



FALL 2018

# OKC Metro Alliance, Inc. Newsletter

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## Men's Lodge Challenge

**We need your help!** Please join our capital campaign to raise \$500,000 to complete the Men's Lodge at Firststep.

**Can you help us raise an additional \$78,000 by December 31, 2018?**

The new 8,115 square foot Men's Lodge facility includes twenty (20) single-room occupancy apartments, a reception area, staff offices, a medication room, laundry, and a large conference room. To date \$1.6 million has been secured for the project. Please consider making a tax deductible donation for the Men's Lodge. Your gift can make a huge difference for improving access to sober living housing and employment.

Men's Lodge is being funded through partnerships with Inasmuch, Dolese, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency (National Housing Trust Fund), and the City of Oklahoma City (CBDG and HOME). Allen Brown Architects is leading the project along with Omar Khoury. Other team

members include our general contractor, Diversified Construction of Oklahoma, Johnson & Associates (engineering), SRB (survey), and Bill White, construction consultant.

The number of individuals served on this campus will increase from 70 to 90.

The Men's Lodge is designed to encourage longer participation in the program. Individuals who participate in a therapeutic community program for longer are much less likely to relapse according to research presented by the National Institute of Drug Addiction (NIDA). Thanks for your help!

**Connie Schlittler, Executive Director**  
[www.okcmetroalliance.com](http://www.okcmetroalliance.com)

Thanks to the  
E.L. and Thelma Gaylord Foundation  
for awarding a \$100,000 grant to the  
Men's Lodge project.



### Firststep 2019 Calendar

Learn more about the Women's Firststep art program and how it is helping women get back on track. Page 2



### Donor Recognition Event

See pictures from the Fall reception.  
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## Make Art & Stay Sober

**"Make Art & Stay Sober: One Year of the 12 Steps & Art at Women's Firststep"** is our latest project created by staff and residents of Women's Firststep. Make a \$25 donation to receive the 2019 Calendar. Calendars make great gifts for the holidays. Your donation supports the women's art program.

*Jennifer S. story, a program graduate, is featured on the calendar during March 2019*

*"I came to Firststep after I made many bad choices and let myself get swept up in the wrong lifestyle, which eventually led me to prison. Once I completed my prison sentence, the state of Oklahoma felt that I could benefit from a program like Firststep before I was completely released. I didn't know it at the time, but they were right. In the depths of addiction, I lost sight of myself. I no longer knew what made me happy or what I enjoyed. Being given an opportunity to attend art classes gave me a chance to try something new, and in*

*these new experiences I'm beginning to find myself once again. I never thought that painting a picture or creating something beautiful could give me such a feeling of joy and accomplishment. When I make art, my heart is filled with these feelings, and that's what keeps me clean and sober. Firststep has renewed my sense of purpose, rebuilt my confidence, given me the tools I need to maintain sobriety, and given me the opportunity to make supportive, amazing, life-long friends. My*

*determination and positive attitude make me hopeful for the future. I know the past is the past, and nothing from it can continue to hurt me. I've been given the chance of a new life, and I intend to make the absolute best out of it."*



## Orange is the New Black

Piper Kerman, author of the *Orange is the New Black* provided a public lecture at the Oklahoma City University Lemon Lecture Series September 25. Over 27 Firststep women attended the event and many were able to meet Piper.

Fourteen women also received a copy of the book. *Orange is the New Black* is the story of Kerman's year in federal prison. Based on her experiences, Kerman now works to address inequities in the criminal justice system. Last year

85% of the Women's Firststep participants were dealing with criminal justice issues.



Anna Powell, Jennifer Francis, Kelly Burns and Robin Wong attended the lecture (left). Piper Kerman signs Shirley's copy of her book (above).



## Donor Recognition 2018



OKC Metro Alliance Vice President Connie Weber, Board President Ryan O'Toole, and guest Jan Brown at the annual event. Sponsors and major donors for Beans and Cornbread are honored at the event



Steve and Barbara Young (left), board member, hosted the reception in their home. Meg Salyer, OKC City Council, and Marnie Taylor attended the event.



Other guests included Kermit Frank, Dolese, (right) Beth Windel, SDG, and Allen Brown.

