

(Continued from Page 1) how their lives changed and how they gained hope while in recovery. Just as importantly, the book also focuses on their families who suffered in the wake of their loved ones' destructive paths.

According to Valley Hope Association President/CEO Ken Gregoire, "The book captures the deeply human nature of the disease of addiction and the deeply spiritual nature of treatment and recovery. It also captures the efforts of the Valley Hope pioneers in the 1960s as they embarked on a project that at best had to be thought of as a long shot.

"What has always been interesting to me is how the treatment that evolved at Valley Hope is also the story of the values and experiences of people in western Kansas, particularly in Norton. People on the plains find God in a sunset, beauty in a golden wheat field and are the ultimate DIY (Do It Yourself) people. They are fiercely independent and work out their own solutions to tough problems.

"Valley Hope has never been a cookie cutter treatment organization in large part because of the large spirits of our founders but also because we grew and developed on the plains of Kansas. This book is a great read about addiction and its treatment but also about Kansas and its people."

Ron Hunsicker, president and chief executive officer of the National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers, wrote the foreword for the book. "As you read this history, allow yourself to hear the voices, feel the passion, live the dream and begin to look around for miracles," he says. "They believe they happen all the time and they have some stories to share with you that will get you to expect them as well.

"This is more than history; this is a miracle that it ever happened and a greater miracle that it continues to happen, day after day after day."

Brainchild of two men

Valley Hope was the brainchild of Dr. Merlynn Colip, a Norton physician, and Bob Adams a Methodist minister from Jennings. They got to know each other during conversations while serving as "subs" for their bowling teams at the local alley. The conversations eventually led to Adams' good friend, George, who had a drinking problem.

Colip had experienced some run-ins with "drunks" during his medical practice and didn't have much use for them or think they could be cured. As Adams and Colip talked during those long nights of not bowling in 1965, they both began to look for something to help George.

Adams had been trying to find help and had come across a place named Heartview in Mandan, North Dakota, 600 miles from Norton! The director was Dr. William Leipold, who agreed to accept George as soon as they could get him there. "Doc", as he was known, had been at Heartview about a year. During that time, he'd begun to pioneer a philosophy of dealing with alcoholics and addicts that involved "huggers" not "muggers".

He had the simple premise that alcoholics, like all people, deserved respect and trust. They needed to be given responsibility and made accountable for themselves and others like them. They needed to learn about spirituality and how to seek help from a higher power.

Adam stayed a week at Heartview to see firsthand what Doc Leipold was trying to do and seeing spirituality at work. George stayed a month, emerging a sober man and staying sober, with a few short lapses, until his death 22 years later.

Colip and Adams returned to the Norton area wanting to give others the same chance for sobriety George had. Only they didn't want to drive 600 miles to get it.

Within days, Adams and Colip began planning a residential treatment center for western Kansas. Several months later, they called Doc Leipold, who had left Heartview and gone into private practice in Bismarck and asked him to advise them. By August, they'd pulled enough people together so that area newspapers were reporting positively on their efforts. By November, Keith Sebelius, a Norton attorney and later U.S. Congressman, drafted at no charge the articles of incorporation for the

nonprofit Kansas Association for Alcoholic Treatment.

The early Board of Directors, besides Adams and Colip, included Norton County residents Dr.E.F. Steichen, a country doctor from Lenora; Judge Jean Kissell, a Norton judge who regularly saw the impact of addiction; Guy Allen and LeRoy Peterson, interested Norton businessmen.

Early on, the organization was renamed and remains the Valley Hope Association.

Although Leipold's private practice was just starting to take off, he was finally convinced to join the new center in Norton. It was located in a small building on the grounds of the former Norton State Hospital, three miles east of Norton. With the help of Bea Jacquart, a Kansas state representative and the first woman on the treatment center's board, they were able to lease the building for one dollar a year. When the board agreed to the lease, it had nothing but \$1,000 in the bank and a lot of faith.

On August 15, 1967, the small staff joined hands in the lobby at the new center and, led by Father Charles Griffith, a part-time chaplain, prayed for one thing: "Lord, help us help people".

Valley Hope planned to treat 100 patients the first year and ended with 200. Two patients signed in opening day and eight more came in during the next 10 days. By the end of August, the center's 14 beds were full, with more beds stuffed into corners when the need arose.

