

PORTLAND

There's hope, but road back for alcoholic is steep

Sick of being sick, tired brings action

By TERI BROSH
Correspondent, The Oregonian

In early October, 63-year-old Beverly "Ma" Curtis hit a new low in life. Too drunk to stand, she crawled on her hands and knees into the Hooper Memorial Detoxification Center at 20 N.E. Union Ave.

She was "sick and tired of being sick and tired," Curtis said. She stayed at the center for seven days to dry out.

"You bet I'm gonna make it!" she said more than a month later. "I've never been so determined in all my life as I am right now. I'm going to DePaul till I get strong."

DePaul, known formally as DePaul Center for Alcoholism Treatment, 1320 S.W. Washington St., is the state's largest alcohol treatment center. It is rated by the National Council on Alcoholism as "the nation's only program that provides quality treatment exclusively to indigent persons in the late stages of alcoholism."

The only problem, according to Hooper counselor Judy Singleton, is that the highly acclaimed DePaul's 63 beds are always full. And it has a waiting list for a residential treatment program that averages 4.5 months but can continue for eight months.

A shorter, 90-day residential treatment program for those unable to pay for care is available at The Salvation Army's Harbor Light center. It has 40 beds for men and 15 for women.

Private beds available

Some private agencies arrange for local hospital beds. Central City Hospital, 511 S.W. Washington St., has one bed a month for a 21-day program. Compass Northwest in Gresham arranged for five beds in October and three in November for a 30-day program.

For late-stage alcoholics who need a residential program because they have no job, home or family, waiting for treatment can be disastrous, Singleton said.

Jacqueline Clark, 33, also went to the Hooper Center in October and has been sober for more than a month.

"I used to tell myself I wasn't an alcoholic," she said, "because I didn't have to have a drink in the morning."

Nevertheless, she said, she "used to drink a fifth daily."

"Now I realize I can't manage my own life. I have lost everything because of alcohol — my kids, apartments, jobs and money."

"It's hard," she added, "when your roommate drinks, your boss buys you an after-work drink and lets you have a draw every day."

Knowing she needed help, she called the Hooper Center. There Clark dried out, was given counseling and was ready for DePaul.

But DePaul was full. While they wait, Curtis and Clark are volunteer workers in the kitchen at Baloney Joe's, the drop-in center run by the Burnside Community Council.

Obtains a room for \$100

Curtis rents a room for \$100 a month from Jean Baker, the food service manager at Baloney Joe's.

She gets a monthly Social Security check and said she is happy to have a job she loves.

Clark said she, too, likes the kitchen job, but she is getting by only on unemployment compensation. She needs to get a paying job soon, she said.



Beverly "Ma" Curtis, 63, (left) and Jacqueline Clark, 33, work as volunteers in the kitchen at Baloney Joe's while they wait to enter DePaul Center for Alcoholism Treatment. GREG LAWLER

Working together, Curtis and Clark encourage each other in their new, sober lives.

Yet Singleton is afraid of the future for the women who want help, admit they're alcoholics but can't get treatment because the local area has few slots for them.

"Women from all walks of life come to Hooper," Singleton said. "Some of them are street women, yet many have been professional women that have worked all their lives. Finding themselves in late-stage alcoholism, they end up homeless, without jobs and without treatment."

"And that could happen to any one of us," she stressed. "What's frustrating to us at Hooper is the lack of housing resources and treatment spaces for these women."

DePaul hopes to open a women's halfway house in Portland next spring, according to Stephen Newton, president of the agency. That will open up 10 beds at the treatment center and, he said, "that is a start, but in no way addresses the entire need."

The Mayor's Task Force on Downtown Alcoholism has made recommendations to tax fortified wine and to force alcoholics into treatment programs.

Yet, Newton said, "It is not clear where enough money will come from to take care of the current needs."

With funds limited, so is space. Therefore, some alcoholics remain on the street with no place to go for treatment.

"As a result," said Richard Milsom, director of the Oregon Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, "many alcoholics become casualties of the waiting list."

History of a 'casualty'

One who appears to have become a casualty is Greta Jackson, 43, who was born in Portland but spent the first 42 years of her life in

Chicago and Los Angeles.

Interviewed during the first week of November, Jackson, who asked that she be identified by a pseudonym, had sobered up at the Hooper Center and was housed at Rita's Place, a transitional shelter for women.

