



STEPPING STONES

Providing Steps to Recovery

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Admissions Team ready to help on the way to recovery



The Admissions Central Intake triage team provides critical care to individuals seeking help. (Pictured from the left) are Mike Stofan, Director of Admissions, Rhonda Echols, Sherry Pounds, Lacey Anderson and Cindy Shannon.

“Some things just stay with you,” says Mike Stofan, director of Admissions at Stepping Stones Treatment and Recovery Center. He recalls starting the job and a statement made by Executive Director Pete McLenighan, “The Admissions Department is the Emergency Room of this treatment center. No day is ever the same. You have to be prepared for every possible situation.”

“Ready to help and meet every situation are Mike and the Central Intake triage team. The team includes Rhonda Echols, admissions coordinator; assessors Sherry Pounds and Lacey Anderson; outreach worker-counselor Cindy Shannon; and Assistant Admissions Coordinator Cheryl Tatro.

“Teamwork is essential,” says Mike, noting that they meet every morning to go over what had taken place the day before and what the plan is for

the day. This may include not only the scheduled assessments, but scheduled admissions and how to accommodate walk-in individuals.

A person coming to Stepping Stones has come to the realization that “If I don’t stop using drugs or alcohol now, I won’t be around.” Sometimes, that realization comes from within, other times it is prompted by the urgings of families “and friends or the mandate of courts.

While the journey to recovery and the personal baggage that each individual brings differ, the first step is walking through the door or making the phone call, says Sherry, “and that takes courage.”

Lacey adds, “It also takes courage to talk to complete strangers about your life. It can’t be easy.”

The face-to-face interview can take anywhere from 45 minutes to two hours, depending on the individual. A lot of factors figure into the situation and must be considered and documented in the record or the client’s chart.

Some information goes beyond the information gathered in the face-to-face portion of the assessment and that includes employers, court orders, medical issues, family issues, child custody, probation, parole, insurance, financial need.

The process of gathering paperwork to substantiate some of this information may take only a few phone calls or up to several days.

Mike states, “We are a person-centered treatment provider, meaning each client develops their own treatment plan. This process begins during the assessment and continues once the client has entered a level of care with the assigned case manager”

Staff may suggest something that the client may want to consider working on while in treatment, but it is the client’s choice. In the past, treatment plans were developed by the assigned case manager who may have not even met the client.”

The assessor might think that a residential level of care would be appropriate, but the client may have job or child-care responsibilities. In those cases, the outpatient program is an option. Always working to accommodate those served a client who is in the outpatient program and is having difficulty remaining abstinent from substances, has the option of being transferred into a residential program, when space is available.

Because of recent state budget cuts to the Department of Human Services, which is the funding agent for some individuals (and never did cover total cost of treatment), the “wait list” has grown to 60 days. SS does not deny services to individuals for their lack of funding.

For Rhonda, who does most of the initial phone screening and scheduling of the assessment appointments states, “When I first started, it was hard to hear some of the stories from individuals who wanted treatment.”

Lacey adds, “It is a big responsibility to provide treatment. There are so many elements, both physical and psychological. Each person comes with his own life story. We may be the first person who has actually listened

“We don’t just work with one person, but with the whole family. Many families will feel a connection with the staff and call or stop in for visits.”

The assessment process is filled with emotion for most individuals. Sherry notes, “It could be a matter of life and death. We see a lot of tears.”

Cindy adds, “I have had people cry and beg for help and tell me that they are convinced they are going to die.”

Sherry, “We are doing something for them that they can’t do for themselves.

Lacey says, “We do our best, but you can’t take it home with you. It would burn you out.”

On the successes, Sherry notes, “It feels good to know that you’ve helped someone. Recently, one client in a residential level, who was ready to leave after completing the program, came and hugged me and said,, ‘You probably don’t remember me,’ but I did.”

Some clients return for another try at recovery, Mike points out, adding, “Once they have come through these doors and have left for whatever reason, either successfully or not, they are considered by staff to be a part of the family.”

According to Rhonda, one of the hardest parts of the job is getting a call from a family member with the sad news that someone on the waiting list has overdosed and passed away.

Mike concludes, “We hope that the state will return the funding back to where it was so we can help more people.

