

Myths and Facts

(what the media failed to mention because it isn't sensational)

Recovery Chapel only accepts men who are primarily addicts and alcoholics; only the media chooses to sensationalize otherwise.

The men at Recovery Chapel live like a family: they cook, they clean, they work, they go to school, do the yard work, eat together and talk together about life.

Recovery Chapel has operated group homes for six years without a single neighborhood incident.

One sex offender absconded once and we were the first ones to report it to the authorities. Indeed, one of his friends in our program is a prosecution witness.

Recovery Chapel does not have dangerous men in our homes. We screen against men who are a threat to the community:

No Sexual Predators, No Violent Sex Offenders, No Serial Sex Offenders

The Courts have determined the men are not dangerous to the community and have released them. We don't help them get released.

We are surrounded in the community with offenders who are not monitored. You can check out the records of people on www.Case.net

In jails and prison, men are there against their will and darkness prevails. Only men who show that they want enlightenment are allowed to live in the brotherhood of Recovery Chapel. There they live in a healthy social support system that understands their unique challenges.

Group homes do not negatively impact home values.

The Center for Sex Offender Management (www.csom.org) offers good information and publications.

You can read more about us at www.RecoveryChapel.org

The Facts about Recovery Chapel, her Mission, and her Methods

Recovery Chapel, formed in 2004, first served recovering alcoholics and addicts in treatment centers and at our offices. In 2008, we responded to the critical need in Springfield for recovery residences for men. Hospitals, treatment centers, and unsupervised group homes couldn't meet the need. In 2009, we went from four beds to fifteen beds. Also in 2009, we admitted our first alcoholic who also had committed a sexual offense in 1983.

Hearing him tell about his difficulty in securing sober housing and employment made it clear that society had a problem that would not be easily resolved. We determined that the community, in isolating exoffenders from mainstream opportunities, were perpetuating a group of chronic alcoholics and addicts who might more readily succumb to societal frustration. In turn, frustration leads to relapse and recidivism.

We looked in the mirror and decided we would consider helping somebody, even though they had a sex offense in their past, as long as they were genuinely an alcoholic or addict seeking recovery who we believed was no longer a threat to the community. To that goal, we quickly decided there were three types of sex offenders we were not willing to accept:

1. Serial Offenders who have committed more than one sexual offense.
2. Violent Offenders who used force or threat of force to commit a sexual offense.
3. Predatory Offenders who went outside their immediate sphere of influence to seek a victim.

Since 2009, we have had over forty sex offenders and three hundred exoffenders go through our program without a single neighborhood incident. No active Recovery Chapel resident has ever committed a sex offense. The closest a sex offender came to recidivism was a young man who was only given probation for his sexual offense and who lived with us while wearing a monitoring device. He had spent almost a year in our program on Cherry St. where neighbors had no concerns and the men lived in peace. On August 1, 2013, Joshua Erdos removed his monitoring device, Chaplain Robertson notified the authorities, and it took about five months for U.S. Marshals to arrest him. You can read the story in the February 25, 2014 edition of the News-Leader.

Recovery Chapel not only helped keep the community safe during his stay with us, we turned him in fast and first when he went off track. It was also one of the offender's best friends from inside our program, also a sex offender, who is the prosecution's star witness in the case that will hold Erdos accountable. Our intention is to be one of the first lines of defense in the community, not to provide safe harbor for predators. Predators would not seek this enlightened environment where their dark thoughts are likely to be uncovered. Two of our staff are trained in sex offender supervision.

Since the City of Springfield, by City code, only allows group homes to be located in single family residential districts, Recovery Chapel has largely sought the best possible ways to locate our recovery residences within neighborhoods without stirring the ire of neighbors or creating fear. The two residential homes we own are located away from schools and the main path of students heading to

school, are not close to parks, and the nearest City Utilities' bus routes only require our residents to minimally walk through the neighborhood to the bus stop.

We work closely with law enforcement, therapists, probation and parole, and families. We are publishing this document because bringing light to this process is important. Often neighbors don't understand and think we are harboring dark figures that may lurk in the shadows. We are often challenged by neighborhoods that want us to ask their permission to locate into their area, but it is obvious that no neighborhood would approve such a request in advance. So, while we may start off with disgruntled neighbors, as we did in August of 2012 in Greene County, we have been consistent in our approach. Now the neighbors in Greene County even wave to our men.

