

TREATMENT CENTER FINDS A HOME

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The Rotary Adolescent Treatment Center soon will have a home, thanks to a donation from the monks of Belmont Abbey.

Frank Edwards, executive director of the treatment center for teenagers addicted to drugs and alcohol, announced Thursday that Abbot Peter Stragand of Belmont Abbey agreed to lease the center four acres of land on Woodlawn Street for \$1 a year. The center will construct a 15,000-square-foot building on the site to house the drug and alcohol treatment program.

“The location is a good one, being near I-85,” Edwards said. “Some of our Rotary Club members knew there was land available near Belmont Abbey, so we just started talking with Abbot Peter and he was very receptive. I met with the community Wednesday night, and they were extremely interested.”

The building will include offices, a large room for group meetings, lectures and rooms for group and individual counseling. It will accommodate 150 to 200 young people.

Construction costs will take “50 percent to 75 percent” of the \$400,000 raised to operate the center. It is expected to open late this year. The center will use a building behind First Presbyterian Church in Gastonia as temporary quarters until September, and then find other temporary quarters until the building is ready.

Funds for the center came primarily from Gaston County businesses and foundations during a drive sparked by three Rotary Clubs in Gastonia. Control lies in a board of directors appointed by the clubs.

The treatment program, lasting from six to eight months, will incorporate elements of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. It will be in four levels, from the initial orientation to a less-intense level where the patient returns to school or work.

The outpatient program will last from six to eight months. The clients of the center will live in the homes of nearby families of patients who are being treated at a higher level in the program.

The program will include group therapy and lectures on the dynamics of addiction, as well as classes on life skills and how to cope with problems without turning to drugs.

It will not involve any detoxification, Edwards said. “If a child needs to be physically detoxified, it will be either at the detox unit here or at the city where the child is from.”

The 10-member staff will include a full-time lawyer to handle liaison with the courts, a certified public accountant to direct business affairs and an Episcopal priest to direct the program for families.

The center will be supported through fees paid by patients and their families, although Edwards said some scholarship money will be available for those who can't afford it.

“There are two or three ways that will be done,” he said. “We hope to form a scholarship committee of local people. We also hope that Rotary clubs from outside Gastonia will have scholarships for young people from their area. Any money over and above our operating costs will be used for scholarships.” Edwards said he expects the Rotary Center to start working with the first group of four or five young people later this month. The clientele won't be limited to Gaston County.

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