

L.E. Phillips - Libertas Treatment Center is a service of

St. Joseph's Hospital

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FREEDOM

L.E. Phillips - Libertas Treatment Center

Summer 2010

What matters most?

By Tom Fuchs, Director, L.E. Phillips-Libertas Treatment Center

St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls, is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year.

For 125 years, the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis have been dealing with addiction and reaching out to the sick, poor and disadvantaged. Imagine, 125 years ago there were loggers and lumbermen in this region whose lives became unmanageable because of alcohol, and the Sisters selflessly cared for those who, some might say, "didn't matter." The ministry they began, we are now called to carry on.

Part of the theme of our hospital's anniversary involves incorporating the simple question "What matters most?" I imagine that what truly mattered 125 years ago is essentially what matters most today. It is our ability to not get caught up in the rhetoric of hate or blame, but to serve – and to serve with a glad heart while having faith and bolstering hope. It's what brought the Sisters here in the first place, and it's what sustained them when faced with caring for people no one else cared for. They did it without sense of personal gain and without institution. They merely focused on what mattered most – providing care without judging or vilifying anyone and regardless of someone's ability to pay.

Today, more than a century later, it's also what each L.E. Phillips-Libertas Treatment Center colleague is asked to do – to care, to serve, to be present, to have faith and to hope.

L.E. Phillips-Libertas stands on the shoulders of giants, yet, in accordance with our Sisters' mission, simply does "what matters most."



Clients assist with garden project

In June, L.E. Phillips-Libertas Treatment Center counselors Rhonda Hemenway and Nikki Kulibert, along with nine of their residential treatment clients, planted a garden in the center's courtyard area.

Since treatment is about growth and change, the idea behind the garden project is to engage the

clients in a hands-on activity that reflected some of those same qualities, said Tom Fuchs, LEP's director.

The undertaking also teaches life skills, sparks creativity, encourages teamwork and symbolizes rebirth and starting over, added Kulibert.

"The whole goal of this is watching something grown and growing in your own recovery," she said, noting that, while participation in the project is optional, most clients have been eager to help.

Additionally, many colleagues have contributed in various capacities, such as supplying supplies or offering gardening expertise.

The gardeners planted tomatoes, beets, corn, cucumbers, peppers, onions, carrots, peas and flowers. They will tend to the 15-foot-wide by 30-foot-long garden throughout the summer and hope to begin harvesting the fruits of their labor in August.

"I'm thrilled about it – I can't tell you how excited I am," Fuchs said. "And the clients are pumped. Every day people are looking out there to see if the seeds are up. We're all excited to watch the development of this and how our clients continue to use gardening as one of the tools of recovery."



About suboxone

What it is: a narcotic medication indicated for the treatment of opiate dependence. Available only by prescription, it must be taken under a doctor's care as prescribed.

How it works: Suboxone binds to the same receptors as other opiate drugs, mimicking the effects of other opiates by alleviating cravings and withdrawal symptoms and allowing patients to address the psychosocial reasons behind their drug use.

How it's taken: as a tablet that dissolves under the tongue.

How often it's taken: one to three times daily.

Who it's for: Patients with long-standing narcotic addictions.

How the program is structured at LEP: The treatment works by replacing an addicted patient's drug of choice with suboxone – and then gradually reducing the dose until they can manage drug-free. Suboxone, a partial narcotic, has special properties that block patients from using it in conjunction with other illicit drugs. Along with the actual suboxone drug replacement, AODA counseling treatment includes group and individual counseling, drug testing and regular visits with counselors and physicians. LEP has served 84 suboxone clients to date.

For more information: Visit www.libertascenter.org, www.suboxone.com or call the L.E. Phillips-Libertas Treatment Center at 723-5585 or (800) 680-4578.

Accidentally addicted

Suboxone program helping La Crosse man with unforeseen drug dependence

Joel Lillejord had the scare of his life when his then 1-year-old daughter accidentally got into his supply of pain medication pills.

"I thought I had killed her," recalled Lillejord, 40, who was prescribed pain pills 8 years ago following a cancer diagnosis.

The toddler was unharmed, but the close call prompted Lillejord to stop taking the pills. However, he quickly found that quitting was easier said than done – desperately reaching for his medication a mere four days later, unable to take the "indescribable" withdrawal symptoms any longer.

That's when he sought the services of the L.E. Phillips-Libertas Treatment Center.

Lillejord, a massage therapist from La Crosse, does not fit society's stereotype of a drug addict. He had no drug dealer. He didn't buy drugs illegally or abuse his medication. Instead, he became addicted from simply taking his medication as prescribed.

Lillejord has been taking prescription painkillers daily for nine years, first OxyContin and later, when this was no longer effective for his pain, methadone. Because of increases in tolerance, he eventually became physically dependent on the pain medications – a situation health experts are seeing more and more.

Recognizing he needed help, Lillejord called the L.E. Phillips-Libertas Treatment Center, which launched a treatment program last summer specifically targeted at patients with opiate addictions. The treatment works by replacing their current opiate with the medication suboxone, then gradually tapering the dose until they are opiate-free. Another major component for success is working closely with counselors, medical staff and a healthy support system. Lillejord, who continues in recovery today, is speaking the program's praises.

"The suboxone has worked great," he said. "I've had no cravings at all. It's made getting off this easy."

Substance Abuse Counselor Lisa Harbert has been seeing Lillejord since last June and describes him a positive patient with incredible perseverance. She is particularly impressed with his willingness to put what he learns in treatment into practice, instead of just talking about it. For instance, following a session about health behaviors, he now implements a healthy diet and exercise program as a way to minimize his pain.

"Joel has been amazing," Harbert said. "He has kept focused on the prize, which is not to use again."

Lillejord encourages anyone with issues similar to his to consider seeking treatment themselves and emphasized that "there's no shame in this."

"People just need to know that there's medication out there that can help," he said. "It worked for me."

