

Recovery Center's opening planned within the next 60 days

Downtown Moscow office will serve people from across the county recovering from mental health, substance abuse disorders

By Terri Harber
Daily News staff writer

Darrell Keim has started hitting the countywide meeting circuit to let people know about the services the Latah Recovery Center will provide to the community once it opens later this summer.

The newly hired program director of the center made his first such presentation to the Lions Club this past week.

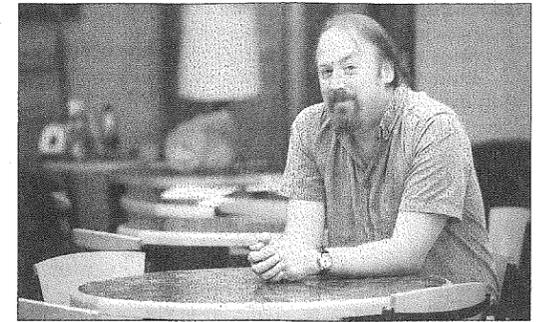
The center will provide peer support, structured classes and resources that people in recovery can use to obtain housing and employ-

ment, and fulfill various day-to-day needs. It's a process "of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential," according to literature at the presentation.

The center will also pro-

vide support to family members of those dealing with mental health and behavioral problems. Other offerings are being created and are going to reflect the needs of Latah County residents who will use the center, Keim said.

Keim said the center's location, near the intersection



Geoff Crimmins/Daily News

Darrell Keim is the program director of the Latah Recovery Center, which is expected to open in Moscow in September.

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of Main and Sixth streets, is significant because the center should be close to other important places in the community, such as the hospital and police department. Easy access to public transit was another key consideration for choosing a site, since many of the center's potential clients don't own cars or drive, Keim said.

Keim cleared up a common misconception brought up during the meeting's question-and-answer period and said people won't be staying at the center overnight. The center will initially only be open during the day, likely 10 a.m.-3 p.m., he said.

"Some think this is going to be a flophouse," Keim said. "We're not that."

Some of that confusion might be the center being linked with Sojourners' Alliance, which offers long-term transitional housing and services to assist individu-

als or families in overcoming the root issues that led them to be homeless. Sojourners' is an established 501(c)(3) and the designation will help the recovery center move toward eventual independence as its own non-profit group.

It's expected many of the people who are receiving service from Sojourners' will benefit from what will be available at the center, and Steve Bonnar, Sojourners' director, will help the center with various administrative duties.

"I'm excited about what's gone on for the Latah Recovery Center," said Kathy Skippen, a program specialist with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Division of Behavioral Health. She referred to the partnership between the center and Sojourners as "a great community relationship."

An important and ongoing part of the recovery is routine and positive involvement in the world around them, Skippen said. The center's Main Street location should allow the center,

its clients and the surrounding businesses to easily connect, she added.

Money came last month for the center's first year of operation in the form of a \$125,000 Millennium Fund grant. The center's board — with help from volunteers — is designing the downtown space so it can be ready to begin operations in late August or September.

Fundraising efforts are needed to keep the center going after that, though Latah County will provide some money.

Four centers throughout Idaho are starting operations this year thanks to grants through the Millennium Fund, Skippen said.

Keim said the preventive care offered is much less costly than other current methods available to serve these people — mostly hospital emergency rooms and incarceration. Spending \$1 on prevention saves between \$5 and \$7 spent to operate jails and prisons and for medical treatments, Keim said.

Latah County's specialty courts also help to keep people

with such problems out of cells and hospital rooms, County Commissioner Tom Lamar said. He took over as the commission's liaison with the center after Tom Stroschein left the county commission in 2014.

"Though we are taking steps that will improve our ability to help and care for those recovering from such disorders, we have a long stairway left to climb," Lamar said.

The Affordable Care Act and addition of the Latah Community Clinic have allowed the county to decrease the amounts of money spent on overall indigent health care during recent years. This year's estimated need will be about \$440,000, according to the County Clerk-Recorder's office.

Commission Chair Dick Walser and Lamar said they hope the opening of the recovery center will save the county more money.

State Rep. John Rusche, Idaho's House minority leader from the 6th District, which includes Nez Perce and Lewis counties, said more of these com-

munity recovery centers will be created around Idaho.

All three of the elected officials expressed interest in seeing Idaho put more focus on the crisis part of this care system.

Rusche said some of the other areas in the mental health and substance abuse disorder care system that require increased attention and funding include prevention efforts, non-adjudicated treatment for drug and alcohol problems, more psychiatrists and psychiatric beds. Mental health resources geared toward children also need improvement.

"We can do better," he said. Keim said providing the help will go a long way toward keeping people from ending up in jail cells and hospital rooms.

Keim said volunteers are still needed at the center, as are cleaning and office supplies, stationary items and other essentials.

Call (208) 882-6932 for details about how to donate or volunteer.

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