruise

Saturday, June 25, from 8-11 pm

Long Wharf, Boston, MA

\$15 per person

Call Ed Crawford (508) 561-8800 for tickets



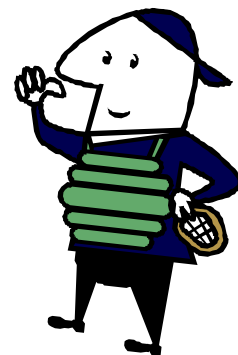
Willis Sober Softball Team Schedule

Sunday afternoons in June, July & August

1:00 p.m.

Beaverbrook Playing Field

Mann Street, Worcester, MA



Inside this issue:

Woman with A Mission:

Sandi Carlson

Page 3

Questions, questions

Page 2

A Gardener's Journal

Page 4

Recovery Resources & Sober Events in our Community

Page 4

Play Ball!!

Page 1

Recovering people come from all walks of life. We are all races, all economic levels, all ages, male, female and transgender. We are as varied as the rest of the human race. Listen to our voices and our stories...

HENRY LEE WILLIS COMMUNITY CENTER, INC.
WILLIS CENTER

Hand in Hand. Helping One Another!

Life on Life's Terms: *A Woman's Thoughts on Recovery*

I don't have a quote for this article...but I do have questions – lots of them!

Why do we as a society carve people up into little pieces when it comes to treatment? Why do we not treat individuals as a complete entity, as a whole person? When people are having problems functioning in their life, we as a society treat the symptoms instead of the person under those symptoms. We label the person with their symptoms, and then send them to a different treatment for each symptom.



For example, perhaps a woman has a history of trauma – maybe domestic violence; she also might have a drinking problem, from depression, and now she's going through menopause! How can people providing service to this woman help her?

Usually, we send her to four different service providers in order to deal with each issue, as if they were all separate and unrelated conditions!

Women's Services

This situation just does not make sense to me. My "dream" is a program that deals with many issues, at one location, with one treatment team. I would call it "Women's Services" and treat each woman as a single entity, a whole person. Individuals are not well served by

separating their minds, bodies and behaviors into nice convenient little boxes. People are just not that simple; they are complicated beings whose problems are all entwined and connected, and the solutions are also connected.

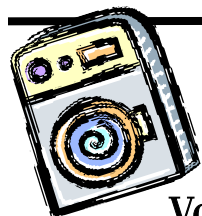
I just don't understand the reasoning behind treating symptoms separately, rather than the whole person - it just doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. I wonder if the reason is that medical providers, mental health providers, and substance recovery providers all have different funding sources. Maybe it's just too complicated to treat multiple problems at one location. I don't know...



I've asked this question of others and they didn't seem to understand this approach either. I guess I'm not the only one who doesn't understand it! But I do have my dream, my vision of comprehensive, coordinated "Women's Services." Who knows where that will lead?

Jeanine

Recovering Alcoholic and Addict



Listen to the radio!!!

Voices of Recovery

Monday, June 27, 4-5:00 pm
WCUW 91.3 fm

This month: **Women in Recovery-**
Their challenges and issues

We're having a **PARTY**

Freedom Group

(aka **The Loony Noony**)



Is celebrating its 15th anniversary **June 24, 2005,**
12:00 noon

Our Lady of Fatima Church, Belmont St., Worcester

Buffet lunch by the best NA chefs in the area

Old Timers and New Timers will speak on what the meeting has meant to them

Woman with a Mission: Sandi Carlson

“Getting through everyday is an accomplishment.”

Sandi Carlson is Director of HIV programs at UMass Medical School and a Willis Center board member. I caught up with her between meetings, and was able to ask her about her commitment to recovery.



“Life is easier when you’re honest,” she muses; “I wake up every day and can remember what I did yesterday!” That seems like a minor achievement to many of us, but there was a time in Sandi’s life when it was not easy to remember what she did, or what lies she had told in order to get her next fix. She was caught on the roller coaster of addiction, hopping on the wagon and falling off again many times before her recovery, over fifteen years ago.

Sandi grew up in a quiet middle class family in Worcester where “homelessness, domestic violence, and drug abuse were only words.” Sandi flashes a big smile; “but addiction is not biased; it affects people from all walks life, even sheltered girls like me.”

