

Transition House helps residents on road to recovery, learn healthy skills

By Joy Hampton Senior Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:48 pm

Life seemed like a downward spiral for Richard, who has been challenged with mental health issues all of his adult life. To deal with his issues, Richard self-medicated and dug the hole even deeper when he became chemically dependent — until he found help at Transition House.

“I’ve got a job now,” Richard said. “I’m fixin’ to graduate Mental Health Court. I’m looking for an apartment now for the first time in years.”

He’s also been sober since May 9, 2012.

“I graduated the program (at Transition House), but I moved into a bad situation and they let me come back in July,” Richard said.

Richard learned how to see the threat a bad living condition presented through his groups at Transition House. That training allowed him to take action before things became worse. He said he never would have done that in the past, but through counseling, classes and groups at Transition House, he learned to talk about problems before they escalated.

“That’s really the advantage with the outreach program,” Executive Director Bonnie Peruttzi said. “It allows for that continuity. We’re always available for support.”

Richard has been active in building healthy connections and relationships because of what he learned about himself and how to connect with others through groups at Transition House.

“I’ve been going to groups for three years,” he said.

Some of those have been as a client, and some through outreach.

“He’s been really active in the wellness group,” Peruttzi said. “Each group provides a different set of tools.”



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Transition House client Richard shows clinical director Mary Hopkins a basket he wove in the Gifts of Hope program.

Peruttzi said recovery is like building a house. There are different tools needed for different jobs, from recovery-oriented classes to basic life management classes like budgeting and getting a job.

“I learned how to set boundaries,” Richard said.

That new skill probably kept him from going to jail, Peruttzi said. Prior to coming to Transition House, Richard said he didn’t have boundaries.

“I’ve learned to let it go now. I don’t sit and think about the past,” Richard said. “Now I think about the future and what I’m going to do. And I’ve learned to manage my mental health.”

Getting a job is scary, but he was ready to take that step.

“I didn’t think I could do it,” he said.

“I don’t think he ever had confidence,” Peruttzi said. “He never did any arts and crafts as a child. When we started the Gifts of Hope group, Richard had never done any arts and crafts.”

A challenging childhood may have prevented some normal development that enhances life skills.

“I was paralyzed when I was a kid,” he said. “I missed almost two years of school.”

He never got to do creative activities that children normally do, like finger painting.

“What clients are doing is exploring their creative side and then sharing gifts with people who have supported their recovery,” Peruttzi said.

Richard discovered a talent for making reed baskets and other items.

“I’m in the process of making a footstool right now,” he said. “It relaxes me and brings a calm over me.”

In the Gifts of Hope program, students make everything from baskets and dream catchers to poetry and melted crayon art.

“They didn’t know what else to do except self-medicate, self-harm or engage in unhealthy relationships,” Peruttzi said. “They are learning a new variety of tools to manage life.”

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