



Stepping Stones

NEWSLETTER

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A COMPREHENSIVE CENTER FOR ALCOHOL AND DRUG REHABILITATION

www.fsos.org

Carl Abbott to Design Master Site Plan



Carl Abbott

After an extensive search, First Step's Building Committee selected Carl Abbott Architects/Planners to develop the Master Site Plan for our new residential campus.

Led by co-chairs Mollie Cardamone and John Lambie, the committee considered proposals from seven architectural firms before inviting formal presentations from two. Recognized as a leader in Sarasota architecture, Abbott's work includes a number of notable and award-winning buildings in the area including St. Thomas More Church, the Women's Resource Center and the Summerhouse Restaurant.

The Building Committee was impressed with Abbott's commitment to work closely with First Step to design a functional and creative building that will enhance our vision of First Step's future and enrich the lives of clients and staff using the new facilities. Real estate developer Richard Carlson, a member of both First Step's Board and Building Committee, reminded fellow members that their work is to create a plan for new facilities that will be appropriate both now and in the future — an exciting challenge that is certain to change the shape of First Step's residential recovery programs.

A Sober Reality



What place matters more than home? For the men and women who successfully complete one of First Step's addiction recovery programs, a home is a vital first step toward a stable life. One of the most important aspects of treatment and recovery for those avoiding relapse is living in a healthy, functional environment surrounded by others who are not abusing alcohol or drugs.

"Housing is an important issue particularly for people who are in the early stages of recovery. Frequently, they have lost families and jobs, they have burned what ever bridges they had" stated Bob Piper, First Step's Vice President of Residential Services. According to Mr. Piper, "It is very important for people in recovery to have a good support system in place and they need decent housing to help get them back on their feet. Simple things that we take for granted, like a roof over our heads and a bed to sleep in, can make all the difference in the world for someone trying to sustain their recovery."

The relationship between addiction and homelessness is complex and controversial. While rates of alcohol and drug abuse are disproportionately high among the homeless population, the increase in homelessness over the past two decades cannot be explained by addiction alone. Many people who are addicted to alcohol and drugs never become homeless, but people who are poor and addicted are clearly at increased risk of homelessness.

As the concern about the need to provide adequate housing for the region's workforce, the homeless and low-income families gains momentum in the Sarasota area, County officials, advocates, economic development leaders, employers and concerned citizens are searching for solutions — none will be easy or inexpensive. In the meantime, the problem of affordable housing further complicates the ability of human service agencies, such as First Step, to provide housing for their clients. Overwhelming evidence from communities that have already addressed the issue proves that housing is an essential component of a comprehensive continuum of care — a critical safety net that can make the difference between a successful recovery and relapse.

(Continued)



In the meantime, our treatment beds are full, recovery programs have waiting lists and costs of providing care continue to climb while public subsidies and insurance reimbursements continue to fall. Data collected from across the country demonstrates that the cost

of providing appropriate housing and other supportive services for clients transitioning out of a substance abuse recovery program is much less expensive than keeping the revolving door spinning. This community has a chance to make a real difference and to set an example for others to follow. It's the right thing to do – both fiscally and ethically.

Caring Hearts Luncheon Launches Special Fund

The Sandy Seidman Second Step Fund

With over 150 guests present, the fourth annual Caring Hearts Luncheon was a successful event.

Held at Michael's On East, the luncheon was highlighted by presentations from Dr. Washington Hill, Chair OB-GYN Director of Maternal-Fetal Medicine at Sarasota Memorial Hospital, and Jennifer, a client of First Step's Mothers & Infants program. The annual event raises awareness and support for the Mothers & Infants program, First Step's substance abuse recovery programs for pregnant and post-partum women.

