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PEACEFUL PLACE TO RECOVER

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A view of Recovering Hands, a therapeutic treatment center nestled on a Nathalie farm; below, retreat participants with Kim Adams, center, wearing sleeveless t-shirt, who owns the farm with her husband, Bill.

By Cassidy Ingram
News & Record
SoVaNow.com / March 25, 2019

On a secluded farm in Nathalie, Kim and Bill Adams have created a caring and therapeutic environment for women suffering the after-effects of substance abuse — providing them with counseling, lifestyle coaching, even the comfort of tending to animals.

Recovering Hands is set on a 150-acre farm in Breezy Hill, an area of Nathalie known for its tobacco farming. With picturesque views in every direction, the women under the Adams' care enjoy a peaceful existence in their recovery from drug addiction.

As certified specialists in peer recovery — and having themselves confronted substance abuse — the Adams take an expansive view of what it takes to overcome addiction, one reason they emphasize the importance of lifestyle and self-sufficiency skills.

After moving to the farm in 2004, Kim Adams said it became apparent that the area was "missing something" in the treatment of substance abusers.

"People are dying from this [opioid epidemic]," said Adams, who has made it her mission to help those afflicted by substance abuse since the late 1980s. "The messages that are out there [say] 'sweep it under the rug, don't talk about it,' but every family has someone [with this issue] and I think it's important to let people know there's a resource right here."

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The farm is dotted with several structures, all of which were once either run-down barns or, in one case, an old camper once used by Kim’s father during his time assisting with Hurricane Katrina relief.

“There’s no such thing as junk,” Adams said as she showed off the renovated buildings on the Recovering Hands farm. In some cases, clients were enlisted to help with the fix-up, learning hands-on skills in the process. Many women who come there feel that society has begun to view them as “junk,” robbing them of the confidence necessary to successfully reintegrate with family and community.

The facilities at Recovering Hands include two cabins — one for their clients and one for the staff — as well as the main house which serves as the Adams home and an area for activities and meals. Another building near the main house serves as the Group Room, where clients and staff hold their meditation sessions and workshops.

A labyrinth is nestled near the front of the property, a peaceful place for exercising bodies and minds. There is also a greenhouse and a gym.

The Adamases hope that, by doing hands-on activities and exercises — along with daily counseling — their female clients can not only “learn by doing,” but also feel empowered by their abilities. Just like with the buildings they help to fix, they can also learn to fix themselves, said Kim Adams: “The girls are always amazed that they’re way more talented than they thought they were.”

One former client, who chooses to go by the initials S.L., said the approach taken by the Adamases turned her life around: “I was living in a hopeless, desperate state when a mutual friend mentioned [Recovering Hands] to me,” said S.L. “The things I learned while at Recovering Hands allowed me to build a strong foundation so that when I entered back into my life I would be ... prepared and ready to move forward.”

Kim Adams, who handles most of the day-to-day activities, stressed the importance of keeping clients active both physically and mentally during their stay. It is the best way, she believes, to ward off depression — a very common illness for those suffering from substance abuse.

“You can’t just will [depression] away,” she said. “The [activities] that we’re doing really helps with some of those shortcomings that keep us down.”

The female clients at Recovering Hands keep a fairly busy daily schedule. Their mornings begin around 8:30-9 a.m. with breakfast and then a meditation session. Then, they do their first activity of the day: options include horse-grooming, making candles, or cooking up hot pepper jelly, a farmstead specialty.

After their first activity of the day, they have lunch — which, Adams says, is a group activity in itself. Clients assist her with budgeting, grocery shopping, planning and preparing the meals, a routine that she feels is very important in developing a trusting and almost family-like relationship among the women.

They enjoy a “family-style” meal and then the day continues on with workshops and activities until the evening, when the women attend a recovery meeting outside of town.

This is a part of their “90 in 90” initiative — attending 90 recovery meetings in 90 days, an approach common within the addiction treatment world. The idea is to create a new routine and makes sure that recovery is at the forefront of clients’ minds each day.

The meetings are usually a bit of a drive away due to the lack of venues in the Nathalie area, so clients at Recovering Hands use that drive time productively as well, said Adams: “There’s a meeting on the way to the meeting, a meeting at the meeting, and a meeting on the way home.”

She hailed the importance of these impromptu “meetings,” saying that it is important to keep the dialogue of recovery going throughout the day, even during other activities.

Mediation, counseling, conversation — almost all of which unfolds at the pastoral Adams farm — helps former addicts find their emotional center, and move forward into the world.

“While I healed physically, the most impactful change for me was the one I went through emotionally and spiritually,” S.L. said. “I had a lot of time to sit with myself and reflect, pray, and just be at peace.”

This peace not only comes from the meditation and relaxing environment, but also from the farm creatures: cows, horses, two dogs, and a llama. All have found a home at Recovering Hands, and Adams says the animals play a helpful role in teaching her clients about responsibility.

The women have a limited role in caring for the animals — their responsibilities are limited to feeding and grooming the horses — but Adams believes that their presence is just as healing as any other aspect of her facility. Most of her animals are rescues, seen as “society’s outcasts,” a label that Adams says many of her clients identify with.

Taking care for another creature can help the women care for themselves, she

believes.

Though Kim does most of the daily work, she receives help from a couple living nearby, close friends who assist with driving, mechanical work, and helping with daily activities as needed. Meanwhile, Bill provides most of the financial support as he works on the road. However, Kim hopes that the facility will become self-financing in the near future as she works on obtaining grants and insurance reimbursements to help women who cannot afford to come stay at Recovering Hands.

It's been a difficult process thus far, since most insurances do not pay for "peer support." Kim Adams disagrees wholeheartedly with this policy, noting that while primary treatment centers are important for recovery, peer support is integral for the more intricate and emotional challenge of helping recovering substance abusers.

She also feels disappointment whenever women who seek help are unable to get it because of their financial situation. Though Recovering Hands costs considerably less than most other residential treatment centers — the fee is \$3,000, while the average facility may charge is \$16,000 — many women still find it difficult to come up with money to continue their treatment.

It's "very hard to say no" to people in these situations, Adams said, but until she is able to sufficiently fund her facility through the help of grants and insurance, turning down clients is unavoidable at times.

The issue hits home for Adams. Her brother, who passed away from an overdose two years ago, also had trouble in finding resources to help him recover. "Every time he needed help, he couldn't access it," she said. "You could see him spiraling out of control, and yet there was nobody to help him."

She says that experience is part of the reason she has dedicated her life to helping those who suffer from this illness. "I'm tired of watching people die, and them not having a place to go.

"For people who are ready, this is a great place to learn how to stay clean."

The Adamses' farm is open to any woman who is ready to make the effort to recover: "It's amazing what a little bit of love will do."

For more information, visit Recovering Hands on the web at recoveringhands.com or on Facebook at facebook.com/RecoveringHands. Phone 860-309-1404.

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