

OnTrackNews

WINTER 2019

Addiction
recovery

Behavioral
health care

Supportive
housing

and more



About OnTrack Rogue Valley

Our mission is to empower individuals and families to overcome addiction, poverty and social stigma through integrative counseling, education, skills training and stable housing that sustain recovery.

Outpatient Services for Adults

Substance abuse and addiction, DUII counseling, domestic abuse counseling (separate programs for victims and aggressors), Medication-Assisted-Treatment (MAT) supportive counseling, anger management and family/couples counseling.

Medford (541) 772-1777

Grants Pass (541) 955-9227

White City (541) 776-6110

Cave Junction (541) 592-5350

Teens Program Providing safe, emotional support and education about addiction, encouraging the adolescents in the creation of treatment planning, thereby increasing the opportunity of positive life choices for success. **Call (541) 200-2426.**

Residential Recovery Programs The HOME program for current and expectant mothers and their children, and the Dad's program serving fathers and their children (pre-K and under), are located in Medford. A coed adults-only residential facility is in Grants Pass.

Award-winning Day Care Program "Little Trackers" is state-licensed and certified, teaching and caring for children (ages 6 weeks to 6 years) using a trauma-based care approach. Oregon's QRIS (Quality Rating and Improvement System) awarded "Little Trackers" five stars. Teachers are also trained to work with children who have developmental disabilities and/or cognitive delays. **Call (541) 973-2235.**

Family Connections One of the only supervised family visitation centers in the Rogue Valley.
Call (541) 200-2446.

Housing Opportunities Our transitional and long-term housing communities are for individuals and households with a history of recovery who receive supportive services from a referring agency in the community. Tenants must be sober and in recovery.
Call (541) 772-1777.

For more information, call (541) 772-1777 or visit www.ontrackrogu山谷.org

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Photo by Rodney Rampey

From the Executive Director

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *OnTrack* magazine. The theme of our first issue is “awareness”. We want to make you “aware” that OnTrack Rogue Valley is alive and well. Our organization is entering its 50th year, with a

renewed commitment to be a vital partner in the health and social services community here in the Rogue Valley. The articles and information in this issue should give you a well-rounded perspective on the services we offer.

Most people know OnTrack as a provider of addiction recovery services for adults and teens, and that is certainly our primary focus. What you may not know is that we also offer programs for domestic violence counseling (both for perpetrators and victims), anger management, and supportive medicated-assisted-treatment (MAT) counseling.

OnTrack Rogue Valley also operates an award-winning day care center in Medford called “Little Trackers” for children ages six weeks to six years. The staff is trained in trauma-informed care and provides a nurturing, healthy, play-based environment. The center is open to all children, including those of our adult clientele.

Supportive housing is also a major part of our mission. Over 250 units of transitional and low-income housing make up our housing inventory. Through our peer support services, case management and affordable rents, OnTrack provides additional support to many clients, greatly increasing the chances of a successful recovery process.

In 2019, we plan to expand our Spanish-language services beyond our current offerings in DUI education and domestic violence counseling.

We encourage you to utilize our resources if you or a loved one is in need. We also ask that you graciously consider a donation to OnTrack so we can continue our vital work in our community.

Thank you for your support of OnTrack Rogue Valley.

Sincerely,
Alan Ledford, PhD
Executive Director

A silhouette of a person standing on a beach with their arms outstretched, looking out at the ocean. The background shows a hazy, overcast sky and distant mountains.

“Don’t look back – you’re not going that way.”

Taking Stock and Moving Forward

By Alan Ledford, PhD, Executive Director

Rebuilding an organization, much like addiction recovery, is never accomplished quickly. A series of achievable goals and thoughtful adjustments, enacted with intention and a desire for growth and healing, gather momentum and build upon each other to effect more sweeping changes. It is a multi-year journey full of challenges, victories and setbacks, and one must stay nimble and open to new ideas.

A primary focus for OnTrack Rogue Valley in 2018 was on continuing to provide uninterrupted quality care and services for our community while working to strengthen relationships with coordinated care organizations (CCOs), the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), the Department of Human Services (DHS), and our community partners here in the Rogue Valley. Our internal priorities focused on building a management structure, overhauling our billing and financial systems, and fostering an environment where our clinical services, and therefore our clients, can succeed and thrive to their fullest potential.

Focus on quality assurance

“Quality assurance” was our lodestar for 2018. OnTrack contracted with the Compliance Consortium, which provides essential information and strategies to make OnTrack’s compliance personnel as knowledgeable and effective as possible. Our quality assurance director Janel Yergen, who also serves as our compliance and ethics officer, was hired as part of the leadership team. It is worth mentioning that for a significant portion of 2018, OnTrack did not bill its clients for services, as we untangled years of billing inaccuracies and repaired relationships with insurance providers. Never once did we consider closing or not providing services to our community. OnTrack has been serving the Rogue Valley for 49 years, and we were not about to cease doing that. Fortunately, we were able to tap into some of our

financial reserves to carry us through this time.