### Thanks to all our generous donors!

-In September, The Anschutz Foundation awarded us a \$10,000 grant towards vehicle purchases

-I Support the Girls provided Women's Firststep \$2490 worth of new bras this summer.

## Firststep FAQs

**What is a work-recovery program?** Firststep is designed as a Therapeutic Community (TC) approach. According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) Therapeutic Communities have two main elements that support sobriety and recovery: "the community as change agent and the efficacy of self-help." Employment is an important part of becoming a meaningful participant in the community and is a "distinctive component" of the Therapeutic Community approach.

**How are you funded?** We are supported through employers throughout the Oklahoma City area. This enables individuals with no income to enter the program. Residents pay fees on a sliding fee scale, based on net income (after taxes garnishments, and other deductions).

### How much does it cost?

The program costs approximately \$44 per day. For someone who works 40 hours per week, their fees trend around \$34 per day. Program fees are based on their net earnings, after payroll taxes, garnishments, and other deductions.

### What is included in the resident fees?

Program fees include rent, utilities, prepared meals and snacks, 24 hour on-site supervision, transportation, case management, drug and alcohol testing, and a structured therapeutic program. Firststep offers 20 or more hours of classes and meetings per week. Bedding, linens, laundry facilities and grooming supplies are also provided to all residents.

### How much are residents paid?

All residents are paid minimum wage-- \$7.25 per hour.

### Do you receive state funding?

Firststep receives no state funding. We depend on donations, private grants, work contracts and fees. Grants through the City of Oklahoma City fund case management services to supporting re-integration into the community and affordable housing.

### What kind of jobs?

Residents are asked about work experience at admission and placed in a position that is a good fit for their skills and knowledge. Most positions are entry-level, low skill jobs. Many of our employers hire our grads for permanent positions including management.

### Do Firststep residents have access to treatment?

"Tri-City Youth & Family Center, Inc., has partnered with Firststep Men's and Women's Firststep for over two decades to provide behavioral health services on campus at the men and women's programs. The residential model is an integral part of the continuum of care for substance abuse services. This level of care is so necessary for individuals not responding to traditional outpatient services as well as serving as a "step down" for a more controlled medical model residential treatment environment as well as a detoxification program. First Step provides a safe, supervised sober-living environment in which access to treatment can occur on campus. This level of care is tremendously important as it provides the community based housing and structure, the opportunity to enhance and develop a positive peer culture while simultaneously experiencing the "pressures of society" such as employment. Treatment services provide additionally resources to stabilize, assist in recovery and sustain sobriety.

As our state ranks second in the nation for substance abuse disorders exorbitant wait lists for accessing care is a real issue. This "wait" oftentimes contributes to our state now also ranking number one for incarcerating individuals per capita as well as the having over 9,000 children in DHS custody. Collaborations such as ours are most definitely worth celebrating. We need more partnerships to bridge the gaps in our system which will increase access to care and provide more resources to have healthier Oklahomans. Under this partnership, behavioral health services such as assessment, treatment planning, individual/group therapy, peer recovery, and rehabilitation groups (to include DHS approved parenting classes) can occur. Tri-City Youth & Family Center, Inc. has been in existence since 1974 providing mental health and substance abuse resources to Eastern Oklahoma County providing an array of prevention and intervention services."

