

CORRECTIONS TO COMMUNITY

QUARTERLY NEWS FROM ALTERNATIVES, INC.

SPRING 2020



ALTERNATIVES
CORRECTIONS TO COMMUNITY

Mission Statement:

We promote public safety and challenge offenders to become responsible, productive citizens.

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Meet Our Medical Team!

By Jan Begger, Chief Operating Officer

With the Coronavirus Pandemic reaching its peak in Montana, this is a good time to recognize the nursing staff at Passages and Alpha House. Every day brings new issues and protocols and these heroes lead our efforts at risk reduction. Staff and clients both remain in good spirits knowing that these professionals have our back.

The medical team at Alternatives, Inc. is a highly qualified and educated group of professionals with diverse backgrounds that led them to the field of corrections.

Toni Denny, Registered Nurse, has been with the agency for two years and she supervises our medical team. She is an enrolled member of the Chippewa-Cree Tribe from Rocky Boy, Montana. She received a highly competitive Indian Health Service Scholarship and graduated from Salish Kootenai College, becoming a Registered Nurse in 2004. She has worked at several rural hospitals during her career, mainly with the Indian Health Service. For several years she worked as a travel RN to accommodate her husband's career and to raise their four children. During that time, she travelled to various hospitals in Montana, Oklahoma, Arizona and New Mexico. Toni was hired as one of two RN's and was soon promoted to the position of RN Supervisor, a position in which she excels. She prides

herself on doing her best daily, and enjoys maintaining a sense of fun and humor!



Alternatives' Medical team: (L-R) Shellie Gookin-LPN, Amanda Marshall-LPN, Cathy Cline-LPN, Toni Denny-RN, and Kelly Debats-LPN

Kelly DeBats, Licensed Practical Nurse, has been the mainstay of the team for the past 9 years! She was out of the workforce raising her six children when Alternatives made her an

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Meet Our Medical Team!

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offer she couldn't refuse. Kelly has been a key contributor in developing Alternatives' medical procedures and is considered the "go to" for new staff. She earned her degree in 1985 from Billings Vo-Tech and began her career in the hospital setting. Kelly has two perfect grandchildren and her favorite hobby is fishing. She is an inspiration to our entire staff and a joy to work with.

Amanda Marshall, LPN, has been a nurse for 13 years. She graduated from MSU-COT Billings with an Associate of Applied Science in Nursing. Amanda came to Passages last November from the Yellowstone County Detention Facility. She has worked in various jobs as a nurse in Montana and feels that corrections is where she wants to be. Amanda has a 24-year-old son who is a United States Marine currently stationed at Camp Pendleton, California. OORAH! She is also expecting a grandbaby in September!

Rachel McMorris is an LPN with 20 years experience currently temping at Alternatives. She says she is thankful for the chance to help out Alpha House and Passages. She is currently back in nursing school pursuing her Bachelor's RN to further her goal of becoming a Psych Nurse Practitioner. Rachel enjoys OrangeTheory Fitness, Soul Cycle, and elk hunting. She has two adult daughters and two bonus boys with her husband Chris. She hopes to travel a lot with her family in the future.

Shellie Gookin is a temporary LPN with 45 years experience. Blessed to be an at home mom for several years, Shellie reentered the workforce in 1993. Her experience comes from working in hospitals, long term care, and more recently the Yellowstone County Detention Facility.



Rachel McMorris - LPN



Passages recently received a \$500 grant from Zonta to assist women in furthering their education by preparing for their HiSet while a resident of Passages. The funding will be used to pay for the \$10 per test fee. The Zonta Club of Billings is comprised of executives and professionals dedicated to the advancement of women through education, economic stability, legal and legislative equality, health and wellness, both locally and worldwide.

There are six separate tests required in order to complete the HiSet process. In 2018, ten residents received their HiSet degree while at Passages.

Carey Guides

By Adam Chenoweth, Alpha House Case Manager

The Carey Guides are a system of 33 manuals that address criminogenic needs and provide case management tools.