New agreements and plans of correction were reached with All Care and Jackson Care Connect/Care Oregon in 2018. We are currently billing and receiving payments from both organizations. We continue to work with the State Medicaid Integrity team and the Oregon Health Authority on upcoming contracts and reaching agreement on past audits.

Residential programs update

After a period of time in late 2017 when our HOME Program for new and expectant mothers battling addiction was not in operation, we began readmitting clients and by May 2018 the program was relicensed and in June all restrictions from the OHA and DHS were lifted, allowing mothers and children to be admitted to the program. The program has a capacity of 27 moms and up to 24 children, and we are currently increasing our counseling team in anticipation of operating at capacity in 2019.

Our residential Dad’s program, with capacity for ten adults and seven children, moved to a beautiful new facility on Lone Pine Road in East Medford in June. This facility represents a significant improvement in physical surroundings and quality of care for our clients. The Dad’s House has operated at full capacity, with an ongoing waiting list, for most of the time since the June opening.

Trainings and compliance

Ongoing training opportunities for OnTrack's clinicians and counselors-in-training is a vital component in improving our services. In 2018, we offered onsite trainings in pharmacology, trauma-informed care, group counseling, DSM/ASAM Evaluation, Seeking Safety (treatment for PTSD and substance abuse) and navigating change, to name just a few courses. Frequently we were able to open registration for the classes to our community partners, who responded enthusiastically.

OnTrack is entering its 50th year of service to the Rogue Valley.

All OnTrack staff must begin their employment by completing HIPAA training as well as a full suite of Relias courses focusing on standards of conduct, workplace safety, cultural diversity, workplace harassment, employee rights and responsibilities and philosophy of treatment.

A new leadership structure was instituted at OnTrack during 2018. In addition to the quality assurance director position, directors of human resources, information technology, housing and facilities, finance and communications were added, joining the clinical director. A deputy executive director, Sommer Wolcott, was also hired. Together with the board of directors, new strategic and operational plans have been developed and implemented, with one of OnTrack's main goals going forward being national accreditation

There remains much work to be done to re-establish OnTrack as one of the premier providers of addiction recovery care in the Rogue Valley. Our commitment to reach the highest level of service is unwavering, and we have an excellent team of clinicians, administrators and support staff who are performing with a renewed sense of purpose and possibility.



“Breaking Free”

An Innovative Approach to Domestic Violence Treatment

Fifteen years ago, Leslie Kendall arrived at OnTrack with a desire to deepen her own recovery and help others on their paths to sobriety and healing. At the time, Leslie had over 20 years of continuous sobriety but no formal training in counseling. Her passion to help others was obvious, and she was hired initially as a part-time trainee drug and alcohol facilitator.

In 2005, Leslie was assigned to facilitate OnTrack’s Women’s Alternative to Violence (WAV) treatment program. She obtained her CADCI (Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor) certification and dove deeply into the world of domestic violence counseling.

In 2008, Leslie collaborated with other OnTrack staff to publish a new workbook curriculum for her program called “Breaking Free.” The curriculum drew on the well-established Duluth treatment model, but also included other newer approaches such as Seeking Safety (Lisa Najavits, Ph.D.), Marshall Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication, motivational interviewing, emotional regulation, humor, and mindfulness techniques. Her program was designed for women “who are taking back their lives through a combination of education, self-awareness, and a daily practice of self-love and self-acceptance.”

As her program grew, Leslie reached out to academicians and providers in other parts of the country working on the cutting edge of domestic violence research. To bring information to the Southern Oregon treatment community, in 2011 Leslie organized a one-day conference at the Smullin Center in Medford. The conference was designed to highlight new research and evidence-based practices in working with female and male victims and aggressive women. Presenters included: Sandra M. Stith, Ph.D. and University Distinguished Professor at Kansas State University, whose specialty is working with couples addressing domestic violence; Deborah Capaldi, Ph.D., and Senior Research Scientist at the University of Oregon, who described a longitudinal study that revealed patterns of bi-directional violence in couples; and John Hamel, Ph.D. and LCSW, who has pioneered an evidence-based practice serving abusive men in the San Francisco Bay Area.

More recently, in 2017 and 2018, Leslie collaborated with Lesley Lambo, Ph.D. candidate at Concordia University in Montreal, whose Ph.D. thesis uses data from OnTrack's population of female perpetrators of intimate partner violence

“Emotional abuse can sometimes be far more damaging over the long-term than physical violence.”

The “Breaking Free” program at OnTrack continues to serve women in Southern Oregon who participate in groups and one-on-one sessions. In addition to serving female victims, the program has evolved to address bi-directional abuse as well as female aggressors. Her curriculum is a journey of self-discovery involving 30 weeks of counseling and education. After a clear introduction to the necessity of abstinence from alcohol and drugs for the duration of the program, participants are initially taken through the concepts of self-care, loving oneself and compassionate communication.

