



VIEWS & VISIONS

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Creating a Center for Healing

Douglas Leech, Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Ascension Recovery Services

Douglas Leech is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Ascension Recovery Services, a national company headquartered in Morgantown that provides treatment program development services and clinical services throughout West Virginia and beyond.

Leech also founded West Virginia Sober Living (formerly Morgantown Sober Living), a self-sustaining non-profit organization that operates sober living homes, job creation and reintegration programming, and a network of peer recovery services that provide broad community support for substance use disorders in the Mountain State.

Born and raised in Morgantown, West Virginia, Leech has always had a great love for his home state. Through his own struggles with addiction and subsequent recovery, he developed a passion for helping those who suffer from the same disease.

Leech earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from Pennsylvania State University and worked at Ernst & Young in Pittsburgh before returning to Morgantown. He has served in a leadership capacity on a number of West Virginia non-profit boards.

In 2017, drug overdoses were responsible for more than 72,000 deaths in the United States, which is a new record and a roughly 10 percent increase from the previous year. The biggest driving factor has been opioids; specifically, heroin, OxyContin and fentanyl, which were responsible for nearly 49,000 deaths alone. This drug epidemic is deadlier than gun violence, car crashes or AIDS, and represents nearly 200 people dying from overdoses every day. West Virginia has led the nation in overdose deaths by a wide margin dating back multiple years.

A number of factors have led us to this current state of affairs, including stigma related to addiction and a lack of quality prevention and treatment options, particularly in rural America. With every community in the U.S. affected deeply with such a deadly epidemic, one would assume that treatment programs in every community would be welcomed. Unfortunately,

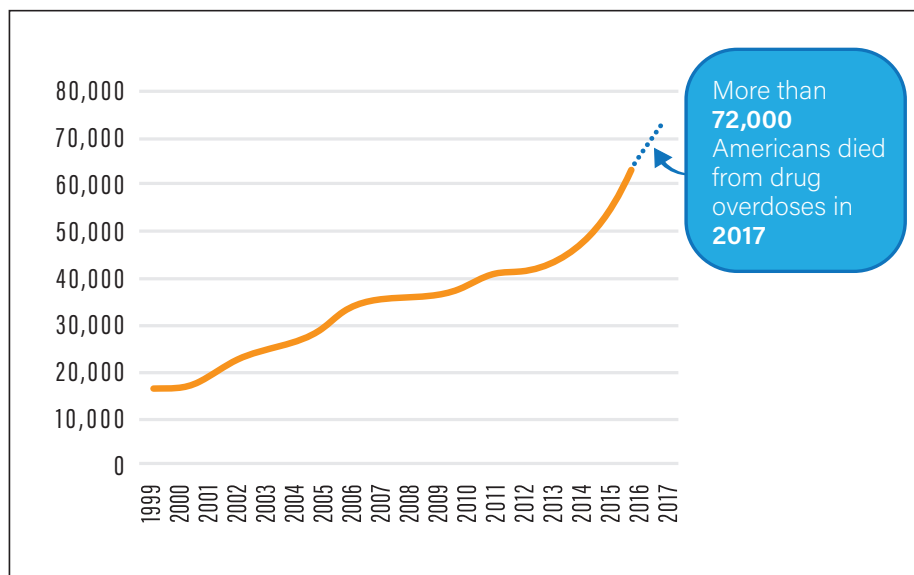
the NIMBY (not in my back yard) effect prevents many of these programs from opening. In communities where addiction is viewed as a disease, as recognized by the American Medical Association, and not a moral failing, we see those affected by substance use disorders (SUD) are supported and encouraged to enter treatment and recovery programs.

Ascension Recovery Services is a company formed in response to this terrible epidemic. Ascension has two main divisions: Clinical Services and Program Development Services. Ascension's Clinical Services division offers premier SUD treatment services across the continuum of care in West Virginia. Ascension specializes in addiction interventions; monitoring services; peer recovery coaching;



ASCENSION
Recovery Services

Total U.S. Drug Deaths



screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment (SBIRT); alcohol and drug counseling; and family support and counseling.

Ascension's Program Development division is a national leader for program development services specializing in opening residential treatment centers (RTC), partial hospitalization programs (PHP), intensive outpatient programs (IOP) and sober living homes. Ascension has assisted with the development of treatment programs across the United States and is currently operating in 10 states (West Virginia, Maryland, Florida, Texas, California, Colorado, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and New Jersey). Ascension has written and received state and federal grants related to SUD treatment solutions to be applied to these various treatment programs totaling millions of dollars. Ascension has been able to attract some of the best talent in the industry, including past chief executive officers and clinical directors of successful addiction treatment programs.

I began working with WVU's Department of Behavioral Medicine and Psychiatry during the planning process of opening

West Virginia Sober Living (formerly Morgantown Sober Living), seeking consultation from Drs. Jim Stevenson and Jim Berry on the clinical matters related to operating supportive recovery housing. They began to collaborate on various recovery related expansion initiatives in the area, including applying for various state and federal funds. WVU Medicine was operating a very robust outpatient program for SUD, and Ascension had recovery housing, but a clear missing link in the continuum of care was the absence of residential 28-day treatment center.