This doesn't make sense except to people who know what we teach, how we hold men accountable, and the kind of support we provide. We monitor what they do each day without micromanaging them. Once we are comfortable they are living how they should, we may allow them overnight passes at a preapproved location. They are required to work and pay their own way. They are required to go to religious and/or 12-step meetings. We use a Christ-centered discipling approach. They do chores each day. They eat together and hold each other accountable in a way that is more therapeutic than what many families are able to accomplish.

We help them find jobs. We counsel them when they get fired. We teach them how to dress and appropriately groom themselves. Their rooms are inspected every day. They do their own laundry and learn how to take care of a home. They cook and have fellowship events. We engage them on a healthy social level daily. We give them rides to work. We help them get other support systems in place and teach them how to properly advocate for themselves. We give them a sense of love, discipline, and belonging they might have never experienced.

The house will have elder brothers that help the new brothers. Every soul is counted, monitored, and assisted toward goals that are appropriate for the individual. While doing this, we take great pains not to negatively impact the neighborhood. We are trying to teach our men how to live in harmony and being a good neighbor is part of the teaching process. We keep our property in good shape, require the men not to hang around in the front yard unless they are awaiting a ride, only allow them to smoke in back yards or on back patios away from the public eye, and have only licensed and insured vehicles on the property.

People wonder why we should care. Why can't we be rid of the problem? It just isn't that simple. The Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM) is a national clearinghouse and technical assistance center that supports state and local jurisdictions in the effective management of sex offenders. Their 2001 report, *Myths and Facts about Sex Offenders*, provides some essential insights:

1. *While sex offenders constitute a large and increasing population of prison inmates, most are eventually released to the community. Some 60% of those 265,000 convicted sex offenders noted above were supervised in the community, whether directly following sentencing or after a term of incarceration in jail or prison. Short of incarceration, supervision allows the criminal justice system the best means to maintain control over offenders, monitor their residence, and require*

them to work and participate in treatment. As a result, there is a growing interest in providing community supervision for this population as an effective means of reducing the threat of future victimization.

- 2. Statistics indicate that the majority of women who have been raped know their assailant. A 1998 National Violence Against Women Survey revealed that among those women who reported being raped, 76% were victimized by a current or former husband, live-in partner, or date (Tjaden and Thoennes, 1998). Also, a Bureau of Justice Statistics study found that nearly 9 out of 10 rape or sexual assault victimizations involved a single offender with whom the victim had a prior relationship as a family member, intimate, or acquaintance (Greenfeld, 1997).*
- 3. Approximately 60% of boys and 80% of girls who are sexually victimized are abused by someone known to the child or the child's family (Lieb, Quinsey, and Berliner, 1998). Relatives, friends, baby-sitters, persons in positions of authority over the child, or persons who supervise children are more likely than strangers to commit a sexual assault.*
- 4. Without the option of community supervision and treatment, the vast majority of incarcerated sex offenders would otherwise serve their maximum sentences and return to the community without the internal (treatment) and external (supervision) controls to effectively manage their sexually abusive behavior. Managing those offenders who are amenable to treatment and can be supervised intensively in the community following an appropriate term of incarceration can serve to prevent future victimization while saving taxpayers substantial imprisonment costs (Lotke, 1996).*

Recovery Chapel isn't looking for people to come and welcome us into neighborhoods. The fact is that you already have a number of exoffenders and sex offenders living, working and playing all around the city. What we want is for people to set aside their judgmental nature about our work long enough to see that we are serving the Kingdom of God and the City of Springfield as best we can. While some neighbors might be upset at first, we endure that temporary onslaught of negativity to serve a greater good which becomes obvious over time. We cannot let the fears of a few dictate what God would have us do.

Some people like to call and tell us how ungodly we are and we immediately disconnect the call from those ranting assassins. Others want us to please them and indulge their selfish and fearful concerns. People can be flippant and angry and self-righteous. They may vilify our work without taking the time to understand it, refusing to listen to reason or hear the story of the men in our program. They remind me of a crowd from two thousand years ago that wanted to stone a harlot. The Master asked for a person without sin to cast the first stone. The crowd wisely walked away.