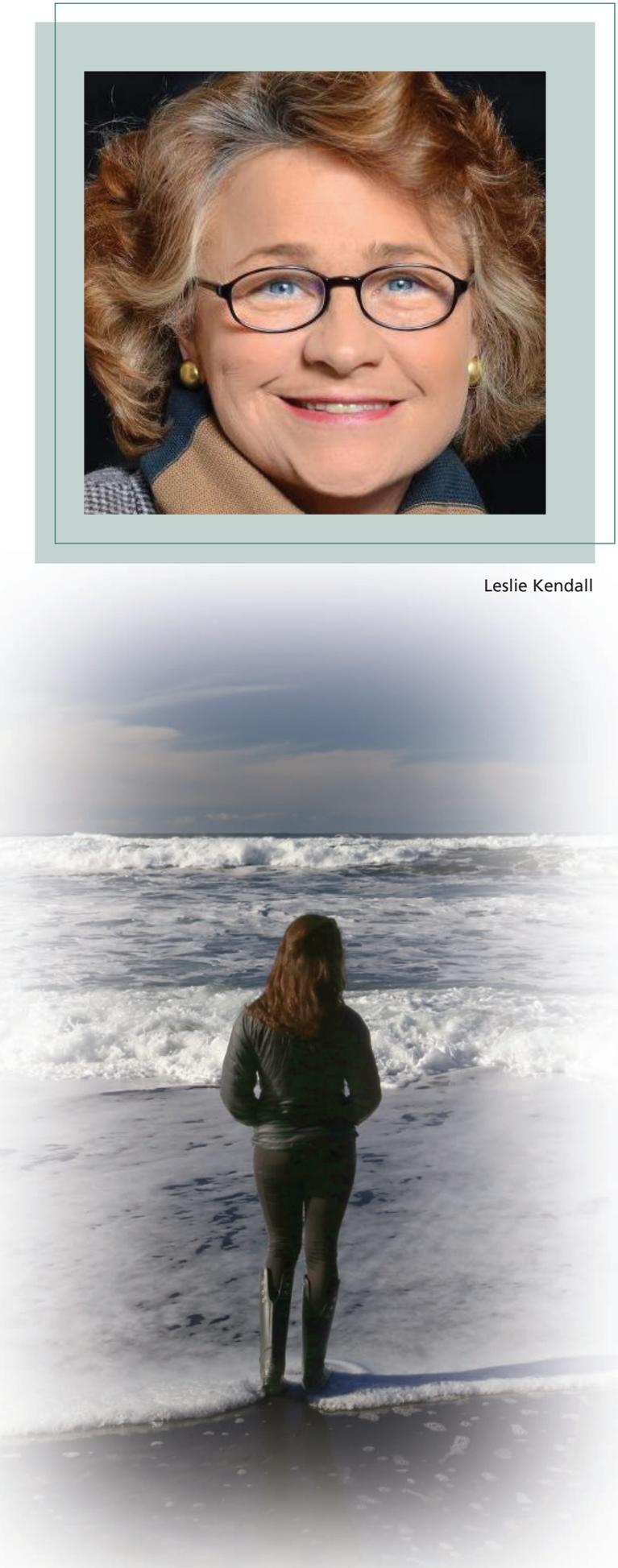
Ensuing lessons involve the concept of co-dependency, a deep exploration of understanding anger and the cycle of domestic violence and becoming aware of the effects of domestic violence on children. As the course continues, participants learn the dynamics of power and control in relationships, how to ask for help, and how to cultivate stable relationships.

Leslie also emphasizes that not all domestic abuse is physical or sexual in nature. “Emotional abuse can sometimes be far more damaging over the long-term than physical violence,” she states. “You are being emotionally abused if someone ignores your feelings, withholds approval or affection, continually criticizes you, makes all decisions for you, humiliates you in public or private, manipulates you with lies and contradictions, or ridicules your most valued beliefs.”

For more information about the “Breaking Free” program, call Leslie Kendall at OnTrack, (541) 200-2375. Also in Southern Oregon, Community Works offers a program strictly for victims of domestic violence. Community Works can be reached through their hotline at (541) 779-4357.



Leslie Kendall



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a black graduation cap with a blue tassel and a black graduation gown, is smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a purple wristband on her left wrist and a silver bracelet on her right wrist. In the foreground, another person's hand is visible, making a peace sign gesture. The background consists of green foliage.

Back from the Brink, and **Transformed**

By Eddie Wallace

OnTrack Rogue Valley has a talented, dedicated team of certified alcohol and drug counselors (CADCs) who have arrived at their chosen profession from a wide variety of life experiences. It's not at all uncommon for a CADC to have navigated their own journey through addiction and into recovery, and subsequently discovered their calling as a counselor. Two examples are OnTrack's Medford-based counselor Shasta Gish and Grants Pass residential manager Tony Hinojosa.

Shasta is a cheerful, optimistic survivor who, at age 39, recently received her CADC-I certification. The fact that she is clean and helping others reclaim their lives from the ravages of addiction is a testament to her strength and endurance.

