

## New Executive Director Ready to Launch CeDAR's Next Era

By Tyler Smith

Twenty-three years after he entered the field, Steve Millette says the mysteries of addiction continue to intrigue him.

In the coming days, he'll have many opportunities to explore them. Millette took over Oct. 17 as the second executive director of the hospital's Center for Dependency, Addiction and Rehabilitation (CeDAR), replacing the recently retired Frank Lisnow (*Insider*, Sept. 28).

Millette, an internationally certified alcohol and drug counselor and clinical supervisor, says he's still learning about a disease too often shrouded in misunderstanding and shame.

"It's the only disease I know whose principle symptom is to deny the disease," he says. "There is still so much more we need to figure out to help people find relief from their suffering."

In CeDAR, he thinks he's found the ideal place to pursue those inquiries. Millette arrives after serving seven-and-a-half years as executive director of treatment services at Pavillon Treatment Center in Mill Spring, N.C., a freestanding, not-for-profit facility founded in 1996.

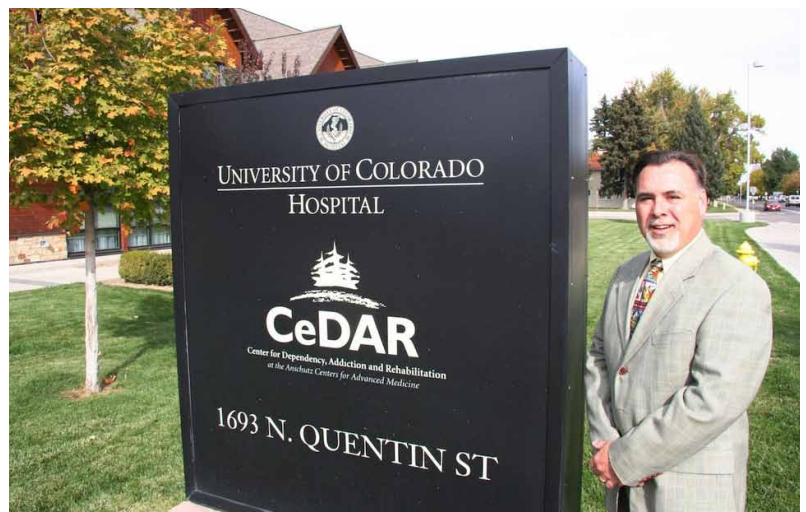
*"I wasn't looking for a lateral move," Millette says. Pavillon, struggling when he arrived, had patients on a waiting list when he left and recently completed construction of a new admissions and administration building. It also more than doubled the number of employees during his tenure.*

**New opportunity.** CeDAR, however, offered not only a move up — an executive leadership position with additional responsibilities — but also a very different set of resources than had been available at the free-standing, unaffiliated Pavillion.

"The chance to be part of an academic medical center piqued my intellectual curiosity," he remarks. "I saw a reservoir of opportunities for growth. That captured my attention."

Even as he settles into his first two weeks on the job, Millette already is thinking about CeDAR's position in the larger campus academic community. "One of the things I want to see more of is a smoother integration between CeDAR and the larger system," he says. "I want to find ways to capitalize more on what's available on the academic side."

For example, he notes, the American Board of Addiction Medicine in April accredited the first 10 addiction medicine residency training programs in the U.S. The organization is inviting additional applicants, Millette says, opening a door he believes CeDAR should walk through.



*New CeDAR Executive Director Steve Millette says he's eager to build ever stronger bonds with the hospital and university.*

"A residency program would allow us to better integrate with other departments," he maintains, "and give us more resources and training on issues of addiction and recovery. Faculty and residents would also benefit, he says, by learning to recognize and respond to the signs of addiction in their clinical practice."

Millette says he's impressed with CeDAR's direction and growth in just six years. "I was pleasantly surprised by the contributions of

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the team to CeDAR's identity," he says. "And the separate gender program is very favorable from a quality perspective. It makes a big difference to have an environment that is gender responsive."

The opening earlier this year of a second residential cottage is simultaneously a positive development and a challenge, he adds.

Noting the new cottage currently operates at about half capacity, Millette says he looks forward to working with staff to figure out "what's holding us back. We will look for ways to expand and enhance the program in ways that position us to be sought after."

**Broad road, big tent.** Millette may be pondering how to carve out a niche for CeDAR in the recovery community, but his own experience has hardly been narrowly focused. He got into the addiction and recovery field shortly after graduating from Assumption College, a four-year Catholic liberal arts college in Worcester, Mass.

Following his parents, who had moved to South Florida from Rhode Island, he found a job as a technician in a brand-new addiction treatment center in West Palm Beach in 1988.

"I got my feet wet and never left," he says. As the years passed, he worked in the inpatient, outpatient and private practice settings, and logged experience in consulting, teaching, training and state licensing review. He also picked up a masters degree in mental health counseling from Nova University (now Nova Southeastern University) in Broward County, Fla.

"At each step I looked for a new challenge," he says, "but at heart I'm a clinician."

Millette says he tries to take the broadest possible perspective on helping those with addictions find the road to recovery.

**Helping hands.** *"Addiction is a chronic disease," he says, "and the only hope for those who suffer from it is to be well-treated in a comprehensive, holistic and interdisciplinary fashion. There are lots of people who have a slice of the pie. But the goal is long-term recovery, and that is about the whole person. There is not a physical, spiritual or religious solution. It's all of the above."*

Given that view, it's not surprising that Millette honors the core philosophies of recovery that are embodied in the 12 Step Recovery program – and followed at CeDAR – while he continues to search for and listen to new ideas.

"The origin of recovery is in one alcoholic helping another," he says. "We saw success as never before when we added the piece of peer support and mentoring. That's the best of the old that we don't want to lose. We want to build on it."

"But in a way," he adds, "we've come full circle from the failed attempts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century at managing addiction solely with medical approaches." As researchers learn more about the brain's role in addiction, he says, "we see the importance of including medications and new research in recovery."

The search for new and ever-more effective ways to manage addiction will be part of CeDAR's future, Millette believes.

"CeDAR's struggle is a microcosm of the field overall," he concludes. "That's to be expected. It went through a struggle as a start-up. Its management has been good, but there is room for growth and fitting pieces together. I want to see us work more seamlessly and efficiently and in an integrated way with the rest of the campus. The first step is to say, 'Hey, we're interested.'"