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Andy's Place: Opioid Recovery and Healing Through Housing

Jackson, Michigan

In 2020 alone, 2,684 Michiganders died from opioid–related overdoses – more than any year prior, with a 14 percent increase over 2019. A new initiative launched in the state sees a solution in permanent supportive recovery housing.

Through a unique partnership between recovery advocates, Michigan's drug courts, and housing leaders, the innovative model known as Andy's Place has channeled the grief of one family into a **solution to address an ongoing crisis affecting communities across the state of Michigan.**

Halting the Revolving Door: The Power of Permanent Supportive Recovery Housing

For more than 30 years, the Michigan Drug Treatment Courts have proven to be a successful approach to curbing relapse and recidivism rates for drug and alcohol offenders. Treating addiction as a disease rather than a criminal issue, the courts provide continuous and comprehensive interventions, treatments, and services to help people stay on a path to sustained sobriety with judicial supervision.

During the history of the courts, **judges have found one of the biggest obstacles to successful recovery is housing.** People in treatment often return to environments they lived in while using, triggering relapse.

> "We've learned housing is a major issue in the success of recovery for the opiate community. Addicts have a very tight knit social structure that's hard to break. Removing them from trigger environments gives their brains a chance to heal and can be very effective in long-term recovery."
>
> *— Judge Harvey Hoffman, Michigan Drug Courts*

About Andy's Place

- Provides **safe, quality housing along with supportive services in a supervised environment** for 39 individuals and a separate building with 11 two-bedroom apartments for families.
- All residents are referred by the Michigan Drug Treatment Courts, which also provides regular oversight.
- Inspired by a family member who lost a loved one to opioid addiction and now a recovery advocate, **Andy's Place is a first-in-the-nation partnership** among Michigan Governor's office, Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and Michigan Drug Treatment Courts.
- Located in Jackson, **plans are underway to bring this model to other communities in Michigan** including Farmington Hills and Kalamazoo.

An April 2019 groundbreaking event included Governor Gretchen Whitmer and State Senator Mike Shirkey

continued

Channeling Grief to Help Others

After Mike Hirst lost his son, Andrew, from a heroin overdose in 2010, Mike was inspired to launch a nonprofit foundation called Andy's Angels to support families dealing with addiction and promote innovations in recovery. Knowing rates of relapse in traditional 30-, 60-, or 90-day treatment programs are as high as 80 percent and that the human brain can take years to fully heal from long-term drug use, Mike conceived the idea of creating supportive recovery housing to give people space and time to completely break the addiction cycle.

Working with the Michigan Association of Treatment Court Professionals, he proposed the idea to Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and the Governor of Michigan. In 2018, MDHSA, the Michigan Drug Treatment Courts, and community development financing leader Cinnaire joined with Mike to announce the founding of Andy's Place, a supportive recovery housing facility for opioid addiction recovery.

From Concept to Reality

Andy's Place is the first of several permanent supportive recovery housing projects planned in Michigan to address recovery holistically. Developed by Milner and Caringella, Inc., in conjunction with Community Action Agency, Andy's Place opened in 2020 and now offers 39 one-bedroom apartments for individuals referred by the courts. Based on research that has shown that a key component of successful recovery is restoring families and keeping them together in a safe environment, Andy's Place also provides a separate building with 11 two-bedroom apartments to house families. By using federal and state resources, rent for residents is based on income. Individuals without an income aren't required to pay.

Another key component offered onsite is a comprehensive slate of supportive services, including case management and a recovery program funded and managed by the Drug Courts; recreational and life skills programs, including financial health and employment classes; sober and wellness activities; a greenhouse; and an area to create music. The Community Action Agency of Jackson, the development partner, provides job training and employment services through collaboration with local business owners and manufacturers.

The federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), awarded by MSHDA was critical to the project's success. Tax credit equity through LIHTC provided $10.9 million of the $12 million total cost, which was raised by Michigan-based Cinnaire, a community development financial institution (CDFI) that leads in affordable housing finance and development across Michigan and eight other states.

Nationally Recognized

Andy's Place has received national industry awards recognizing its innovative housing and supportive services model: 2021 Charles L. Edson Tax Credit Excellence Award and 2021 *Affordable Housing Finance* Readers' Choice Award.

Community Room to Host Supportive Services

Fully Furnished Apartments Provided

"Changing an environment is so important, and a lot of other amenities go along with this. Supportive recovery housing is not just about housing people; it's about giving them real opportunity to survive."

— Mike Hirst, Father and Recovery Advocate