

Machias Valley News Observer Article

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Recovery Support Network

A safe place, a sober place, a structured home environment for women in recovery, this is the mission of the Recovery Support Network (RSN), the first of its kind in Washington County. Formed in 2006, this grassroots agency seeks to fill a need for transitional housing – a missing piece among Washington County’s wealth of programs for women in treatment for addiction and/or alcoholism.

Not just a place to crash: the housing RSN envisions is a temporary nurturing home for up to five women in early stages of recovery. Children of residents are welcome and the length of residency is flexible, although 6-18 months would likely be the average stay. Residents would pay a proportional amount of “rent” and develop a life plan which RSN’s contacts with other area agencies and entities would help facilitate. Thus, a resident could enroll in a treatment program for drug addiction, work with a nutritionist, participate in Narcotics Anonymous, and take classes to finish a degree or obtain a professional license. While pulling the various pieces of their lives together in this manner, RSN residents would benefit from the stable, drug-free environment of the home they would share with their children and other residents under the supervision of RSN staff, learning basic life skills they may lack, such as how to purchase food on a budget and cook healthy meals for themselves and their families. Residents would also be mentored by women having successfully transitioned out of the home.

As it stands now, “women run the risk of losing their children to the State if they leave them,” to seek treatment, warns Märta Conlin, RSN’s Program Director, “but with whom are they going to leave them?” Without trustworthy, sober family or friends able to structurally help support their recovery, many women do not pursue substance abuse treatment – an outcome the community can ill afford.

The goal of RSN’s holistic program is for women entering the residence to return to the community as productive citizens with improved health and social skills, working or enrolled in school, without putting their children at risk during the process. A member of the Community Caring Collaborative – 35 agencies geared toward child welfare from birth through eight years of age – RSN is well positioned to pull in appropriate services for a resident’s children. As Conlin explains, RSN functions as “a framework” for women to access treatment and other vital services already in place in Washington County. “We won’t provide it all, but will coordinate it.”

RSN is actively seeking donations and grants to begin acquiring their first of several transitional homes in the County. Board of Directors President June Ashworth indicates that in addition to start up costs, RSN “hopes to set up an endowment fund to facilitate maintenance.” Gaining momentum, the ambitious non-profit organization held their second annual meeting on May 14th, inviting newcomers into their membership of individuals, families, and businesses. To learn more about the Recovery Support Network, visit <http://recovery supportnetwork.org>, email info@recovery supportnetwork.org or call 263-6272.