Research has shown that traditional supervision has often been ineffective in solidifying positive change in the offender population. These tools have short, proactive exercises that help offenders learn new skills. They offer guided practice and role playing in order to make a lasting difference.

Some of the topics the guides address are antisocial associates, antisocial thinking, problem solving, motivation for offenders to change, and many more topics.

As a soldier, I have served this great country for almost 20 years. I have served in some of the worst places and worst times this country has thrown a modern soldier into. Through those experiences I have built a gruff and tough line of thinking as anyone who knows me can attest. So, when we were required to attend Carey Guide training last year, I had the thought “we can’t talk people into acting better”. My military training teaches me that you must break someone down to rebuild them, to build them into a better version of themselves. My military training has also taught me that I must follow orders without question, which made me dive headlong into the Carey Guides and through that I have had some eye opening experiences, both good and bad.



One young man on my caseload had broken most program rules and was not motivated. I decided that it would be best to work on his motivation so during our first visit, we discussed Carey Guides as a tool that could be used to help him do better and give him an idea of what his criminal behavior has cost him. As we went through tool 1, he began to cry and he said, “I don’t know how this is supposed to help me. I just see what I lost.” That led to a conversation about what his options in life were and his

“I don’t know how this is supposed to help me. I just see what I lost.” goals. I asked him to work on the rest of tool 1 by himself and reflect on the answers before he wrote them out. He completed the assignment ON TIME and now he takes pride in working independently and has become successful in complying with his program requirements.

Another client of mine has been diagnosed with a substance use disorder and a list of mental health disorders that would keep most of us in bed every day, all day. He seems to play on other’s sympathy in order to manipulate the system. I thought that if he had a better understanding of his behavior it could possibly open better communication lines. He was reluctant to use the Carey Tool and asked, “why are you trying to diagnose me?” I explained that the tool was not meant to diagnose his behavior but to increase his understanding of his behaviors and their consequences. He became defensive and used some abusive language. I handed him the tool and told him that if he wanted to complete it he could. The next time he came back to my office not only did he have it done, but freely discussed concerns he had not addressed before. His willingness to open up has allowed me to advise him about services he can access.

This last case felt like a failure on my part and makes me wonder if more Carey Guide time would have resulted in a different outcome. Much like the guy from my first story, this guy was just struggling with programming. He had zero follow through, refused to meet basic requirements like self helps, and would rarely attend functions that were scheduled for him. As a result, he was on a zero tolerance for further class 2 violations from Probation and Parole. This also happened to be the same time we went through Carey Guide training. I figured I’d give the guides a try. Maybe I could set him on a trajectory of doing well and he could graduate from Alpha House. I started with the motivation tools, which I feel really impacted him. He would look at them and say “wow” and “oh my God.” He was amazed at what his criminal behavior had cost him. In the long run he got another class 2 violation and was revoked.

The Carey Guides are a great tool and can be used in some wonderful ways. Do you have a resident/client who you need or want to open up more to you or maybe one you want to encourage (through their own personal discoveries) to make a change? Then this old soldier recommends the Carey Guides.

Yellowstone County Domestic Violence Court Exploratory Project

By Amanda Green, Director of Development

In 2019, Alternatives, in conjunction with the Yellowstone County Justice Court applied to the Montana Board of Crime Control for funding to explore options for a Domestic Violence Court. The STOP Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) project was awarded \$44,452 to support a Domestic Violence Coordinator position. The Coordinator is responsible for holding organizational meetings, gather information, present data, and collaborate with community partners. The funding was granted in early December and awarded over a 9-month period. Jessi Kraft was hired in early November and has been hard at work to fulfill the purpose of the grant (reviewing legal, social, and fiscal challenges and favors in the creation of Montana's first domestic violence specialty court). Prior to coming to Alternatives, Jessi was the Pretrial Risk Assessment Assistant with the Yellowstone County Justice Court; ensuring PSA's were generated and tracked for all defendants incarcerated on new criminal charges.



