

Friday May 29, 2009

Isaiah House issues plea for donations

By **HERB BROCK**
herb@amnews.com

Editors note: This story is the first installment of a two-part series about Isaiah House.

WILLISBURG - Facing a budget crisis, Isaiah House Drug and Alcohol Recovery Center is issuing a plea for both monetary and in-kind donations.

Mark LaPalme, executive director of the center, said the center's current annual budget is \$360,000 but it is about \$37,000 in the red.

"Aside from payroll, many of the expenses don't seem that much, in and of themselves," he said. "But \$4,000 a month for electricity and another \$4,000 a month for 100 meals a day, for example, add up quickly and we currently aren't able to cover all of our expenses."

One of the main sources of income are "sponsorships," which include individuals, families and various organizations who commit to contribute certain amounts every year, LaPalme said.

Another big source of funds is provided by "pillar partners," which include churches and other religious organizations, he said.

Residents also provide funds for the center's budget, LaPalme said.

Each person who stays at the center pays \$840 a month; but he said the actual cost to house each of them is



Mark LaPalme, left, executive director of Isaiah House, stands outside the main building in Willisburg with former resident Choe Sergent, who now lived in Danville. (Herb Brock photo)

about \$1,600. Also, residents earn money for the center by working in various community projects, such as picking up trash along roadsides, LaPalme said.

The center doesn't receive any grants, he said.

While the center board's main goal in its current fundraising efforts is to keep its existing program going, LaPalme said it would like to build an account to pay for completing the renovation of the sprawling, one-time school house it has occupied since it moved from Hustonville to Willisburg, and to purchase computers and other equipment.

"We have capacity in the building to house and provide programs and services to 70 men, but we have the budget and staff for 35 men," he said.

"One day, we would like to have the budget that can cover the expenses for facilities and services for 72 men, but right now we are running short on the money to pay for what we have."

The center currently houses 21 men of all ages, plus five trustees and two men who are in the transitional stage leading to discharge, according to budget director Michael Clark.

The staff is comprised of 12 full- and part-time employees, including a house manager, and contract employees, including a doctor and a counselor, and unpaid volunteers, Clark said.

LaPalme said donations are tax-deductible and may be sent either by mail or online through the center's Web site.

"People can make no-strings-attached donations that would go into our general fund or they may specify on the memo lines of their check exactly what they would like their donations to pay for, such as food or clothing," he said.

Goods and services also needed

In addition to monetary contributions, people also may donate goods and services, LaPalme said.

"We are in need of such things as clothes, toiletries and cleaning supplies," he said. "We also can use cars or trucks because we do an enormous amount of traveling, transporting residents to job sites, doctor's offices and many other places."

The center also is in need of people, LaPalme said. "We need volunteers to serve as teachers, tutors, Bible study leaders, drivers and night watchmen, who stay in the dorm areas from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.," he said.

In early 2008, Isaiah House moved from a facility it rented in Hustonville from Cornerstone Assembly of God.

The board had planned on using the space it left behind in Hustonville for a drug and alcohol recovery program for women, but LaPalme said negotiations

with Cornerstone didn't pan out. The board lacked sufficient start-up funding and staff for the proposed program. The center, located at 2084 Main St. in Willisburg, consists of 35,000-square-foot. LaPalme said the property is valued at about \$1.25 million.

The building contains six counseling offices, a medical room, gymnasium, weight room, commercial kitchen, game room, TV room, library and a potential detox room.

Isaiah House is an eight- to 10-month program that requires participants to have a home church, job, apartment, accountability group and accountability partner before being discharged. He said each person is tracked for five years.

If someone is discharged after 10 months, monthly phone calls and urine tests are required until the 15-month mark. The phone call checkups continue until the five-year mark.

LaPalme said last year's statistics show that 76 percent of men who were law offenders participating in the Isaiah House program did not re-offend. He added that about 92 percent stay drug- and alcohol-free after they leave.

* * *

SO YOU KNOW

* Tax-deductible monetary donations may be made to Isaiah House Drug and Alcohol Recovery Center, a 501C3 non-profit corporation, by mailing checks to the center at P.O. Box 188, Willisburg, Ky. 40078 or by going online at www.isaiah-house.org and donating through a "Pay Pal" program.

* In-kind donations of such things as cleaning supplies, clothing and vehicles may be taken to the center at 2084 Main St. in Willisburg.

* For more information about the center and its needs, call (859) 375-9200.

Copyright: The Advocate-Messenger 2009