I was asked by Dr. Marc Haut, Dr. Jim Berry, Melanie McMillen and Debbie Bellisario to assist in preparing a feasibility study, business plan and financial analysis for such a program in Morgantown and we were formerly engaged by WVU Medicine – WVU Hospitals and WVU Department of Behavioral Medicine and Psychiatry – to begin developing a residential treatment center. Fully implemented, the RTC will provide 30 residential treatment beds and 12 detoxification beds in a 30,000-square-foot facility nestled on a hillside overlooking Mylan Park in Morgantown, West Virginia. Program guests will

receive a wide array of services, including individual and group counseling, 12-step meetings and facilitation, medication assisted treatment (MAT), peer recovery services, mindfulness-based stress reduction, trauma-informed care and an individualized holistic treatment plan. Opening in the spring of 2019, the WVU Detox and RTC will be accredited by the Joint Commission and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, and will accept a broad mix of payers, including Medicaid, commercial insurance, private pay and charity care.

Ascension begins a development project like this RTC for WVU by performing a full market analysis and feasibility study, conservative financial proforma financial analysis and business plan development. One of the main reasons that residential treatment centers rarely make it out of the concept stage is due to the very high initial start-up costs. Investment dollars are difficult to come by, and many organizations are unable to incur a large amount of debt for the real estate development costs associated with this type of project. Through a public-private partnership (P3) between Recovery

Continued on Page 53

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WVU Medicine's new residential treatment center, located in Morgantown, West Virginia



Creating a Center for Healing

Douglas Leech
(continued from p. 25)

Properties and WVU Hospitals, the need for large initial capital requirement is eliminated, while keeping the transaction off-balance sheet for the hospital.

Additionally, Ascension co-wrote a grant with the WVU Department of Behavioral Medicine and Psychiatry and was funded in the amount of \$1,000,000 through the Ryan Brown Treatment Fund provided by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities. This grant funding, the P3 and the commitment by WVU Medicine to

provide high quality treatment to West Virginians suffering from SUD, has brought first-class residential treatment to our great state, which was previously only received out of state by those with the ability to pay for such expensive services.

The construction of this facility has involved some great contractors, engineers and architects. What is probably most notable has been the inclusion of Impact Construction on this project, which hires people in recovery from addiction. This facility is already giving back by employing and providing good jobs to people in recovery to build the very facility that will allow for thousands of West Virginians to begin their journey of healing.

While patient motivation and an evidence-based treatment program are

the most important factors in creating positive treatment outcomes, the look and feel of the treatment facility is also critically important. When someone is finally ready to get meaningful help for their addiction, they are “sick and tired of being sick and tired,” and the last place they want to go is to a sterile environment that feels like a medical office with bright overhead fluorescent lights. People more proactively seek treatment when the facility has a dignified, home-like setting in a peaceful and serene location, which is much more conducive to recovery and serenity. With a facility as nice as the new WVU RTC, those entering treatment will immediately feel that someone loved them and cared enough about them to provide such a great center for healing. ❧



The Boy Scouts of America: Building Futures in West Virginia

Jack Furst
(continued from p. 23)

new \$4.1 million headquarters. The Buckskin Council’s H. Bernard Wehrle Sr. Scout Leadership Service Center opened in 2016, serving youth in 39 counties in West Virginia, Kentucky, Virginia and Ohio. Buckskin Council Scout Executive Jeff Purdy said, “It’s enabled us to

expand the services we offer to Scouts and to the community. In fact, we have outside groups using our facilities on a weekly basis.”

The BSA is excited to have found a home for the Summit Bechtel Reserve in the hills of West Virginia. Coal from the site may no longer be fueling the local economy, but the Summit Bechtel Reserve is still an economic powerhouse for the region. We foresee many generations of West Virginians and Scouts benefitting from the innovative programs and facilities created there. ❧



The Pennsylvania Contractor and Subcontractor Payment Act

K. Bradley Mellor
(continued from p. 17)

this amendment will have much impact. Essentially, it requires 30 days’ written notice of failure to receive payment sent to the contractor. Then, if payment is not received in 30 days from that notice, an additional certified mail notice is sent to the owner. If payment isn’t received within 30 days after the certified mail notice, the subcontractor can suspend performance. CASPA does not specifically provide for payment of the type of expenses that often surround a suspension, such as demobilization, remobilization, labor or material cost increases, or site general

conditions. The act also does not provide any specific schedule relief in such situations. It will be interesting to see how courts apply this provision.

Though presumably well intentioned, it is difficult or impossible for a legislature to enact a law or amendment that adequately addresses the concerns and issues of all the owners, contractors, subcontractors and suppliers that the law will affect. The best way to address each party’s individual concerns is to identify and negotiate those concerns before signing a contract. Recognizing that the necessary level of detail and negotiation may not be available to all contractual relationships, the Pennsylvania legislature has tried, with its 2018 amendments to CASPA, to make the overall playing field a little more level. The courts will certainly weigh in on the interpretation of the amendment, and their decisions will help to clarify its application. ❧