

That's the Spirit: CeDAR Launches Chaplain Residency Program

By Tyler Smith

The hospital's Center for Dependency, Addiction and Rehabilitation (CeDAR) this month launched a one-of-a-kind program it believes will strengthen a key component of the recovery process: spirituality.



CeDAR marketing specialist Rollie Fisher, with wife Michelle, discussed the gift that started the chaplain residency during a speech Aug. 10.

A large donation from CeDAR marketing supervisor Rollie Fisher and his wife Michelle funded a three-year, chaplain residency program. It will provide specialized Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) training for a chaplaincy resident, who will specialize in addiction treatment issues.



Plaque outside chapel in CeDAR Spiritual and Family Center commemorates the Fishers' gift.

The new resident, Todd Strickland of Spiritual Care Services at UCH, will spend 30 hours a week at CeDAR, meeting with patients individually and in groups, and another 10 hours getting additional education, said CeDAR Chaplain Deanna D. Jo Lowell.

With two years of counseling experience, classroom training and tests, Strickland – and, CeDAR hopes, subsequent residents – will be eligible to apply for certification as an addiction counselor.

"The resident will be exposed to the disease of addiction," Lowell said, "and will learn to integrate chaplaincy skills with clinical skills." The idea, she explained, is that a deeper clinical understanding of addiction and knowledge of therapeutic interventions will help the resident lead patients to the spiritual growth that CeDAR believes is essential to recovery.



CeDAR Chaplain Deanna (D. Jo) Lowell kept the idea of a residency alive.

"Part of the destruction of addiction is that the addict's spirituality is gone," Lowell said. "There is no contentment or sense that life is good. We are working with a population that is hungry for life but has been living on a sparse diet – starvation rations."

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The chaplain's work, she explained, is to help the addict find meaning — either religious or secular — that will sustain him or her on a road to recovery that is physically and emotionally bumpy.

As Michelle Fisher put it, "In all of us there is something that sets our moral compass. We all have something that dictates the course of our lives. It's important when people need to fix things in their lives that they are able to make a spiritual connection and get back on track."

The first. Lowell believes the CeDAR chaplain residency is the only one of its kind in the United States. "We have skilled chaplains in centers, but there have been no operational funds for formal training [in addiction counseling]," she said.

The funding for a resident at CeDAR is new, but the emphasis on spirituality is not. It was woven into the recovery philosophy of the center's first medical director, the late Robert Harmon, MD, and reinforced by former executive director Frank Lisnow and Julie Swaney, MDiv, the hospital's Spiritual Care Services manager.



The Reverend Julie Swaney, manager of Spiritual Care Services at UCH, with Millette during the dedication of the residency program Aug. 10.

In 2009, a \$2 million gift from the Anschutz Foundation helped build and open the Marion Pfister Anschutz Spiritual and Family Center adjacent to CeDAR's administrative building and resident cottages. The center includes a space dedicated to guidance and counseling for family members (*Insider*, July 21, 2009). In addition, the hospital's resident chaplains do a rotation at CeDAR as part of the CPE training.

During the search for a replacement for Lisnow, who retired in October 2011, Lowell asked interviewees how they felt about establishing a chaplain residency program. She found a strong supporter in Steve Millette, now CeDAR's executive director.

"One of the reasons I took the job is that I was attracted to the educational mission," Millette said. "To provide best-in-class care, we need multidisciplinary education — not just physicians, but all disciplines in addiction services."



CeDAR Executive Director Steve Millette sees the residency as part of the facility's educational mission.

In turn, he said, spirituality is a key link in CeDAR's approach to care, which incorporates 12-step instruction with individual and group counseling, cognitive and dialectical behavioral therapy, and psychiatric and medical care.

"The 12 steps are inherently spiritual — they are based on a belief in some power greater than yourself," Millette said. "We believe that part of getting well is finding some definition of that in your life."

A chaplain resident "on the ground" at CeDAR will assist patients in that discovery process, Millette believes.

"When we talk to patients about the chronic disease and the continuum of care, we say that recovery is the presence of wellness — that it is harder for the disease to take hold in the presence of wellness," he said. "Physical health and recuperation are all positively affected when patients find a spiritual connection."

Change for the better. The idea for the residency program ultimately came to fruition as Rollie Fisher, who has been with CeDAR since August 2007, and wife Michelle contemplated Rollie's upcoming retirement at the end of 2013. As they discussed estate planning and other matters, Rollie said, "We talked about whether there was anything close enough to our hearts we could put our name on."

He is not in recovery himself, but Fisher was profoundly affected by the alcoholism that contributed to his father's early death (*see accompanying story, this issue*). He'd talked with Lowell previously about the resident chaplaincy, and suddenly he and Michelle

decided that making a donation to start it made perfect sense.

"It fits in my mantra of doing things to help someone's father," Fisher said. "It also coincides nicely with Michelle's life principle of changing the world for the better."

Michelle Fisher believes the funding for the residency program is only a start. "It's exciting to be a part of it, to plant the seeds and see it get rolling," she said.

"We think the program will grow so we can train two to three residents a year," Rollie added. "We see this as a gift that will keep on giving as more and more chaplains are trained to work in the addiction field."

There are painful memories associated with the gift, he admitted. "But it's important to me long term, knowing that I won't be here forever, that we have the program and that lives will continue to be touched. Someone's father will be helped because of the spiritual emphasis."



Fisher wanted a gift to CeDAR that would last.