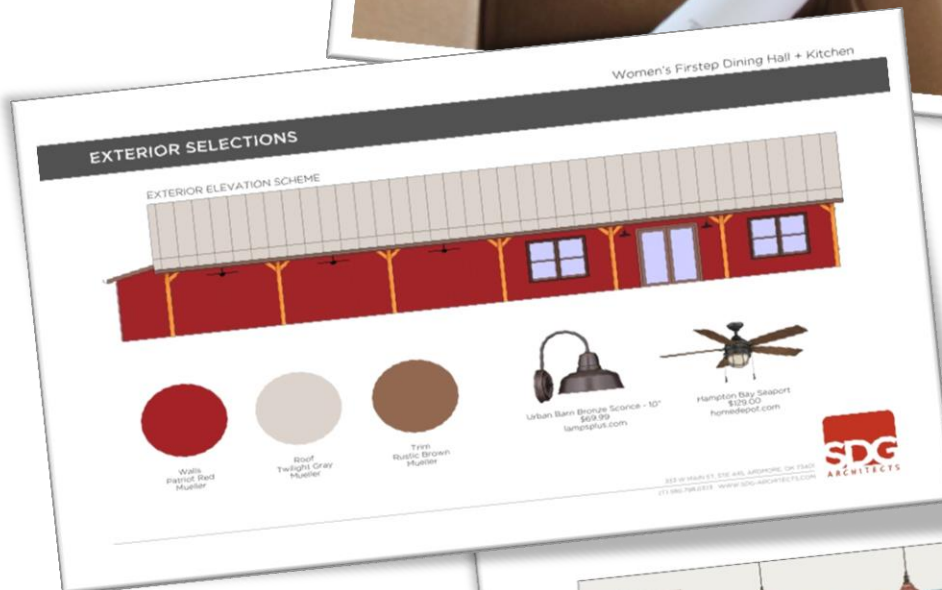
Comments by Donita Goodin, Executive Director, Tri-City Youth & Family

## Women's Kitchen Update

The new Women's Firststep Kitchen project is moving into high gear. The 2,700 foot kitchen and dining area will provide space for food service, preparation, storage, and cleaning area. The dining hall will have a self-service area for coffee and water, personal food storage area, vending, and space for a reach-in refrigerator. Up to 70 people will be able to be seated in the new dining hall. The extra space will accommodate family visits on the weekends and during holiday celebrations. Women's Firststep current kitchen is a small, residential kitchen serving up to 56 women every day: there is only seating for eighteen women at most. The new dining hall will provide space to provide more classes and meetings between meals. On the east side of the build, a long porch is designed to accommodate outdoor activities or for private meditation and reflection

We are partnering with Beth Windel of SDG Architects of Ardmore to design the new kitchen and dining room. Marc Long from SRB is providing survey and engineering services. It is expected to take eight

months once construction bids are awarded. Funding is being sought to complete the construction as well as purchase new equipment and furnishings. The project supports Firststep's goal to meet state certification requirements for substance abuse treatment facilities.





## Arnall Family Foundation Grant Announced

The Arnall Family Foundation has awarded OKC Metro Alliance \$22,320 for a PIA needs assessment. In 1973, the Public Inebriate Alternative (PIA) was established to minimize the numbers of individuals experiencing incarceration following an arrest for public intoxication.

The 90-day grant will be used to identify needs of PIA detainees and see if services can be provided to reduce their involvement in the criminal justice system. Case management and wraparound supports are proposed. The grant is also funding a PIA information management system to track detainee admissions over time, identify their needs, and develop trend reports. Ultimately, the system could track the effectiveness of the case management or other interventions in diverting PIA detainees from the county jail.

Keith Pirtle, MSW, has been hired as a consultant to lead the Arnall funded project.

Keith has a long history of successful policy, program and infrastructure development. He has worked for years in state government serving children and families in Oklahoma in an administrative, policy and leadership capacity. He served as the Senior State Project Director and Principal Investigator for Oklahoma's Systems of Care for the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

The Arnall Family Foundation is identifying or developing innovative methods to address criminal justice issues in Oklahoma County. Efforts are particularly targeting the over-crowding of the Oklahoma County Detention Center and encouraging humane cost-effective alternatives to incarceration.

It is noteworthy that the new project coincides with a growing movement of "sobering centers" in the United States. In September, a team from OKC Metro Alliance attended a one-day summit in San Diego with approximately 60 other people representing sobering centers from across the nation. Suzanne Graham, our Chief Operating Officer, Shilmila White, PIA Director, Catt Burton, Metro Alliance board

member and on the staff the Oklahoma County DA's office attended the meeting as well as Keith Pirtle.

It is estimated that there are 30-40 programs nationally. Both Tulsa and Austin opened Sobering Centers in this past summer. Shannon Smith-Bernardin, MSN, Ph.D. is providing national leadership to the sobering centers movement by organizing annual summits, collecting data and publishing research on the projects.

The PIA project team will be visiting other programs in the nation to gather ideas and best practices to improve jail diversion efforts in Oklahoma County.