This year's luncheon, presented by Fifth Third Bank, launched the Sandy Seidman Second Step Fund. Named in honor of Sandy Seidman, former First Step Board member and founding chair of the Caring Hearts Luncheon, the Second Step Fund is a permanent recognition of Sandy's commitment to the mothers and babies who benefit from First Step programs. The Fund will provide women who successfully complete the program with an opportunity to apply for a voucher to cover deposits on housing, utilities or phone service. The goal is to alleviate some of the financial strain as the women transition back into the community. The first award from the Fund, a grant of \$281, helped a successful program graduate pay her first month's rent.

More than \$10,000 has been raised for the Fund so far. Your contribution is welcome and can be mailed in the enclosed donation envelope. Please indicate that your gift is for the Sandy Seidman Second Step Fund.



For a Limited Time Only: Use Your IRA as Never Before

Under the Pension Protection Act of 2006, you can make a lifetime gift using funds from your individual retirement account (IRA) without undesirable tax effects. These IRA gifts can be accomplished simply and without tax complications through the end of 2007 (when the provision is scheduled to expire). Making your gift now – while you are living – means you will be able to witness the benefits of your generosity. Gifts of substantial worth are particularly important to First Step now, as we move close to launching the capital campaign to fund our new Residential Center.

You may contribute funds this way if:

- You are age 70½ or older
- The gift is \$100,000 or less each year
- You make the gift on or before Dec. 31, 2007
- You transfer the gift outright to one or more public charities, but not supporting organizations or donor advised funds

- You transfer funds directly from an IRA or Rollover IRA
- You cannot receive benefits from First Step in exchange for the gift

How the New Law Works

Pat, age 80, has \$450,000 in an IRA and has pledged to give First Step \$75,000 this year. If Pat transfers \$75,000 from the IRA, she will avoid paying income tax on that amount. She cannot, however, claim a charitable deduction – it is a pure "wash." Pat has found an easy way to benefit First Step without tax complications. If Pat's spouse has an IRA and is 70½ or older, he can also give up to \$100,000 each year.

For More Information

It would be wise to consult your tax professional if you are contemplating a gift under the Pension Protection Act. Please feel free to call Donna Wolski, VP of Development, at 941-552-2476 or dwolski@fsos.org for information on how your gift can benefit First Step today.

Dave's Message



Living homeless is a lifestyle choice few would make: living hopeless is a circumstance none of us should have to bear. While many read doom and gloom in the drop of the formerly hot housing market, in reality, it may lead to an expanded rental market.

As one of the many "fifty-somethings" who started out in an apartment on my way to eventual home ownership,

I am convinced that renting is a good alternative for individuals and families, including First Step's clients, who are ready to make a transition from a recovery program back to the community. The community and our public officials have a real opportunity to make a difference now in the availability of housing options for our clients, the homeless and others who struggle to provide safe, secure and affordable housing for themselves and their families.

First Step is prepared to purchase and manage apartment units for our transitioning clients if public funding becomes available to assist us in obtaining the property. As real estate prices continue to slide, properties appropriate for this purpose will become increasingly available. We should be prepared to take advantage of these opportunities while they exist.

County leaders can make an immediate difference by allocating Community Housing Funds toward expanding rental options and State leaders can deepen the pool of available funds by lifting the cap on Florida's Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund. In both instances, money is already available – let's put it to work making a difference for those who really need it.

David J. Beesley, MPH
President/CEO

Help First Step Save Money...

Please help us keep our mailing costs down by providing us with your e-mail address. E-mail addresses will be used for future newsletters and First Step event announcements. First Step will not sell or share your e-mail addresses to other parties. Please clip and mail the response card below:

Name: _____

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E-mail Address: _____



The Invisible Epidemic

She enjoys a couple glasses of wine or cocktails during her bridge games. He sits in the shade of the lanai sipping on a cold beer. Both take a variety of medications for reasons ranging from pain control to depression. Afternoons fading into evenings can be a difficult and lonely time for older adults. Scenes similar to these are common in communities everywhere.

Alcohol and drug abuse by older adults is being called an "invisible epidemic" by some national health care experts. Recent data reported by emergency medical personnel at Sarasota Memorial Hospital confirms the problem locally: older adults now represent more than half of all reported drug reactions leading to hospitalization through the emergency room.