She grew up in the Sutherlin/Roseburg area, and one of her first memories is as a six-year old, sneaking sips of wine when the adults weren't watching, and going to bed drunk. Without a strong parental role model, this early exposure to altered states led to a steady consumption of alcohol, pot and cigarettes by age 12. "I remember always feeling less-than and uncomfortable, and wanting to change how I felt," she recalls.

Shasta became a parent at age 19 and was married to an addict who turned her on to pain pills. The marriage ended, and a subsequent boyfriend committed suicide. "I didn't have any coping skills to deal with that," she admits, "and after that I started using meth heavily as well as heroin."

The drugs destroyed Shasta's life, resulting in the loss of her job, her house and eventually her daughter, who had to be sent away to live with relatives. Shasta's life consisted of living in a series of cheap motels as she dealt and used drugs.

Turning her life around

After being arrested for drug dealing, Shasta had her first opportunity with Jackson County's Drug Court rehabilitation program. While that first attempt was unsuccessful, a second chance with the same program finally made the difference and enabled her to begin turning her life around.

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"I detoxed while I was in jail," Shasta recalls, "and I realized at that point that I didn't want to spend my life in prison, and that I wanted my life and family back." After six months clean, Shasta says she was "on fire" in her recovery and realized "I want to help people." With the motivation of the Drug Court program's requirement of pursuing either school or work, she committed to the path of higher education, something she had never envisioned as possible for herself. She completed the necessary pre-requisites and human services classes, followed by counselor-in-training work at OnTrack. This past summer, Shasta received her CADC-I certification.

"Treatment taught me I had a disease, and NA taught me how to treat it. Because of that, I can help others."

"I love it! I can't imagine doing anything else," she enthuses about her OnTrack counseling work. "I see myself in my clients all the time, in their various behaviors, successes, setbacks and even their excuses." Shasta credits her ongoing participation in Narcotics Anonymous (NA) for her strength and resilience. "Treatment taught me I had a disease, and NA taught me how to treat it. Because of that, I can help others."

Tony's story

Tony Hinojosa, OnTrack's residential program manager in Grants Pass, is a friendly, gentle bear of a man who, at age 55, is proof that it's never too late to tame your addictions and achieve a life you never thought was possible.

As Tony describes it, his early life was absent of any role models to look up to, and he was in and out of trouble with the law from age 15 onward. He ran afoul of the California Youth Authority as a teenager, and from ages 18 to 27 was frequently in the California prison system, while at the same time developing a significant alcohol and drug addiction. Tony's travels, troubles and attempts at recovery took him from Sacramento to St. Louis to Chicago and back again. Along the way, there were numerous attempts at getting clean, including a successful stretch in Chicago that saw him teaching at Adult and Teen Challenge, a noted addiction

recovery program. But relapses continued to plague him. He sank deeper into heroin use and came close to dying of an overdose, saved only by the efforts of a paramedic who arrived in the nick of time. Tony also returned to prison around this time. "Without the jail time, I'd be dead," he freely admits today. When he was released, he began residential treatment at the Progress House in Placerville, CA, whose credo is "Recovery – A Journey, Not a Race." It was here that the elements of his recovery, and the seeds of his future as a counselor, coalesced and bore fruit.

Finally, ready for change

"I knew I had the capability back at the Teen and Adult Challenge in Chicago," Tony remembers. "But it took years for me to be ready and for everything to come together. A counselor at Progress House suggested that I would be a good counselor. It was the right moment for me to hear it."

"I have a life beyond my wildest dreams"

