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Drug and alcohol center now open in Willisburg

By Jeff Moreland
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It's been vacant for about a year now, but the building that was most recently home to The Care Academy in Willisburg has some new residents.

Isaiah House, a faith-based alcohol and drug treatment facility for adult men, is now open. For the past two weeks, the new center's staff has been on site and getting things up to speed to offer services to men in need of help with their addictions.



Mark LaPalme, executive director of Isaiah House, talked with staff members during a meeting Friday.

Photo by Jeff Moreland

Jim Fletcher knows very well what the men are dealing with as they enter Isaiah House. Fletcher, who now serves as house manager and also handles public relations for the center, has benefited himself from the treatment offered inside.

"I grew up in New Orleans, in the French Quarter, and I had a false sense of reality," Fletcher said. "I thought that was what it was all about. It was normal for me to drink and do drugs, and it controlled my life for more than 32 years. I was actually in bondage to it."

Fletcher came to know God about six years ago while living in Salt Lake City, Utah. He said he was cold and

dirty, living on the streets, when he went into a mission to eat and clean up. He left cleaner than he ever thought possible.

"I saw a rescue mission, and my intent was to go in, get something to eat, clean up, and then get back on my way, but God had different plans," Fletcher said.

Fletcher was invited to get involved in a program for addicts at that mission, and he did, but his plan was to disprove the scriptures offered by the program. Instead, he found himself realizing that he was being healed by God, and he knew he had a greater calling than he could have imagined.

After starting on his way to recovery, Fletcher found himself in New Orleans again in 2005. He went there to help and reunite with his family, and he did, but he also saw that his past would rear its head, and he had to get away again.

"I was fine until people started coming back, and old friends and old habits started coming back around," Fletcher said. "I felt myself sliding back into that, and I knew I couldn't stay there."

Fletcher knew he wanted to help in the ministry, and he made a list of 10 places and began making phone calls to see who may need help.

"As I was going along, doors were closing for me. I was in Memphis, Tenn., and I had two places left to call. One was in Arkansas, and the other was in Hustonville, Ky. I didn't even know where Hustonville was, but I said, 'God, you need to lead me.'"

God did lead Fletcher, and he took him to Hustonville in Lincoln County, the former home of Isaiah House. Fletcher entered the program for three months before joining the staff, and now finds himself in Washington County continuing to spread the word of God and help men who are battling the same addictions he has fought.

Now sober for more than six years, Fletcher continues to do God's work. He and Mark LaPalme, the executive director of Isaiah House, are trying to get the center settled into the community, and they have been busy getting to know their new neighbors, including those at local churches. As part of the faith-based program at

Isaiah House, the men who seek help there for addictions are also offered a healthy dose of scripture and church attendance. The group has visited a few times at Willisburg Christian Church, as well as others in the community, and plan to visit even more as they continue to make a new home in the area.

“It’s exciting because there’s a great need for this type of ministry in almost every community,” LaPalme said. “There’s more of a problem than we can fix. Putting a house like this in every county ought to be a necessity. We’ve been here about two weeks now and we’ve had people dropping in and everybody here is really friendly. They’re caring and loving, and they take the time to invest in people’s lives.”

Isaiah House currently has 14 men in the program, and LaPalme said he hopes to be up to about 25 in the next 30 days. The center’s capacity is 50, according to Fletcher.

The visitors LaPalme mentioned are more than welcome, and Fletcher said an open house is planned for Feb. 7, but anyone who is curious about the work being done at Isaiah House can stop by and visit with the management, as well as taking a tour of the center. Isaiah House provides a clean environment and a one-year program for men 18 and older who are looking for help with addictions. Fletcher said men are checked into the program on a voluntary basis, as well as some who are court ordered to a facility. Upon entry, they complete a questionnaire about their background and their addictions to help with their treatment. While at the center, they are subject to testing for drugs and alcohol, as well as smoking. Fletcher stressed that the center is smoke free.

During the day, the men of Isaiah House have Bible studies and other religious lessons, as well as performing chores and working as part of the center’s community outreach programs.

“In Hustonville, we had a firewood ministry. We had a man who downed trees, and he would let our guys have them for firewood. We would sell the firewood to make money, and if there was somebody who was needy, we would give them firewood for free,” Fletcher said.

Isaiah House helps the men who enter its program to get back on their feet by assisting them with getting their driver’s license back if necessary, as well as GED assistance. After being at Isaiah House for 90 days, the men can begin to work outside the center, and public job search is another service the center provides.

“We handle everything for them. We send money home to help support their family, and we budget their money for them. It’s a direct deposit, and we give them a weekly statement broken down to the penny for where their money goes,” Fletcher said. “After we get them integrated back into work, they start to take control and can open a checking account and start to pay their own bills and start to do those things for themselves.”

In the final two months of the program, the men can begin to transition back to their normal lives. They are permitted to get an apartment and continue working, but must have two support groups to continue their sobriety and two accountability partners and are encouraged to have a home church to attend. The operators of Isaiah House stay in contact with the accountability partners to ensure that things are going well, and after two successful months, the men graduate from the program.

Fletcher said the men in the program voluntarily can quit at any time, although they are encouraged to stay by staff members as well as other program participants. For those court ordered to a center, they may request a judge allow them to transfer to another center if they are not pleased with the faith-based program.

“If they quit or plan to leave, we contact authorities, and we call their families,” Fletcher said. “Usually when they leave, that’s when the drugs and alcohol are calling them. I’ve stood in the door trying to talk sense to them. It’s hard, but we have to let them go if they really want to leave.”

In Hustonville, Fletcher said the center was in a very rural area, but with homes close by in Willisburg, the men will not simply be allowed to walk away, but they will be taken home or to a location where family or friends can pick them up.

“We don’t want guys going door to door and bothering the neighbors. We’ll take them from here and drop them off where they need to go,” Fletcher added. That relationship with neighbors is one Isaiah House hopes to continue building. LaPalme said there have been some people who have come to ask questions and visit the center, and Fletcher added that anyone with questions is welcome to call or stop by the center.

An open house will be held on Feb. 7 for the public, and another tour is planned for pastors in the community who want to learn more about the faith-based program.

For more information, call Isaiah House at
(859) 375-9201, or
visit www.isaiah-house.org on the Web