Abandoned by her mother when she was 14, Jackson said she has worked for the past 20 years as a waitress, a barmaid, a prostitute and by running card games.

After her two children were removed from her custody, she said, she tried to improve her life by attending business college and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

She said she was "tired of the way I feel and look as a result of drinking."

"I need a place where I can come and go," she said. "A place where I can stay while I look into things — look for a job, get some

clothes and get my kids back."

On Nov. 9, Greta was checked into Rita's Place. Shortly thereafter she disappeared and hasn't been heard from since.

Both Curtis and Clark recounted lives of early exposure to alcoholism, and both said they began drinking as adolescents.

"My mother was drunk the day I was born," Clark said. "People told me they thought I'd be born on a bar stool."

Her grandparents eventually gained custody of her, but she ran away from home at age 14, Clark said.

She got her first ticket for drunken driving shortly afterward and eventually was placed in a Tillamook detention home, she said.

By the time she was 20, she had two children by her boyfriend. In 1972, while she was working as a go-go dancer in Alaska, the boy-

friend took their children away, Clark said.

Later, she met and married a man who lived in Portland. All the while, she continued to dance in bars and to drink, she said.

Curtis, who was born in Eureka, Calif., said her mother and stepfather drank and beat her.

She remembered feeling loved only between the ages of 11 and 18, when she lived in a Catholic girls' home and in a foster home.

When the woman in the foster home died suddenly, she ran away, Curtis said.

In the years since then, she alternately drifted, drank, jumped freight cars, got jobs, drank again and quit her jobs, she said.

A soft-spoken woman, she said she is "tired of getting a worm's eye-view of the world."

"I can't take the alcohol and the streets anymore, but there's no place for a woman to go," she said.

Lack of space, funds hobble alcohol efforts

Alcoholism treatment programs for indigent persons have too few spaces and too little financial support to meet all local needs, counselors report.

Residential programs for persons without jobs and homes — especially women — have the fewest slots for clients, but out-patient programs are able to accommodate larger numbers.

Burnside Projects, 523 N.W. Everett St., has a program serving about 140 men and women. The agency often tries to find housing for clients at the Everett or Estate hotels while providing out-patient counseling.

The Project for Community Recovery, 807 N. Alberta St., has programs for both men and women. It usually fills an allotment of 10 in-

patient beds at the DePaul Center for Alcoholism Treatment.

Volunteers of America, 563 S.E. Alder St., can accommodate up to 60 men and women each month in out-patient counseling. Because it offers bilingual services, about half its clients usually are Spanish-speaking.

Alcohol Safety Action Program, 919 S.W. Taylor St., offers services for both men and women but specializes in women's treatment.

Native American Rehabilitation Association, 3020 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd., provides services for persons of all ethnic backgrounds, but specializes in programs for Indians. The agency operates an out-patient center, 30- to 90-day residential programs for 10 men and

five women, and a program that can accommodate up to 10 women with up to 20 children.

The Council on Drug Abuse, 306 N.E. 20th Ave., serves both men and women, but its programs are aimed at people whose primary addiction is to drugs rather than alcohol.

The Alcohol Rehabilitation Association operates two halfway houses in Southeast Portland. Each accommodates up to 15 men.

Harmony House operates a halfway house for 15 men in Southeast Portland and a second house for 15 men in Oregon City.

The Salvation Army's Harbor Light currently serves three women in a halfway house.

Clergyman earns his letters in kindness

By DIANE LUND
Correspondent, The Oregonian

Admirers of the Rev. C.T. Abbott, founder and director of William Temple House, remembered the 35th anniversary of the Episcopal clergyman's ordination by writing him letters.

The letters, which recalled special memories and events in his life, were compiled in a scrapbook and will be given to Abbott.

The letter-writing idea came from Andrew Jaros, who has worked as a volunteer counselor at William Temple House.

"I think the world of father," Jaros said. "He lends an ear to the lonely who need food and counseling. He's a good listener and never judges people."

Knowing Abbott loves to laugh about his weight, Bernyce Johnson reminisced about the counselor calling himself a Weight Watcher dropout.

"Father Abbott has a marvelous sense of humor," said Johnson, who's on the board at William Temple House. "And he's one of the most popular men I know."

Acknowledging he failed Weight Watchers, Abbott said he decided God wanted him to stay fat.

"God put us here to enjoy ourselves, besides, fat people don't run so they're harmless," said Abbott. "I wouldn't give up gourmet food, a glass of Scotch with soda or smoking. That wouldn't be living, it would just be existing."