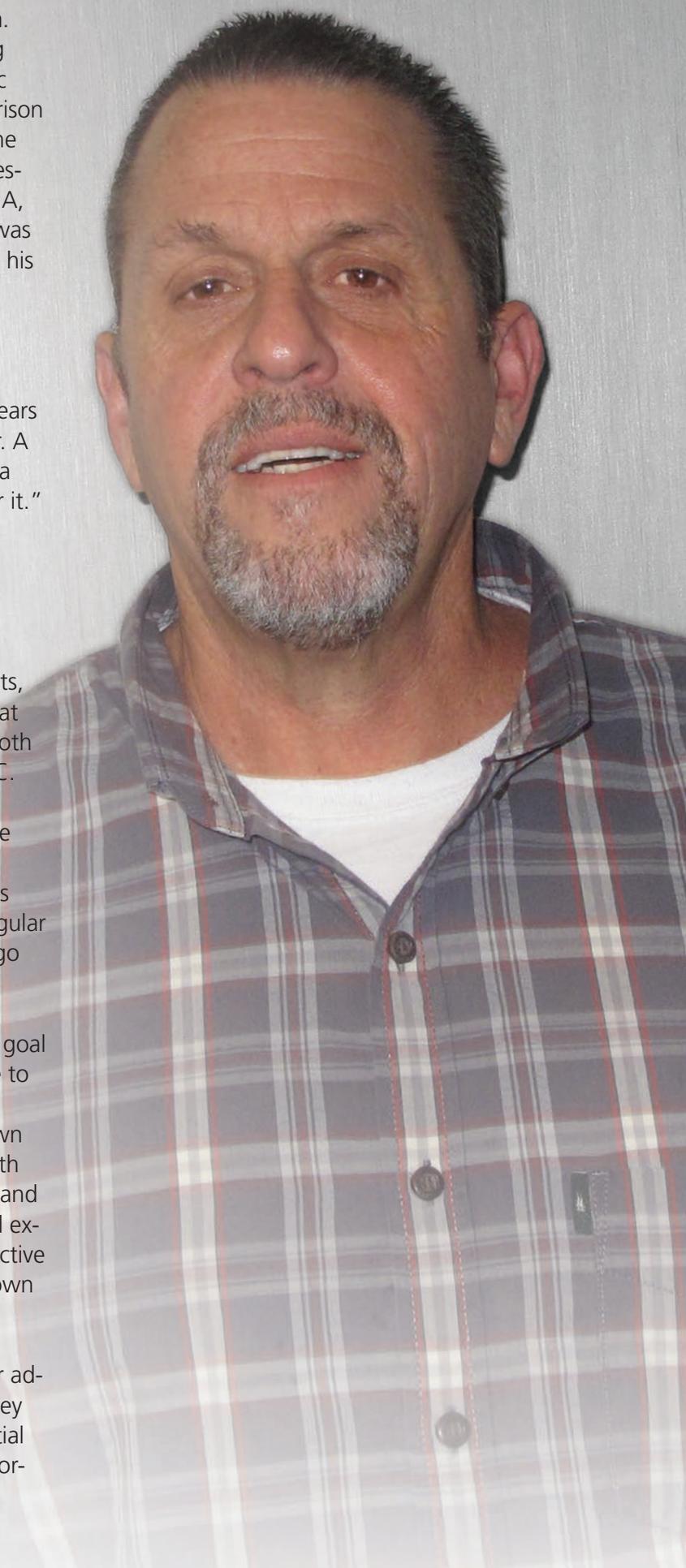
Tony spent the next five years accruing the college credits, observation hours, internships and other experiences that brought him to his current credentials as a CADC-II in both Oregon and California, as well as an international CADC. The level II certification helped him land his current job as residential program manager in Grants Pass, which he began last May.

"I have a life beyond my wildest dreams," he enthuses today. "I get up every day in my own home, I have a regular job where I help people with their recovery, and then I go home in the evening. The simple pleasures."

Like Shasta, Tony continues to work through his own recovery program, attending NA and AA meetings. The goal is to stay clean, strong and centered, and therefore able to do his best work with his clients and co-workers.

Both Shasta and Tony make it clear that while their own experience with addiction may help them empathize with their clients, the focus during treatment is on the client and not their own personal addiction stories. Nor is personal experience with addiction a requirement for being an effective counselor. Every counselor comes to this field for their own reasons and brings their unique gifts to the treatment process.

If you or someone you love is in need of treatment for addiction and/or substance abuse, call OnTrack Rogue Valley at (541) 772-1777 for information on scheduling an initial assessment. We're here and ready to help. For more information on Narcotics Anonymous, visit www.na.org



Finding Truth, Authenticity and Joy

Paula Skinner leads the team serving White City and the Upper Rogue communities.

By Bill Coyne

When the Rogue Family Center opened in White City in 2000, OnTrack was one of several Human Services providers who shared the new space. These included Jackson County Health and human services, DHS Child Welfare and Adult & Family Services. Dedicated to applying the concept of one-stop shopping to services, the Family Center was at that time considered to be one of the most integrated sites in the nation

Expanding outpatient services from our Medford offices to White City, Ashland and eventually Grants Pass and Cave Junction was consistent with our goal to make treatment services accessible to people for whom commuting to Medford would constitute a hardship. Since its location is also convenient to Veterans Administration facilities, the White City office serves a significant number of veterans.

Today at our White City office, DUI Treatment Services and Alcohol and Drug Treatment for Adult Men and Women are provided by counselors Cheryl Collins and Daniel Etchison, assisted by administrative assistant Robin Arnold. Sheila Harrington conducts the Domestic Violence Program for Men, and April Macaulay provides treatment services for youth. The White City office is managed by Paula Skinner, who is also available for facilitating groups and individual sessions. I talked with Paula a little about the journey that brought her here.

Paula was initially employed at OnTrack five years ago as a counselor at the HOME Program, OnTrack's residential treatment program for pregnant and parenting women. She transitioned to White City's outpatient program and has occupied her supervisory position since 2016. Her initial contact with the Rogue Valley was somewhat brief. It took place during her childhood when her parents explored the idea of homesteading in Sam's Valley in 1966. In 1993, following family members who had migrated back to the Rogue Valley, she returned to Oregon and has remained here since that time. She is the mother of three children and proud grandmother of eight.

