

Bannerman is new executive director

Recovery House helps change lives

By LISA TALLYN
Staff writer

Many men with serious addiction problems have had their lives changed permanently through a stay at Halton Recovery House.

Judy Bannerman, executive director of the 21-bed facility in Hornby since July, said as long as the men can be plugged into a support network in their community, the 90-day program offered there has about a 70 per cent success rate.

Halton Recovery House was founded in 1975. The men who stay there, many who are addicted to both alcohol and drugs, receive extensive group and individual therapy from staff counsellors.

For the three months they stay the house becomes their home.

"Each of the men are assigned a chore," said Bannerman. Four men take on kitchen duty, sharing meal planning, cooking, cleaning and learning skills they can use when they leave. The others handle other regular chores around the house.

"A regular day for the men begins at 6:30 a.m. with breakfast followed by chores at 7:15," said Bannerman. At 8 a.m. residents participate in one-on-one sessions with other residents.

"It is an opportunity for them to get feelings out and start verbalizing. Each session is not necessarily with the same person."

After coffee at 9 a.m. the men meet for the commitment group where they commit to the theme of the week, for example honesty.

"They will make a commitment to be honest to whoever they talk to that day," said Bannerman.

Before lunch there is a group counselling session followed by another group session focusing on the week's topic after lunch. The men are also introduced to the 12 step Alcoholics Anonymous program. After coffee the men meet

Three evenings and Sunday mornings the men attend AA meetings in neighboring communities or at the house. Fridays they attend Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

"We build structure into their days. Many of them haven't had a structured day."

All of the men are required to be clean and well dressed and they are also shown the importance of volunteering.

"We try to show them they need to give back to the community," said Bannerman.

Through her own recovery, Bannerman has an understanding of what the men are going through.

When she was attempting to find treatment for her problem she discovered there were no groups for women. For that reason she became a board member and chairperson of Hope Place, the treatment facility for women in Milton.

She has an MA in psychology and education, a diploma in addiction studies from McMaster University and has nearly completed the requirements for certification as an alcohol and drug counsellor.

She, along with 29 others from across the province, were recently appointed to a Ministry of Health provincial advisory council on substance abuse. Bannerman also teaches addiction studies at McMaster.

Halton Recovery House is located on Trafalgar Rd. north of Steeles Ave.

For information on the program offered there call 878-1120.



Judy Bannerman took over as executive director of Halton Recovery House in July.

again in smaller groups with staff counsellors and participate in another short one-on-one session. Before dinner they do some chores and after they eat they have some free time followed by a wind down session led by the counsellors.

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