“If there is anyone who is in need of services, they need to call and leave their information. Staff will return their call within 24 hours. Please call 815- 744-4555 Ext. 135.”

From the Director ... **3-year Accreditation**

The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) announced that Stepping Stones has been accredited for a period of three years for its Outpatient, Intensive Outpatient and Residential substance use disorder treatment programs. The latest accreditation is the seventh consecutive Three-Year Accreditation that this international accrediting body has awarded to Stepping Stones.

CARF surveyors made no recommendation, which signifies that they did not identify any areas of nonconformance to the standards. This is an extraordinary accomplishment, as only 3 percent of CARF

surveys result in no recommendations. The staff and Board of Directors are congratulated for their dedication to high quality services and management practices.

This accreditation decision represents the highest-level quality services and management practices. This accreditation decision represents the highest level of accreditation that can be awarded to an organization. An organization receiving a Three-Year Accreditation has put itself through a rigorous peer review process and has demonstrated to a team of surveyors during an on-site visit that its programs and services are of the highest quality, measurable, and accountable.

CARF is an independent, nonprofit accrediting body whose mission is to promote the quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process that centers on enhancing the lives of the persons served. Founded in 1966, CARF establishes consumer-focused standards to help organizations measure and improve the quality of their programs and services. For additional information, please visit: www.steppingstonetreatment.com or call 815-744-4555 x 125

Pete McLenighan

Pleased to Introduce ...

Advisory Board member Robert Kelly. He speaks of his involvement with SS, "I came with the building."

Bob guesses his involvement began more than 40 years ago with the men's halfway house-a small facility that housed eight to 12 men-and was the community's first response to provide treatment. Bob's barber was involved with the effort to offer help and he encouraged Bob to join in.

And he did join in, serving as president and vice president of that board and later with the SS Advisory Board. Bob brought a multitude of experiences that have benefited the agency. As a 41-year veteran of the Joliet Police Department, he brought his law enforcement knowledge to the board. As a union carpenter, he used his knowledge as a liaison between contractors and the agency with remodeling work at various facilities.

Regarding Stepping Stones' contribution to the community, "You can't put a value on it," says Bob, "The recovery rate is the reward. General Electrics always advertised, 'Progress is our most important product.' I like to think that here at Stepping Stones, "People are our most important product."

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Mission Statement

Stepping Stones is dedicated to providing effective treatment for persons suffering from the illness of addiction to alcohol and/or other drugs, even if these persons are unable to pay for the cost of such services.

Board of Directors

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Robert Kelly Sr. Maurice White, OSF

Stepping Stones has been determined by the IRS to be a 501c3 organization and donations are deductible as provided by law.

22nd Annual Community Forum addresses the 'New Face of Heroin Addiction-Illinois Teens'

"Are we doing the same old tired thing? What can we do differently to save our kids?" asked John Roberts, a speaker at the March 30 event.

Alarming statistics released from the office of the Will County Coroner Patrick O'Neil noted that there were 29 heroin-related deaths in the county in 2009 as compared to five deaths 10 years ago. Heroin's availability and low cost (\$5 to \$10 a hit) coupled with its potency has had an impact on families like the Roberts family.

Roberts spoke from the heart, telling of the loss of his 18 year-old son to a heroin overdose last year. He said, "We have to wake up and see what is happening right here. We need the same public attention for the heroin epidemic that the swine flu epidemic received."

Sponsored by the Southwest Coalition for Substance Abuse Issues, the Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association and Joliet Township High School, the forums bring individuals, families, representatives of community organizations and public officials together to talk about the impact of substance use on the community and what can be done individually and collectively to minimize the negative impact of substance use.



John Roberts says "We have to make sure that there is a circle of help that is connected and ready to help all of our kids. I believe you can never give up."



(At left, from the left) are local elected officials participating in the forum. They are Will County Executive Larry Walsh, Will County Sheriff Paul Kaupas and Joliet Police Chief Fred Hayes. (At right, from the left) Attending the forum were State Senators J.J. Wilhelmi, Christine Radogno and Linda Holmes.

Your donations are appreciated! With reduced state funding, our ability to serve everyone who require our services is affected. We thank you for your concern and help!