Paula's interest in the field of counseling was at first peripheral to other pursuits. She studied business and was trained in massage therapy, but an interest in psychology and self-help disciplines that had been in the background began to take focus while she was in her twenties. Witnessing the effects of substance abuse on the lives of people that she cared for motivated her to seek a career in counseling. She took some time away from Southern Oregon to live in Eugene where she completed an internship with Serenity Lane.

Throughout Paula's youth her family travelled and moved a great deal. She spent time in Virginia and Maryland, where the family's driveway lay directly on the Mason-Dixon Line. The family lived at various times in California, Nevada, Colorado, Texas, Georgia and Louisiana. They resided in Peru during a revolution that forced them to move back to the U.S. Though it was challenging and lonely at times, Paula appreciates this hands-on education in geography. The opportunity to meet diverse people and explore different cultures provided her with a valuable background for understanding the people she would later work with as a counselor.

Paula's passion for encouraging people to reach their true potential is an important factor in her treatment philosophy. She feels that alcoholics or addicts still active in their use are not their real selves and that the process of treatment frees individuals so that they can return to a place of truth, authenticity and joy. As a counselor she feels it is her privilege to expedite that life-changing process, a positive attitude consistent with the mission and goals of our agency.

OnTrack's White City office is located in the Rogue Family Center, 3131 Avenue C, White City. Hours are Monday through Thursday, 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM; Fridays 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM. Phone number: 541-776-6110.





Mental Health Issues and Substance Abuse

Two Waves Crashing on Each Other

Drowning is a silent death.

Much to contrary and public opinion, supported by some memorable movie scenes over the years, the drowning victim slips beneath the water's surface by frightening degrees of separation without drawing much if any attention

By Mike Westby

Substance abuse is a lot like drowning. Without a noticeable sign, things start going dark. It can be a very quiet submersion. The nexus between mental health and substance abuse and the drowning metaphor is utilized here to emphasize a primary connection. In both cases the mid-brain is in charge. If there is an overwhelming threat, it goes to the brain's limbic system. In the case of a drowning person, the mid-brain takes over and you will be doing what it says because executive function has been cut out.

This is why pilots in training for combat are water-boarded, so they learn that they are not going to drown (in interrogation). They need to be trained to rely on their reason. Substances like alcohol and drugs become a workaround for people with mental health issues who have not developed the appropriate techniques to cope.

People who have been deprived of adequate nurturing and have a resulting embedded personality defect that inhibits their ability to bond are never going to be rid of it. They must be able to recognize this and respond with a technique that allows them satisfactory relief from what they perceive as impending death. The feeling is absolutely that powerful. And the response is primal.

Self-medication is the workaround that brings relief, even though it is ultimately self-destructive. The user is not thinking long-term. Instead of the frontal lobe having the ability to say, "this skill you are using (self-medication) is ineffective," the downside is ignored.

The 1995-97 Kaiser Permanente Study of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) concluded that early traumas translate into a high likelihood of future substance abuse, depression, suicide, obesity, and diabetes.

Early childhood trauma alters development of both perception and its use in designing a skill set to cope. There are many inputs involved in this process. Your experience of what is hot or cold, for example, has to do with perceptions.

If you have impaired perceptions from early childhood traumas, you may not know hot from cold. You have to learn that from experience, and that is dangerous. People who have sensory perception damage might only make meaning out of intense heat by seeing the result of the damage. These people may have lots of accidents until they learn.

The point of the example is that perceptions are very malleable and vulnerable to things which alter the meaning of the perception. The damage can result in false strategies for dealing with negative experiences. False strategies like substance abuse.

Substances alter the meaning of the perceived trauma so that when we seek relief from the pain, we seek the mid-brain, not the frontal lobe. The choice to use this workaround has a reward. The reward is that you are temporarily less uncomfortable - temporarily because using this technique ignores the consequences.

Our bodies are designed to adjust to the chemicals we ingest. A result is that our body is thus able to present a defense. But the body is functioning as if that defense is always going to be there. If you try to withdraw it is uncomfortable because the body is depending on the substance. Inasmuch, it is no longer using its normal process to quiet the system.

The impact is now a negative one. If you withdraw, then suddenly the system that it was acting in place of is overwhelmed and the effect can be serious to the body.

