



Men's Second Chance Living house manager John Inman stands in the newly upgraded kitchen at the sober living facility in Hailey. Photo credit: John Inman

Home Sweet

'Second Chance' Home

Sober living facility makes upgrades, adds new programs

BY ERIC VALENTINE

When Sonya Wilander filed her 2019 annual report for Men's Second Chance Living in January, the organization she leads spelled out seven manageable goals for 2020. For most folks and businesses, their modest aims turned into lofty pipe dreams roughly by March 11, when the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. At the Hailey sober living residence, however, a number of the dreams are becoming a reality.

"Maintain and improve our beautiful home ..." Check.

"Engage community partners with opportunities for health and wellness ..." Check.

"Advocate for better employment opportunities and better options ..." Check.

The list goes on.

Wilander, who was on her way Monday to get the Idaho Lottery's formal approval for a raffle-style fundraiser, had just gotten off the phone with Hyperbarics of Sun Valley, confirming that the therapeutic center would be able to take on a new client—specifically, a resident of the sober living facility who will serve as a case study to determine just how effective "super-oxygenation" of the lungs can be for combatting mental health issues such as—and/or related to—addiction to alcohol and drugs.

"It's an expensive treatment not many people can afford and there's been some help for military veterans here, but this is the first time help is available for someone overcoming substance abuse," Wilander said. "If we can show success, then there may be grants available later where more people can get this treatment."

Proof of any success wouldn't be confirmed for another six to 12 months, Wilander explained, but even the idea that one of her current seven residents would be able to benefit from the cutting-edge therapy was exciting. Coupled with the success of the new educational and financial planning programs offered at MSCL, things have been looking up for the organization and its participants even during these strange times.

Providing new therapies for

the residents of the sober living facility isn't the only exciting thing happening at MSCL these days. The kitchen at the residence just saw an upgrade, too. The two-year-old facility was able to make improvements thanks to a grant from the Wood River Women's Foundation.

Wilander, a longtime substance abuse counselor who first spent seven years volunteering for the Hailey drug courts, has a street-smart and academic understanding of recovery. And that means she has a holistic approach to helping the men who enter her program succeed. It involves more than regular or cutting-edge therapy, it involves more than a great place to live. It's about educating the men with new skills and building new habits, too.

Wilander has brought in Kristin Hovencamp, a Valley-based investment consultant at Hazlett Wealth Management, to conduct financial planning courses to MSCL residents. She focuses on long-term savings techniques and helps residents set specific savings goals. The program sets residents up with credit cards that have modest spending caps, something manageable to pay down, which helps establish creditworthiness. The program also allows residents to make a monthly deposit and, if the deposit goal is met, matching funds are made available.

"They can't just make a deposit in one lump sum; it has to be done monthly," Wilander explained. "We're not just providing them with financial planning information, we're helping them create new financial habits."

The raffle Wilander was getting approved will be launched in early December if it's allowed to go forward. "Chance for Change," as it's called, is a partnership with Jensen Stern jewelers in Ketchum. The jeweler has donated a \$10,000 gift certificate for use in the store. A limited number of raffle tickets priced at \$100 each will be sold.

"We're keeping the ticket numbers low so it's a good chance of winning," Wilander said.

And chances are, any time the community supports MSCL, it's a win for everyone.