First Step of Sarasota has been awarded a Jerome and Mildred Paddock Foundation grant for **Get Connected**, a program designed to call attention to the problem and to educate the older adults and their caregivers about the dangers related to the use of alcohol in combination with prescription and over-the-counter medications. Alcohol alters the affects of certain medications and may lead to serious medical complications, even addictions.



Get Connected, a three-session program, will help its older adult participants strengthen healthy behaviors, develop problem solving skills and more effectively manage difficult situations. Topics include identifying areas of risk and assets, medication misuse and the importance of rituals and feelings. The program will also provide information on the impact that alcohol has on individuals as they age and how it interacts with prescription and OTC medications.

The **Get Connected** program, taught by two of First Step's Outpatient Prevention Educators, who are themselves seniors, is non-threatening and focuses on positive thinking and attitudes. According to Barbara Reynolds, Director of Residential Health and Older Adult Education, "the group is a social gathering that helps individuals cope with aging. It is fun; we play games and serve refreshments. Usually, I have twice as many people in the second session as I did the first because people have a good experience and bring their friends next time."

The program is currently being offered in independent living communities, assisted living centers and in nursing homes.

For more information, call 366-5333.



First Step Welcomes New Board Members

Dr. Lawrence Miller – Recently appointed as Interim Assistant City Manager of Sarasota, Dr. Miller served as the city’s Economic and Development Coordinator prior to his current appointment. Dr. Miller is also involved with the Newtown redevelopment plan. Prior to moving to Sarasota, Dr. Miller served as Executive Director of Elmcot Youth & Adult Activities, Inc., a human service agency in New York City.

Patricia Moffitt – The controller at xG Technology, Inc. in Sarasota, Ms. Moffitt comes to First Step’s Board with a financial and philanthropic background. A CPA,

Ms. Moffitt has an MBA from the University of Florida. She has been active with the Sarasota Chamber of Commerce and volunteered for Girls Inc. of Sarasota, the Van Wezel Foundation, Tidewell Hospice Children’s Services Program, John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art and Junior League of Sarasota.

Alan Quinby - With a background in public relations, Alan Quinby was senior counselor at Clarke Advertising and Public Relations for seven years. He has served as President of the Board of The Friends of Selby Public Library and G. WIZ – The Hands-On Science Museum. Mr. Quinby and his wife, Susan Brainerd, are active on the cultural scene

Recent Grants

First Step has recently received grants from:

- Virginia White Clark Fund of the Bank of America Client Foundation
 - Jerome and Mildred Paddock Foundation
- Eluned & Edward Russell Charitable Foundation
- State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) program grant from the Sarasota Office of Housing and Community Development.



First Step Directory

Main: 941-366-5333
800-266-6866
www.fsos.org

Administrative Offices
 1970 Main Street, 5th Floor
 Sarasota 34236

Special Services Center & the Addictions Receiving Facility
 1726 18th Street, Sarasota 34234

Residential Center
 4613 N. Washington Boulevard
 Sarasota 34234

Outpatient Offices
 1970 Main Street, 3rd Floor
 Sarasota 34236

2210 S. Tamiami Trail, Suite 10
 Venice 34293

819 N. Mills Avenue, Suite E
 Arcadia 34266

Family Services Center
 1750 17th Street, Unit K-2
 Sarasota 34234

Court Services
 2075 Main Street, Suite 2
 Sarasota 34237

Family Emergency Treatment Center
 1404 14th Street W.
 Bradenton 34205

OUR MISSION

First Step of Sarasota prevents and treats alcohol and drug addictions and associated disorders. We foster fully functioning, productive individuals by offering a full array of services in partnership with our community.

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First Step provides its services without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability. Treatment programs and materials are sponsored by First Step of Sarasota, Inc., the Florida Department of Children and Families, Sarasota, Manatee and DeSoto Counties, and the United Way of Sarasota County.



First Step is a CARF accredited organization.

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