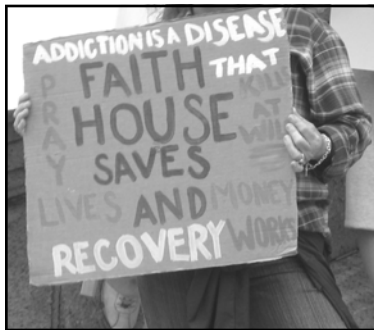
Faith House

Sandi credits her continued sobriety to her experiences at Faith House. There she learned about finding the good in each day, a lesson she was taught by Cynthia, a woman who impacted Sandi’s life in unexpected ways.

Cynthia came to Faith House from prison and was assigned as Sandi’s roommate. “The first few days I held back while I checked her out, but we soon became best buddies,” recalls Sandi.

“She had an amazing smile, and she was grateful for something every day, which impressed the heck out of me – especially since she had AIDS, which was a big challenge in her life.”

Cynthia had many health emergencies because of AIDS. Sandi was assigned as the house driver, and remembers driving Cynthia to the emergency room one night. As she got Cynthia into the hospital, she was horrified to see the doctors and nurses greet them in full biohazard gear, because of their fear of AIDS contamination.



“Back in 1991 people were not as educated about AIDS as they are today,” says Sandi. “It made me furious to see the way my friend was treated, because she deserved better; she deserved to be treated with dignity.” That incident was the impetus for Sandi’s continuing work with AIDS prevention and treatment.

Accomplishing Goals

Cynthia had several goals she wanted to accomplish before her time was gone, including graduating from Faith House and getting her one year of sobriety AA coin. Cynthia did graduate, and she earned her coin, which Sandi brought to Cynthia’s bed to award to her the night before she died.

“After Cynthia died, I was angry and sad, and thought ‘how am I going to keep it together now, after losing my best friend?’ I wanted to pick up so bad! But then I thought if I went and used at that point, it would be a slap in the face to what Cynthia had worked for.”

“I celebrate every night, knowing that I got through another day well.”

Still Making It

Sandi hung in there with her sobriety. “I made it,” shares Sandi, “and I’m still making it. I celebrate every night, knowing that I got through another day well.”

Sandi does indeed get through every day “well.” In fact, she is not only a productive member of society in the city of Worcester, but through her work she commits herself daily to helping those in need, and giving back to the community that helped her regain her identity.

Sandi has been a dedicated AIDS advocate for many years, working at various jobs, from writing grants to directing testing programs. Sandi’s dedication to her work is both a tribute to her friend Cynthia’s spirit, and a testament to her own commitment to justice for those with AIDS. As the HIV Program Director for UMASS Medical School, she brings into the community funds that help people with HIV and AIDS.

“Getting through everyday is an accomplishment,” concludes Sandi.

We applaud you Sandi, on your accomplishment.

A Gardener's Journal

May, 2005



Step into the velvet of the morning-
Let yourself lay back in your dreams.

I rise before 5:00 a.m.; not because I "have to," but because I want to. I step into the velvet of the morning and begin my day.

I have a tiny garden space (tiny is the right word here!). But things are thriving and growing. This garden is a little dream, but it is enough for now.

I have found that I cannot know the dream until I have known the nightmare; and I have certainly experienced the nightmare. But I cannot, I will not let the nightmare take me prisoner. I will stick with my little dream of my tiny thriving garden space.

Take on the situation, not the torment.

Look outside – and let the magic fill you up.

Love, *The Flower Lady*

Gardening Project



Women in Willis recovery programs would like to garden this summer.

Do you have items to share?

We need: compost; mulch; vegetable plants; flowers-perennials; rakes, shovels, watering cans; someone to help build raised beds. **Call to help** -(508) 799-0702 ext. 113

CORI Issues

What is **Criminal Offender Record Information** –who has access to it?

How can you read and understand a CORI report?

What about a CORI and employment or subsidized or public housing?

For information, contact **E.P.O.C.A.**

Ex-Prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement

Carlos Ortiz (774) 242-1441 or Steve O'Neill (508) 410-7676

"Addiction should be understood as a chronic recurring illness that requires treatment."

-Alan Leshner, MD

Former head of the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the National Institutes of Health

Recovery Resources

Willis Center

Substance Recovery Services

**Recovery Residential
Transitional Sober Living
Independent Living**

508-755-8088

HIV/Outreach Services

508-799-0380

Outpatient Counseling

508-799-2934

Visit our website:

www.williscenter.org

Central Mass. Detox Services:

Spectrum

(800) 366-7732

AdCare Hospital

(800) 345-3552 x256

Community Healthlink, Inc

(508) 860-1260

National Resources

www.aa.org

WILLIS CENTER is a minority-based organization located in Worcester, committed to creating a community in which people of color and the disadvantaged can gain equal access to quality human and social services that improve their quality of life.