

## **Community must help battle addiction**

*Printed in The Durham Herald-Sun on February 8, 2007*

Recovery from substance abuse is a powerful experience. One person recently described it this way: “My grandmother came to town to visit me last week. We had a good time. We talked and went out to eat. She left me alone in the car with her pocketbook and keys. Do you know what that means to me? This is the first time she has seen me clean and sober in 15 years! I have lived from shelter to shelter for most of my life. Right about now, I would make my way to Miami, but I am still here in Durham. I will have a job soon and a place to live. I know what it feels like to be alive.”

In 2006, the Substance Abuse Committee of the Partnership for a Healthy Durham surveyed more than 500 people throughout Durham and found that 8% were currently using substances, 15% were in recovery, and almost 40% had a family member either currently using or in recovery. They are young, old, wealthy, homeless, white, African-American, PhDs, high school dropouts, and everyone in between – addiction affects anyone and everyone.

Alcohol/Drug Council of NC estimates that in 2004 the economic costs of alcohol and drug abuse in Durham County were \$348,130,916. There were 566 DWI arrests and 1,292 drug arrests in Durham County. Alcohol claimed the lives of seven persons through traffic accidents. An estimated 25% of auto fatalities involve alcohol. Alcohol-related offenses are the largest cause of prison entries.

According to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), about 10% of the population is addicted to alcohol or drugs, adding up to over 18,000 Durham County citizens. In a given year around 7,000 of them will be identified as having a substance abuse problem but according to The Durham Center, manager of mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services for the County, only about 2,500 actually reach the Center’s treatment system and for most, any treatment they receive is insufficient.

Unfortunately, when a person seeks treatment for substance abuse, there are challenges to confront. The Substance Abuse Committee’s survey found that, of all barriers, stigma had the strongest effect. A SAMHSA survey revealed that almost 25% of people who indicated they were in need of substance abuse treatment would not seek it due to the stigma involved. The perception of addiction as a personal failing, as opposed to a disease, still has a paralyzing effect on those who need help and prevents them from seeking the services that could treat their disease.

This is why The Durham Center, the Substance Abuse Committee and Alcohol/Drug Council of NC came together last September to initiate Durham’s first “Addiction Recovery Month,” culminating with a “Recovery Celebration Block Party” in downtown Durham. This was a joyous occasion filled with music, information, dancing, and moving stories from people in recovery, all in honor of people who have overcome addiction and those who help them in their journey.

Beyond the barriers raised by stigma, there are serious gaps in substance abuse services and a scarcity of trained substance abuse professionals in Durham County. While Durham ranks at the

head of the class in North Carolina for County funding of substance abuse services, much more funding must come from all sources, including the State. For its part, The Durham Center is currently working to strengthen Durham's treatment infrastructure, to build a more comprehensive array of services and to train and support providers.

Many people suffering from addictions have found help in the self-help recovery community, in programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. Durham also has several Oxford Houses, which are self-run group homes for recovering substance abusers. These peer recovery support programs have a strong and crucial role in treating substance abuse in Durham.

Every corner of the community, including the private sector, must begin to take ownership of our pervasive substance abuse problem and be willing to be part of its solution. Just as it is unacceptable for a person with cancer or heart disease not to have the medical treatment they need, it is unacceptable that someone ready to work their way out of addiction cannot find the treatment necessary for their disease. To truly build a "culture of recovery" in Durham, we need to adequately fund substance abuse treatment services and change the way we perceive addiction disorders. It takes tremendous strength and courage to fight back from the nightmare of addiction, and we must honor those fighting that battle with not only the best treatment services possible, but also with a community-wide atmosphere of respect and encouragement.

## **Clip and save**

### **Durham Center Access**

For help with a mental health, developmental disability or substance abuse issue, call DURHAM CENTER ACCESS at 919-560-7100, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Information or a referral to an appropriate provider. Walk-in crisis help is also available 24 hours a day at 2609 North Duke Street, Suite 900 in the Central Medical Park.

### **Durham Center**

The Durham Center is the local management entity (LME) managing the mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services in the area. Most services are provided by contracted providers. <http://durhamcenter.org>  
(919) 560-7100

### **Alcohol/Drug Council of North Carolina**

Provides advocacy, information and referral services and public education about substance abuse for the state. <http://www.alcoholdrughelp.org/>

### **Durham Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence**

A local affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, that provides information about alcoholism, and other drug issues; aims to increase public understanding of drug addictions; and promotes the development of more treatment facilities and services. 309-2600, [www.dcadd.org](http://www.dcadd.org)

## **Treatment Programs**

The Substance Abuse Committee has collaborated with Duke University Health System's Office of Community Relations to create the **Durham County Substance Abuse Referral Directory**, which contains information about substance abuse treatment options in Durham. Available online at [http://dukehealth1.org/community\\_relations/DUMCSubAbuseDirectory06.pdf](http://dukehealth1.org/community_relations/DUMCSubAbuseDirectory06.pdf).

### **Oxford Houses**

Self-run group homes for recovering substance abusers. A list of local Oxford Houses is located in the Substance Abuse Referral Directory above, or at <http://www.oxfordhouse.org/northcarolina.html>.

### **Alcoholics Anonymous**

Help line to provide information on area support group meetings: 286-9499, <http://www.aanc32.org/>

### **Al-Anon**

Support programs for families of alcoholics. 24 hour answering service for questions about Al-Anon or to find a meeting: (800) 243-4035 for English, (800) 251-5738 para español <http://www.alanonalateen6nc.org/>

### **Narcotics Anonymous**

A fellowship of recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean 831-5321, <http://www.crna.org>