

From Lotus Recovery Homes

I learned a long time ago that if information is presented that is not factual and you do not address it, it is generally assumed to be the truth. I received a copy of the pamphlet referring to the Lotus Lake Street property as a "15 bed correctional facility" in response to the Lotus application for Conditional Use Permits (CUPs). I would like to provide information to support our request for the CUP and also address the misinformation in the pamphlet that was distributed.

Lotus Recovery Homes Background:

- Began in June, 2021 as a registered company; it is a 501 c3 non-profit organization
- Was a spin-off from Core Treatment Services
- Took over 404/406 Lake Street from Core and made it a women-only house (previously co-ed)
- Added Marshall Street facility for men and offices
- Summer of 2022 – Original Executive Director terminated, Board members resigned, company in chaos
- September 2022 began my involvement, first with the Board, then appointed by Board as Executive Director in mid-January. I had no idea what a recovery/sober living house was when I was asked to help
- I asked about permits and licenses and was told none were needed, obviously bad advice
- I learned about CUPs as we worked through the transition of The Crossing home to Lotus. Once Paul Braun discovered the lack of CUPs in September, I said we needed to fix it right away.

Response to the Flyer/Additional Specifics:

- Lotus is not a "Correctional Facility." We are a recovery/sober living home with a mission to "Provide safe and secure housing for those in recovery, and to help them rebuild their lives."
- We currently have 19 beds (10 at Lake Street and 9 at Marshall) We want CUP approval for these plus a maximum of 5 additional beds at Lake Street (408 Lake St.) and 3 at Marshall Street (flex space that is currently offices).
- The Crossing home is not a "group home for 12 men." It currently is full of women, three who have their children and one who is in the process of reuniting, a total of seven people. The changeover to men is only if there are not enough women in the community to fill the house after The Lighthouse opens their remodeled facility for a similar purpose. It was a risk management clause as I can't afford to pay rent on an empty house. It will never be co-ed.
- The overdose on Marshall Street on October 29 occurred at 1115 Marshall, a facility owned and managed by The Lighthouse. The man who overdosed was a resident of that house, not ours.
- There are extensive records on all recovery house residents who receive services from the County. These are required by and maintained by the County. I have been told by members of the County team that their requirements are much stricter than other area counties. We have had two men (less than 10% of annual male bed space) not under County supervision for which we keep records, and a new male resident from Shawano for which we answer to Shawano County. All Lake Street residents have been under Manitowoc County record keeping standards.
- I have been told by several people that the area around Lake Street does have drug dealers, but it is not because of Lotus. Out of the hundreds and hundreds of drug tests this year, only one dirty UA may have been due to drugs purchased locally (not necessarily in Lake Street area). The only other two dirty UA's were a result of decisions made when residents took approved

overnights out of the City. We have had no drugs or alcohol in the Lake Street house. Lotus does not provide business for dealers. There may be an impression that residents cover for each other. It is the opposite. They are so committed to both their own recoveries and those of their fellow residents that they don't want to be around drugs and alcohol, and report to staff on the rare occasions there is the inkling of unusual behavior. Drug court participants, about 45% of our residents, are tested 2 to 3 times a week.

- Drug Court is basically full, so no additional drug court housing is needed (beyond current Lotus and Lighthouse housing). But the pamphlet only includes a selective part of the story. 55% of our residents are covered under a SOR Services Contract. My waitlist currently is at a fairly normal 10 people. With the recent expansion at Core Treatment Services (capacity has increased by 20 additional beds), we are starting to see an increase in the need for additional recovery housing after people complete their treatment. I believe you all received a letter from Lori Fure explaining her view of the need.
- As explained earlier, we are not adding 15 beds.
- It is important that recovery homes are in the city. Most residents do not have vehicles and all their services are in the city. It provides greater opportunity for recovery residents to meet community service requirements.
- Beyond those in drug court, our new residents have had treatment in jail or in a treatment center. They must apply, are screened, and be drug and alcohol free. The decision on what recovery home to place them is a joint decision between Lighthouse, Lotus and Human Services. All residents and their progress against their goals are reviewed in a weekly standing meeting between the houses and Human Services. In addition, Human Services stays actively involved in the recovery of non-drug court residents through regular accountability meetings with the residents and by providing services. Lotus is required to report the results of at least 5 meetings with each individual resident each week. All these records are retained by the County; we maintain a duplicate set of our records.
- The number of recovery houses here (we have no idea where 10 came from) is a tribute to the great work being done by Drug Court and Human Services to address the substance abuse problem in Manitowoc. Once a person goes through treatment and is clean, the return to an unsafe environment, typically friends or family, usually results in the failure to stay clean. The temptation is too great and the events and people that triggered them to use in the past almost always lead to renewed use.
- I have learned a lot about substance abuse and recovery in my 10 months overseeing Lotus. I have been taught a lot by my staff, the Human Services staff and through Drug Court. We have been able to create a high accountability, tough love, family-like environment of mutual support in our homes while teaching life skills. We help residents get jobs and then move on to their next steps in their recovery. (ABR and QPS will interview and then attempt to place any residents I recommend to them as they know we help them stay clean and they are motivated for a better life). My support staff is uniquely trained to provide guidance to and to teach our residents. Three of the four (the other is a retired nurse) have police records and have gone through County substance abuse recovery programs themselves, and their lives have been transformed. (This is a very typical profile for workers in recovery nation-wide). They worked hard to overcome their addictions, are getting college degrees, have gone through specialized training, and are street smart, helping them to connect with the residents and see through any

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facades. In recovery, peer support and lived experience are very important in relationships with residents to create a successful recovery.

When I started, I thought I would find 18- to 25-year-olds. Instead, the age range this year has been between 22 and 60, with a recent average of 36. I have found that almost all residents are passionately committed to their recovery, and willing to do what is necessary to be successful. It's hard work to overcome a past life of addiction. Recovery housing provides a safe and secure environment with support systems that most residents have never experienced, and they finally have hope. I thought I would be working on transforming a business; I also get to be part of transforming people's lives and their futures.