People in furs and driving Cadillacs and Rolls Royces quietly checked themselves into the center, telling their friends they were going on vacation. A high-powered businessman known for his displays of temper was one of the early patients and later became a board member. After Blue Cross and Blue Shield was persuaded to pay for treatment-a first anywhere-school teachers, airline mechanics and pilots, Motorola workers, truck drivers and farmers began to turn up for treatment.

Valley Hope stayed in the state-leased facility for one year, then moved to a former motel at the west end of Norton. Dr. Steichen personally guaranteed the \$212,000 loan necessary to buy the motel. The motel building more than tripled Valley Hope's capacity and still houses the Norton treatment center.

Chaplain Robert Speer, who has been with Valley Hope almost from the beginning, calls it "hallowed ground".

Some of the thousands who found their way to the center began referring to it as the Norton Finishing School -- the place where they brought their lives back under control and learned how to live sober.

By the end of 1969, just two and a half years after they'd opened, a total of 1,429 patients had been treated in Norton and the organization's growing professionalism was obvious. The first Alkathon, an all-night, alcohol-free event, drew 550 people in May, 1970, and included speakers from Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon.

The big map at the Norton center with pins marking the hometown of each person in treatment had a secondary impact: people began to see the clusters and realize they weren't alone. When they returned to their communities, they banded together to support each other and, where there wasn't the support they felt they needed, they began to build the infrastructure to get it.

Valley Hope Expansion

The result was Valley Hope expansion to other communities, either as full-fledged inpatient centers or outpatient facilities. Each one of the centers had a story--of commitment, faith, difficulties overcome by what appeared to be a guiding hand that was bigger than any single person or group's abilities.

In addition to Norton, Valley Hope inpatient treatment centers are located in Atchison, KS; Boonville, MO; Chandler, AZ; Cushing, OK; Grapevine, TX; Halstead, KS; O'Neill, NE and Parker, CO.

Outpatient centers are located in Grapevine, TX; Mission, KS; St. Louis, MO; Tempe, AZ; Oklahoma City, OK; Wichita, KS; Omaha, NE and Centennial, CO.

The organization has embraced



The Rev. Bob Adams, one of the founders, is pictured speaking to the crowd during the 20th Valley Hope Birthday Party in 1987.

- Courtesy photo Valley Hope

technology and has launched programs as innovative as their own treatment philosophy was when the first treatment center opened in 1967. Under the direction of Executive Vice President John Leipold, son of Doc and Val Leipold, Valley Hope has stepped forward into a new age of advanced technology and sophisticated business and personnel practices. These are changes Leipold believes will reach more people and help guarantee Valley Hope's financial future.

Doc Leipold was President/CEO for 25 years, followed by Dennis Gilhousen, 12 years and now Ken Gregoire for the past 5 years.

Norton residents who faithfully served on the Valley Hope Association Board of Directors in the past were Keith Sebelius, Dick Boyd, Jim Danielson, Dr. Robert Long, Phil Lesh and Monsignor Armand Girard.

Current members of the Board of Directors are: Pat George, chairman, Dodge City; Dave Hill, vice-chairman, Baldwin City; Michael Carr, secretary, Oklahoma City; Ada Arford, treasurer, Norton; Merlynn Colip, M.D., Norton; John Cumings, Littleton, Colo.; Jeff Wheeler, Colorado Springs, Colo.; John McClymont, Norton; Doug Sebelius, Norton; Patti Yaussi, Lincoln, Neb.

Current members of the Norton Valley Hope/Hope Builders Board are: Eddie Park, Lebanon, NE; Don Schlatter, Lebanon, KS; Doris Yeager, Norton; Marvin May, Oberlin; Jim Sughroue, Indianola, NE; Vickie Taylor, Oberlin; JoAnn Smolczk, McCook, NE; Connie Johnson, Norton.

Spoke at Lions Club

"Valley Hope is now nationally known and highly respected and we're thrilled to be part of it," Dr. Colip told the Norton Lions Club, where he and Megan O'Connor Wetter, Valley Hope's Director of Development, introduced the new book.