The research conducted included a statistical analysis of domestic violence courts across the country and collection of data on Yellowstone County and the surrounding areas. Partnering with the Center for Court Innovations and other DV Specialty Courts, Jessi was able to find nine Mentor Courts that had similar population demographics and met the objectives of a DV Court which differ significantly from traditional treatment court models. Most treatment courts provide hands on, day-to-day coordination and supervision while DV Courts provide coordinated victim and offender efforts, combining both criminal and civil proceedings. With one or two judges coordinating domestic violence cases instead of five or six, a consistent set of recommendations and guidelines can be set for all parties. This allows the judge or judges to collaborate on pre-trial or post-conviction orders that are sometimes disjointed when multiple judges are dealing with the clients. A reduction in the workload for court personnel is seen as a possible benefit of a domestic violence court, as it streamlines the process for victims and perpetrators and allows for better results.

Judge David Carter, Justice of the Peace, is the designated project director and works closely with Alternatives to fulfill the objectives of the grant. Alternatives is responsible for completing the day-to-day work while the Judge helps guide a stakeholder group comprised of 12 community members whom all have a role to play in domestic violence cases. These members represent public government and private organizations including prosecutors, defense attorneys, Gateway House, Crowley Fleck Pro Bono department, Victim Witness Services, and Department of Family Services among others. In addition, the group is lead by a 5-member advisory board consisting of Judge David Carter, Amanda Green - Director of Development for Alternatives, Inc., Jessi Kraft - DV Coordinator for Alternatives, Inc., Assistant City Attorney Ben Halverson, and Daniel Ball (private attorney). This advisory board will take a trip to Buffalo, NY in the early Summer to visit a Mentor Court. It is hoped this visit will shed light on the logistics of running an actual DV Specialty Court. All 17 members whom have collaborated on the project focus mainly on answering three (3) questions:

What form of domestic violence court is best for our community?

What steps are needed in order to implement the court?

Is a domestic violence specialty court feasible in Yellowstone County?

In June, the Advisory Board will submit a final recommendation to the Montana Board of Crime Control as to whether this type of court could function successfully in our area.



Judge David Carter
Yellowstone County Justice Court

United Way Partnership

By Bethany Jackson, Alpha House Case Manager & Gwen Albrecht, Executive Assistant

Alternatives' partnership with the United Way spans two decades. In order to expand the agency's focus on United Way sponsored events, team captains were chosen for each of Alternatives' facilities.

Here is a sampling of the events Alternatives' staff participated in courtesy of the United Way:



- ⇒ Community Baby Shower: Alpha House staff members collected \$88 which was matched by First Interstate Bank. Staff collected baby supplies for families in need in Yellowstone County. These families attended the baby shower at the United Way's corporate office to collect items for their infants and toddlers.
- ⇒ Operation Supply: In September, staff members made donations of school supplies to our collection boxes while others contributed monetarily. These supplies helped equip children throughout the school year.
- ⇒ Day of Caring: Also in September, twenty-five staff members came together for the annual Day of Caring. Two teams worked on two projects in our community. Half were dispatched to the Family Support Network for their "Spring Into Fall" cleaning project, while the other half groomed hiking trails for the Yellowstone River Parks Association.
- ⇒ Annual Campaign: The annual campaign for the 2020 year resulted in staff contributions of over \$3,400!



Day of Caring Team 1: (L-R) Rhonda Stennerson, Craig Botnen, Jen Bauer, Chelsey Duenow, Justina Goldhahn, Shelbi Wolff, Matt Deutscher, Justin Miller, Jen Porter, Gwen Albrecht



Day of Caring Team 2: (L-R) Vickie Coonfare, Mal Tift, Crystal Hanson, Shawn Byrne, Eric Braun, Jimmy Casas, Bethany Jackson. (Crouching front) Ali Iverson

In 2019, United Way selected Passages as a Go Grant recipient. Passages received \$1,000 to use towards the purchase of iPads and educational apps. These will be used by the residents during visitation with their children to assist with school readiness and school projects. This will empower mothers to feel a part of their child's education while still a resident of Passages. Both the child and mother will benefit from this opportunity. Thank you, United Way!



ALTERNATIVES

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