



The Lazarus Foundation

P.O Box 8031 Janesville. Wisconsin 53547-8031

The Lazarus Foundation is five years old. One of our primary missions – safe, affordable housing for recovering individuals in need - is ongoing and growing. We thank our community for your prayers and support.

In our search for community outreach opportunities, we became aware of a need for additional transitional housing in the Janesville community. There are dedicated people and programs in place to assist individuals who are trying to turn their lives around. One of the missing links between good programs and productive living in the community is the absence of adequate quarters in the existing transitional living housing of the Janesville/Rock County Area for homeless persons in recovery.

These are individuals who have made the necessary changes in their thinking and behavior and are now ready to move forward in their lives.

The problem faced is that many are trapped, either by a lack of employability or finances, and at risk of falling right back into the same negative environment (often surrounded by alcohol, drugs or other forms of addiction) from which they came.

It is our hope that we could provide these people with a safe, structured, affordable environment in which to make the necessary transition. A Fresh Start!

Our organization continually sees in applicants severely damaged livers, kidneys, gastrointestinal systems, cardio-pulmonary systems, and numerous mental health issues as a result of alcoholism and other addictions. These are indications of long-term abuse starting in youth and continuing well into the adult life.

There has been a recent increase in public awareness in the real and present problems of teenage alcohol and drug abuse. It's about time!

One of the recurring themes we hear from persons in recovery is that the substance abuse starts at an early age. In our society where it is frowned on to discuss one's faith in a public school, it IS a legal and generally acceptable practice exposing our children to an addictive, poisonous and potentially lethal chemical both by the marketing and the social acceptance of alcohol.

We see horses, pirates, talking frogs and lizards plus other creatures acceptable to children as spokespersons enticing the public to purchase and consume alcoholic beverages (at least "Spuds McKenzie" is no longer among us). Watching young people drinking, dancing, listening to music and generally having fun in beer and other alcohol related advertising has an effect on our adolescents in deciding what constitutes entertainment (and for the teenage boys, "those Twins"). Yeah, it's supposed to target the over-21 crowd, but the message gets a lot farther down the age ladder. "Why wait, somebody's parents or acquaintance will get it for us". Maybe even at their house ("It's safer that way"). Wonderful!

Many public, purportedly family-oriented, festivals, performances and carnivals seem to have the old American tradition, the "Beer Tent", complete with musical acts, lots of young men and women and off-limits to those under 21 (supposedly). Some groups do segregate this area well away from the children's activities, but many do not. As the children ride the rides and play the games, they can look over and see the young (and not so young) adults drinking and having an apparent good time. They are possibly thinking to themselves "I'll get to do that when I grow up", the older ones adding "or get a fake ID". A "graduation", something great and uplifting to look forward to.

The effects of alcohol on our young people can be devastating. Alcohol in quantities generally consumed at "parties" has an extreme effect on young bodies as well as emotional wellbeing. Alcohol poisoning in young people is at an all-time high. It is estimated that as many as 4,000 deaths per year occur nationwide as a result of alcohol poisoning in young people. That number has risen steadily.

Until the 1990's, deaths due to alcohol poisoning were largely ignored by the media and the public at large. Families who lost a child due to AOD (alcohol overdose) suffered in silence. College campuses, where a great many of the deaths occurred, sought to avoid adverse publicity. Death certificates said "cardiac arrest" or "asphyxiation." Medical examiners sometimes chose to tell a grieving family, "It was a freak accident," rather than "Your son/daughter drank him/herself to death."

- Studies have shown that when children start drinking at a young age, brain development is affected. New research by the AMA (American Medical Association) shows that youth who abuse alcohol have 10% smaller brains than non-users.
- 3 million children ages 14 through 17 are regular drinkers who already have a confirmed alcohol problem.
- 24 percent of eighth graders say they have used alcohol in the last 30 days.
- More than 100,000 12-13 year olds binge drink every month.
- Ninth graders who drink are almost twice as likely to attempt suicide as those who don't.
- 40 percent of children who begin drinking before the age of 15 will become alcoholics at some point in their lives.
- There were 1,218 specifically substance abuse (not accident-related) Emergency Room Treatment Admissions for 2002 in the State of Wisconsin according to the National Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Many times more cases occurred that were neither professionally treated nor reported. The death statistics purely from substance abuse for Wisconsin in that year are not available at the time of this writing.
- 1274 drivers under the age of 21 were involved in traffic accidents while under the influence in 2001 in Wisconsin. 17 drivers under the age of 21 testing "positive" were killed that same year.
- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 17,448 people were killed nationwide in alcohol-related traffic accidents in 2001 (44% of all traffic fatalities). Over a third of those persons killed were under 21 and of those, 18 percent were 16 to 20 years old and intoxicated.

These are terrible truths that we tend to gloss over or ignore in our "normal" society.

There are some who feel that this is the Government's responsibility. Unfortunately even those in the Government have admitted for years that they're incapable of doing so on a long-term basis. Only minimal resources and personnel are available for short-term solutions, and that's sometimes not even enough for a full abuse and medical assessment. That means that private and faith-based organizations must fill the gap.

Most young people who have unacknowledged and untreated substance abuse problems will continue to use after they are 21. Before they "hit bottom" (but usually after) is when councilors, therapists and organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous can offer long-term recovery solutions. Facilities offering primary and secondary treatment can offer short-term places to stay while the physical toxins are removed from the body and emotional issues can be addressed and treated. Facilities like the Lazarus House can offer a long-term place to stay while personal lives are sorted out. Unfortunately the numbers of spaces available at these types of facilities are never close to being enough for the number of persons in need.

These issues are not opinions or emotions. These issues are facts. These are our children. Let's start as parents and a community to recognize and acknowledge the consequences in teen substance abuse. Let's start to hold abhorrent the marketing and availability of alcohol and other substances to our young people. Let's start to pay attention.....or our children will reap the debilitating and deadly benefits.

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