"Back in 1966, we had to raise \$20,000 locally to qualify for a \$90,000 Federal Initiation grant to get started and we raised \$22,000. Dr. Leipold said he didn't care how alcoholics got to his program, but we have to get them to treatment. Once there, it is my responsibility to help them.

"Valley Hope really exploded in the early 70s when George Wallace came onto the board. He was a successful businessman from Denver who taught us how to define goals, vision, methodology and attention to details. We now have nine inpatient and eight outpatient facilities in seven states.

"Our goal is to provide the very best treatment at the most affordable cost.

"President Ken Gregoire is a pioneer in the field of addiction treatment. John Leipold, Executive Vice President, is also a pioneer in the development of computer software used in the treatment setting. Tom Baumann is our Chief Financial Officer and keeps track of all the finances.

"We have many dedicated staff

at the Valley Hope Association headquarters here in downtown Norton and at the Norton Valley Hope Treatment Center on west Highway 36.

"We have many, many other dedicated employees at the 16 other treatment facilities around the country.

"We still have a lot of potential. We have some exciting things coming. We are now building a state of the art treatment center in Moundridge, Kansas that will open the spring of 2010. It doesn't look like any of our others. It is designed to give the very best

Finance

(Continued from Page 1) range work. Short-term work would be projects lasting 30 days or less

Inmate crews are currently employed by Norton County Solid Waste and by Prairie Dog State Park.

"We've been very fortunate at the state park," said Toby Kuhn, Prairie Dog State Park ranger and finance committee chair.

He said some inmates have needed talents, like welding, although they are mostly used for grounds maintenance.

An inmate crew would be comprised of four to seven inmates who would be able to work at various projects.

"They can basically do anything that needs to be done," said Norton Correctional Facility Warden Jay Shelton.

Shelton said the prison currently has eight work crews. Most work at the facility; either

treatment.

"We're even changing the names of our Advisory Boards in each community to Valley Hope/Hope Builders."

Dr. Colip concluded, "We want to see the 'prairie miracles' multiply over and over and over in the future."

This exciting new book about "Prairie Miracles" is now for sale at the Valley Hope Treatment Center at 709 West Holme in Norton and the Destination Kitchen at 115 West Main in downtown Norton.

Cost of each book is \$14.95 and

on the grounds or other projects. Shelton said one crew is working on renovating shower facilities in the main unit.

Shelton spoke about Hays and Atwood Township having successful programs for inmates. The Hays program was discontinued when the Stockton facility closed. He said the program was successful and the city participated for several years.

Inmates there participated in groundskeeping, cleanup under a bridge and other projects.

Several city department heads attended the meeting, voicing concerns about working with inmates.

The concerns ranged from safety to job security. City employees would not lose their jobs if inmates were hired. The crew would provide additional help for various projects.

Safety remained a concern for city employees. Kuhn said the

\$5 from each sale will be donated to the Valley Hope Foundation to benefit patients who otherwise could not afford treatment.

The book can also be purchased via the Valley Hope website at www.valleyhope.org. or by mailing your request to VHA Foundation, attn: Megan Wetter, P.O. Box 510, Norton, KS 67654 with the cost of the book plus \$5 shipping. .

For more information, contact the Valley Hope Foundation at (785)877-4483 (GIVE) or e-mail megan@valleyhope.org.

state park shares the concern, but they have not had any problems with their crew.

"There's no way we could do what we needed without the inmate crew," Kuhn said.

"I understand the concerns," he said.

Monday's discussion was a preliminary discussion about the possibility of hiring an inmate crew. The budget for 2010 has already been set.

Each department head was asked to discuss the issue at various committee meetings where they could voice their concerns. The committee meetings were set at Wednesday's council meeting.

City employees said they would like to hear public opinion regarding having inmates working for the city. All committee meetings are open to the public.

The Utility committee will meet at 5:30 p.m., and Public Works at 6 p.m. on Dec. 21.

All meetings are held at the city building and are open to the public.

Council

(Continued from Page 1) advertise for the vacant position. Vote taken. Motion passed.

A motion was made to approve the agreement with Dollar General regarding a sewer easement on the property they are purchas-

ing on Highway 36. Vote taken. Motion passed.


The next city council meeting will be held December 16.

The finance committee will meet Dec. 14, time to be determined.

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