Oklahoma City's PIA opened 45 years ago and is one of the oldest sobering centers in the country. CASPAR, Inc. Emergency Service Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts opened in 1970. These programs offer individuals the opportunity to "sleep off" their intoxication and reenter society without criminal charges. The current growth of these programs reflects the public's desire to divert individuals from the over-crowded jails and emergency rooms.

In 2015, the Vera Institute reported public drunkenness as the most frequent underlying municipal charge for individuals in Oklahoma County Jail. Efforts to address county jail overcrowding would benefit from looking at public intoxication more closely and ways to better address the needs of these detainees. The PIA is funded by the City of Oklahoma City Police Department and private donations.



*Keith Pirtle inside the Public Inebriate Alternative*

### PIA Wish List

*Many detainees come to the PIA program without appropriate clothing.*

*Please consider making a donation of the following new or gentle used items:*

- T-shirts
- Socks
- Pants
- Jackets
- Stocking Hats
- Gloves

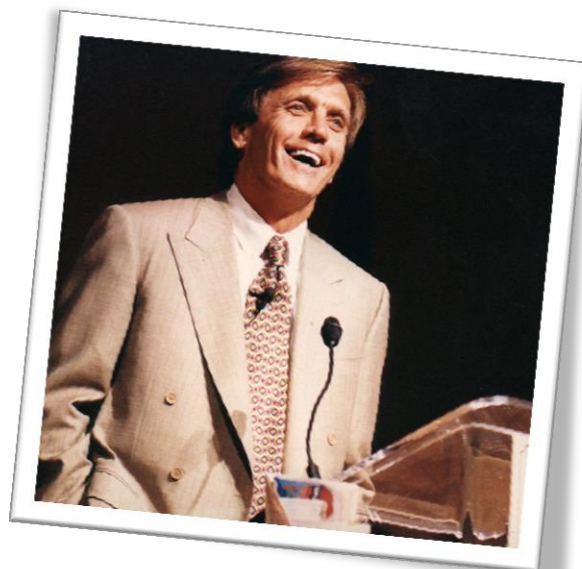
## Upcoming Activities and Events

Oklahoma comedian **Argus Hamilton** will be speaking at the next **Beans and Cornbread luncheon**. Mark your calendar for Thursday May 9, 2019. The event will be held at St. Luke's United Methodist Church. As always, the lunch is free to attend. This event is a great way to promote hope through humor for individuals and families struggling with addiction and drug abuse. We are currently looking for sponsors for this event. Thanks to Mike McAuliffe

and the OKC Comedy Fest for being Beans and Cornbread sponsors in 2019.

**Steve Ford** will be our featured guest at a fundraising luncheon October 3, 2019 at VAST.

Ford's background in the addiction and recovery community began back in the late 1970's when his family personally felt the impact of addiction. Steve's mother, Betty Ford was in the middle of her own personal struggle with addiction that pulled at the entire family. The former First Lady went through an intervention led by her husband and children at a time when addiction was a closet disease. That successful intervention changed the face of addiction after his mother shared her journey of recovery, hope and transformation with the public. Mrs. Ford went on to found the Betty Ford Center.



During the last 17 years Steve has shared his story of recovery and hope with thousands of people in hundreds of different venues. He has spoken to over 75,000 young people all the way from middle schools up to university settings. He has presented the human side of this disease through his talks at professional conferences, prisons, juvenile detention facilities, halfway houses and schools. If you are also interested in being a sponsor for Beans and Cornbread or sponsoring the "A Conversation with Steve Ford" call **Connie Schlittler** 405-568-4469 or e-mail [c.schlittler@okcmetroalliance.com](mailto:c.schlittler@okcmetroalliance.com)



"A Conversation with Steve Ford" will be held October 2019



Judge Stoner (center back) toured Firststep with members of the Oklahoma County Drug Court team and others this past summer.

## Why support Firststep?

*"Firststep provides a very needed service to fill the gap between substance abuse treatment programs and sober living. Firststep is an effective, evidenced-based, therapeutic community model that supports people to sustain their sobriety and heal from addiction. Addiction is the public health crisis of our time and we are desperate for more of this level of care in Oklahoma."*

**-Judge Kenneth Stoner Oklahoma County Drug Court**