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, the connections between mental illness and substance abuse manifest in alarming statistics, representing high percentages of the following use/abuse categories:

- 38% of alcohol
- 44% of cocaine
- 68% of cigarettes

Examples of use/abuse by mental health patients include:

- The depressed patient who uses marijuana to numb the pain
- The patient suffering from social anxiety who drinks to feel more comfortable
- The patient who struggles with panic attacks and takes benzodiazepines like Xanax or Valium in order to calm symptoms or stop attacks before they start
- The patient with low energy and lack of motivation who takes Adderall, cocaine, or crystal meth to increase their drive

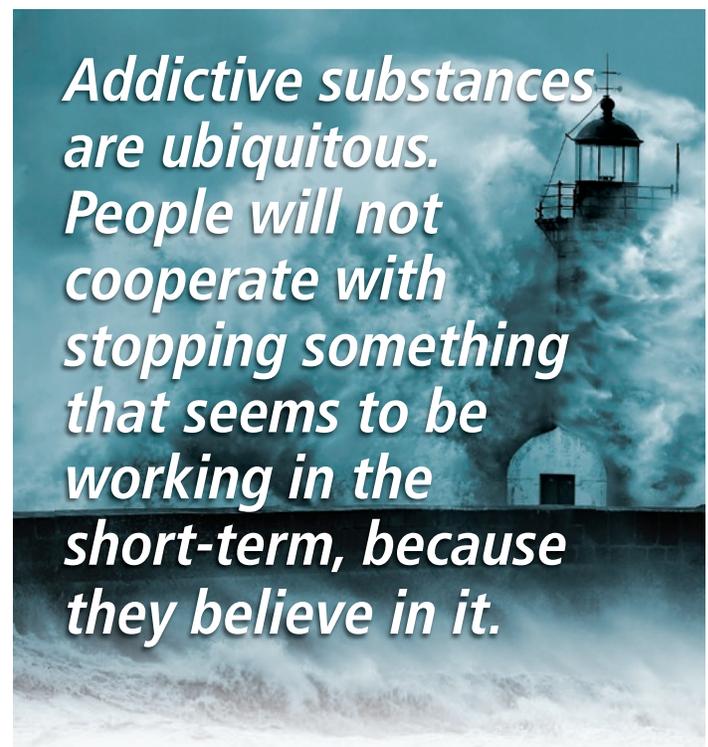
Symptoms of one disorder can also trigger another, according to the same study. There are drugs, for example, that can lead to mental health symptoms such as paranoia, delusions or depressions. Co-occurring mental health disorders happen when these symptoms extend beyond the affect of the substance being used. In these cases, it is imperative that both issues be dealt with at the same time.

When a workaround like substance use has been used, actions are directed at the mid-brain. This is the fight-or-flight response. At the same time, the body has become addicted to the workaround, which while providing temporary relief is also damaging the body's ability to accurately perceive, not to mention the physical toll it is taking on systems, and the manifest behavioral issues that stem from its chronic use.

Addictive substances are ubiquitous. People will not cooperate with stopping something that seems to be working in the short-term, because they believe in it. Once a person finds out they can temporarily relieve pain of all sorts, it will lead them down those paths. Paths that can create distance between them and a healthy life with healthy choices.

They disappear, just like the victim beneath the water. They are the drowning person. They may silently slip away, overwhelmed and unable to cry out for help. A drowning person's body will actually close down the airway to protect itself from the water. And yet this response contributes directly to a silent suffocation that ultimately results in succumbing to the water itself. Likewise, there is paradox in people finding relief in substances that may well eventually destroy them. Perhaps there is more than one reason we call it drowning our sorrows. Like waves crashing into one another, mental health disorders and substance abuse can compound to overtake even the strongest swimmer.

Drowning is a silent death.

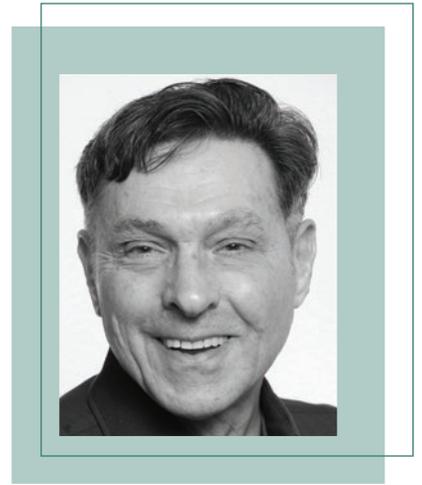


Need help? Call us at (541) 772-1777.

Alan's House: A Place of Life

Longtime staffer Bill Coyne recalls early days of the HIV/AIDS crisis, and how OnTrack was there

By Bill Coyne



I was hired at OnTrack as an administrative assistant late in March 1990. The agency had just acquired its first laser printer. A FAX machine was installed during my first year. Faxes were printed onto heat sensitive paper wound on a roll like butcher paper. The system was temperamental, to say the least; and faxes smeared, wrinkled and curled. For a short while, older files were transferred to microfilm. Remember microfilm?

The agency was not very large. The main office occupied half the ground floor and the entire second floor of 221 West Main. The ground floor was shared with a law office; the third floor was leased to the Public Defender. (We still occasionally receive mail addressed to both; no one likes to update a mailing list.) Rented offices above Legal Services housed the small youth program, quite active in our county's schools in those days. Administration, billing and a group room were first floor; reception and counselors' offices were second. As I recall, there were fewer than three dozen employees.

At that time, OnTrack ran the County Detox, located in one of three old houses at the corner of 10th and Oakdale. They were leased from the city for the token fee of a dollar a year. Today that corner is a parking lot. The largest house would soon become the original site of the HOME Program, possibly the first residential program in the nation to allow mothers to enter treatment with their young children, rather than give them up to foster care, a revolutionary idea at the time.