After Bishop Paul Waldschmidt was ordained an auxiliary bishop of the Catholic Church, he often was mistaken for Abbott.

"Our physical proportions are similar," Waldschmidt said. "After my ordination, I received more invitations to lunch and Abbott had more offers for drinks. It's obvious that both of us enjoy God's bountiful gifts in this life."

Calling Abbott "a rare breed" and "one of a kind," Paula Diamond said he can pull the best out of people.

"He's a genuine helper and doesn't dwell on the negatives," said Diamond, a grant writer for the William Temple House. "He's a powerful, gentle man who smiles and talks in a soothing voice."



Andrew Jaros (left), a volunteer counselor at William Temple House, talks with the Rev. C.T. Abbott, founder and director of the social service agency. GREG LAWLER

Abbott began William Temple House on faith and little else besides the backing of the Episcopal Laymen's Mission Society on June 1, 1965. Working with a shoestring budget, the board told Abbott it couldn't offer him a salary but gave him room and board and a credit card for gas. It wasn't long until he was receiving \$100 a month salary.

"I came for zero and the first month had a 100 percent increase," said Abbott.

During his first six months, Abbott counseled 250 people. In 1984, more than 32,000 people received counseling, food, clothing and money for prescriptions, false teeth and eyeglasses. This year that number is expected to reach 35,000.

No longer a counselor, Abbott is now the executive director of William Temple House. He raises \$330,000 annually, refusing any help from the gov-

ernment or United Way of the Columbia-Willamette.

"I don't want money that has strings attached," he said.

William Temple House has 38 volunteer counselors and a 17-member staff.

During his tenure as a priest, Abbott thought about becoming a bishop but decided God wanted him to remain at William Temple House.

"I would have loved going down the aisles, blessing people and letting them hear my sermons," Abbott said. "God kept me humble instead."

Abbott, who turned 64 last summer, said he is aware that the Episcopal church requires mandatory retirement at 72.

Nevertheless he insists, "I'll never retire. As long as I have my marbles, I'll wheel me in. My vocation and my avocation is William Temple House."

Neighborhood projects given fiscal shot in arm

Ten innovative Portland neighborhood improvement projects will be funded this year with a total of \$50,000 in federal money through the Neighborhood Self-Help Program, said Dee Walsh, program coordinator for the Bureau of Community Development.

Each project will receive about \$5,000 and the projects probably will be under way in early December, she said.

The program, administered by the city's Community Development Bureau, provides one-time grants to neighborhood associations and community groups for projects that increase neighborhood self-reliance and use volunteer labor, donated materials and other resident involvement.

The selected projects:

- A sign and directory project sponsored by the Brooklyn Action Corps. The corps will design a neighborhood promotional sign with a logo for posting at several locations and will compile a directory of local businesses and services.

- An indoor park sponsored by the Buckman Community Association. The association will create an indoor park, run by volunteers, for children 3 years of age and younger.

- A home gardening project sponsored by the Eliot Neighborhood Development Association. Raised-bed vegetable gardens will be built by 20 low-income families.

- A neighborhood facelift project sponsored by the Kerns Neighborhood Association. The association and local businesses will clean up the neighborhood, provide workshops on recycling

and create a promotional brochure.

- A tree bank sponsored by the Ladd's Addition Preservation Fund. Volunteers will plant up to 400 trees in the area according to the originally planned design within the Hosford-Abernethy neighborhood.

- A marketing and communications project sponsored by the Union-Vancouver-Williams Business District Project. The project will create a local business directory and newsletter to promote economic development.

- An economic development project sponsored by the North Portland Citizens Committee. A promotional brochure and directory will be created, and three educational seminars on economic development issues will be held.

- A cleanup project sponsored by Burnside Projects Inc. The helping agency will train six to eight Burnside residents to clean up streets, doorways and parking lots in the neighborhood.

- A property management training project sponsored by REACH Community Development Inc. The non-profit housing rehabilitation company will prepare a management handbook and conduct training for low-income tenants of cooperatively owned housing in the Buckman neighborhood.

- A vocational innovation project sponsored by the Southeast Mental Health Network. The network will teach clerical and maintenance skills to mentally disabled adults who then will provide services to needy residents of Southeast Portland neighborhoods.

Funds have been awarded to 34 Portland projects since the self-help program started in 1982.