

New Recovery Home for Men Created in West Virginia

FAIRMONT, WEST VIRGINIA (Feb. 24, 2024) — A catch-22 awaits substance abuse patients who are ready to end their cycle of addiction. Recovery takes hold in a community, but addiction burns down the connections necessary to form that community.

George Boyle is all too familiar with that pattern. However, that experience now empowers him to help others who are on their own path to recovery.

Boyle and his wife, Cathy, are launching Marion County's first recovery house in Fairmont. The house is the first project for Compassion Central, the 501c3 nonprofit the husband and wife team established earlier this year. The nonprofit received its business license in January.

"There is a huge gap in Marion County and specifically in Fairmont," Cathy Boyle, executive director, said. "Hospitals are trying to get these guys out and into rehab, but where are they going to go? They've got peer support groups, but where do they go after the 60 day rehab? They're right back in the cycle of addiction."

Cathy Boyle said substance abuse patients need to have a longer term place to go to that can host them from anywhere between 12 and 24 months. Those locations also provide the community support needed to help guide a patient through addiction.

The problem is, Marion County has no facilities that fit that need. Although the Marion County Drug Court is more than capable of filling a recovery house with only a day's lead time, anyone who wants to join a recovery house must travel to Clarksburg or Morgantown.

The idea of starting a recovery house came to George Boyle roughly a year ago. An encounter with an individual who worked with recovery houses in Morgantown, as well as conversations spurred by prayer with a member of the Central Church of the Nazarene, led to the establishment of a new recovery home in the parsonage of the church. The Boyles established Compassion Central to make the recovery home a reality.

"We specifically are working as a recovery community organization, which is a state designation, but is really designed to help heal the community from poverty, drugs and alcohol and be a part of that process," George Boyle, president and community pastor, said.

The recovery home will be on 2nd Street at Walnut Avenue. Compassion Central needs roughly \$115,000 for its first year of operations. So far, it's collected between \$40,000 and \$50,000. The nonprofit is seeking community partners and has approached the Marion County Commission for funding assistance. They also plan to approach the City of Fairmont. Work on the facility is in progress. Although the nonprofit is an independent 501c3, it's working closely with the Church of the Nazarene, which is providing physical space and advice to the nonprofit.

This first recovery house will hold between seven and 10 men. Compassion Central hopes to open a women's house next as well as several others.

"This gives them an opportunity to be in a safe place and have other people there that are coaching them and encouraging them," Jim Davis, Compassion Central board member and church board member said. "There'll be a house manager there, also a recovering addict. They may go through a specific training to allow them to be a house manager in accordance with the Fletcher Group. So it's not just like a winging it kind of deal. And basically, they're accountable to each other in the home."

Davis said other substance abuse patients are far more strict on rule-breaking than regular members of the public. The home will be drug free, if a relapse occurs outside the home it will be up to the members to decide how to deal with the offense, in accordance with the offending individual's recovery path. The other members of the house find accountability through community, by making themselves responsible for each other. The long period of time for which the recovery home is designed also incorporates the fact that people make mistakes and relapse, giving people who want to get better the space to get back on their feet after a setback.

Matt Johnson, Director of Faith-Based Initiative for the Fletcher Group, said the faith-based approach provides additional buttressing on which to build a recovery.

"Recovery is a deeply spiritual process," Johnson said. "When we think about substance use disorder, it kind of touches on what I believe to be emotional, spiritual, and physical components. Willingness to see things from a faith-based perspective does kind of tap into an additional way of doing things. You're tapping into a component that maybe wouldn't have been considered otherwise."

Johnson is also the founder of Abundant Living Homes in Westover. The Fletcher Group is an organization dedicated to improving the quality and capacity of recovery housing across the U.S. They don't own or operate any homes, but provide expertise to those who do.

Johnson said substance use is deeply isolating. Connecting people to faith-based organizations and entities that are trained to welcome and support people can be a really powerful thing as well.

Recovery homes also have a positive impact on the communities around them. Johnson said they reduce criminal justice costs, health care costs, costs associated with work and productivity and finally what Johnson calls the statistical value of a human life. For every dollar spent on a recovery house, Johnson said he has seen between \$50 to \$100 in return investment back in terms of reduced societal spending.

Although the Boyles recognize the material and statistical benefits of faith-based recovery, their understanding is more intimate in nature. George Boyle cited Compassion Central's mission statement, saying there's hope and freedom in Christ.

"If it wasn't for our faith in God, I don't know how George would be restored," Cathy Boyle said. "I don't know how our family would be restored. That's straight out of God to heal him and our family. And now we're paying it forward."

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