The third house, a two-bedroom cottage, served several purposes through the years, but at the time I arrived it was the seed that would become Alan's House. One or two at a time, local people in the final stages of HIV Disease were cared for there. They were often friends or acquaintances of staff members, many of whom volunteered to fill shifts. Low profile and often overlooked, our Alan Collins AIDS Project still moves me as a fine example of our agency's ability to identify a need and fill the gap to address it, helping marginalized people live better lives or sometimes simply live.

The shift to the West Medford location that would become Alan's House was already in process when I began working here. Owned by his family, the three-bedroom craftsman style house had been the home of a young man from an East Medford family. Alan was cared for by one of OnTrack's counselors, and after his death the house was acquired from his parents, strong friends of the agency. It was outfitted and supported for the next decade or more with funds received from the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Daedalus Project. Like Alan's House, the Daedalus rose from a personal connection when company members were lost to the epidemic.

At its inception, Alan's House was one of only a handful of AIDS hospices in our state. Overseen by a nurse, it was largely volunteer driven. It hosted a support group that filled its living room and overflowed into the dining room. Although it was undeniably a place where people were made comfortable as they approached death and tears were certainly shed there, I remember it most as a place filled with laughter and life. I was introduced to it when I entered the support group following my own diagnosis. Like so many others, I gained strength and hope from the example of the brave, stubborn, difficult souls I met there who confronted far more dire situations than my own with humor and grace. Alan's House was a place where people could gather for encouragement and news, reunite with loved ones, share meals, enjoy holiday parties and more than once, organize a baby shower. It was also, of course, a place where people learned how to say goodbye.

A year or so after I joined the staff here, the Fairfield Place apartments were built behind Alan's House. The concept was that while able to live independently, people would live in the apartments with assistance from the hospice staff when needed. Should their health decline, they could transition to the house. This was the agency's first venture into the realm of affordable housing for people with specific needs.

All of this occurred at the peak of the epidemic. The agency staff included outreach workers, one of whom gained notoriety by hanging condoms in the trees in public sex areas. For a year we ran a federally funded drop-in center where active users were rewarded food vouchers when exchanging needles, receiving prevention education or testing. Our HIV Prevention classes came about at that time, and several of us spoke to school and community groups. Condoms were available at the front desk, to the chagrin of our receptionists who insisted that the younger people who took them were probably using them for water balloons. With the advent of potent antiretrovirals, the need for hospice care thankfully diminished, and for the next few years, Alan's House sheltered people with HIV who, like those in Fairfield Place, could live independently. Case management was then, and continues to be, crucial to the well-being of our HIV Positive residents, since at the very least, even in the best circumstances, life with HIV can be complex and challenging.

At the risk of being misunderstood, I can honestly say that I sometimes miss that time, its passion and energy, its sense of urgency, the daily manifestation of courage, grace and love. I miss many of the people I don't miss having to lose them. Today what was once known as Alan's House has evolved to meet another community need as the home of our Youth Program. It remains a place of life.

Family Connections

Supervised Family Visitation Opportunities

OnTrack Rogue Valley's FAMILY CONNECTIONS offers supervised family visitation and neutral exchange services to expedite reunification of families where children have had to be temporarily removed because of safety threats caused by, or contributed to by, parental substance abuse. Visitation plans are implemented immediately wherever possible. Facilitators assist families in overcoming barriers to bonding. This is one of the only services of its type in southern Oregon. For more information, call (541) 200-2446 or email m.waite@ontrackrogu山谷.org

Little Trackers

Starting out life with the right skills

Top-rated childcare center for ages 6 weeks to 6 years

The Little Trackers day care program is one of OnTrack's least-known but most important programs. Little Trackers is an inclusive, play-based childcare center specializing in trauma-informed care with a focus on social and emotional development.

The day care program has been awarded five stars by the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs.

Little Trackers is the only non-government operated, five-star QRIS-rated center in southern Oregon with a specialization in trauma-informed care. The teachers and staff focus on developmentally-appropriate learning, rich in discovery and exploration, that fosters a child's lifelong love for learning. A dedicated group of trained professionals provide a healthy and nurturing environment.

The Little Trackers Emergent Curriculum helps children:

- Socially, by providing experiences where children learn the importance of mutual respect and cooperation and enjoy positive interactions and relationships with adults and children.
- Emotionally, by helping children recognize and express their feelings in appropriate ways and to understand and interpret the feelings of others.
- Physically, by encouraging children to develop large and small motor skills.
- Intellectually, by providing creative opportunities that encourage communication, thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Enrollment in Little Trackers is open to all families, regardless of whether the parents are in treatment with OnTrack. Spaces are currently available. Little Trackers is located at 301 S. Ivy Street in Medford. For more information, call (541) 973-2235.

Thanks to OnTrack
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