



ODYSSEY HOUSE

NEWSLETTER

Supported by the NSW Health Department

20th Anniversary Edition

KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

PLANS ARE DRAWN UP TO EXPAND OUR PARENTS AND CHILDRENS PROGRAM



Parents & children enjoy the adventure playground

In response to the increasing need to assist young parents seeking help to arrest their drug and alcohol abuse, Odyssey has drawn up plans to build four 3 family houses in the grounds of Odyssey House at Eagle Vale.

General Manager, James Pitts says, "At present Odyssey is only able to accommodate 12 children at any one time. In the first six months of this year we received calls from 26 single parents and 16 couples - with 76 children between them - whom we were unable to help. This is a tragedy."

Odyssey's Parents and Children's Program enables children under the age of 12 to remain with their parents while the parents undergo treatment. The program supports the parents during their difficult rehabilitation. Most importantly, Odyssey also addresses the children's needs, which have often been sadly neglected, by teaching the parents basic parenting skills such as recognising and caring for both the physical and emotional needs of their children.

"It is our aim for parents and children to leave Odyssey as a happy, supportive family unit, able to cope with and participate fully in the wider community," James Pitts advises.

A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Reflecting on Odyssey's first 20 years, I realise there have been a great many people who have added to its success. Firstly, of course, Odyssey would not have been established without the vision of the first Chairman, Mr Walter McGrath, who, after the death of his son James from a drug overdose in 1976, devoted the remainder of his life to drug rehabilitation in Australia.

Many individuals have given generously of their time and experience, for example, by acting as Directors and members of the Special Advisory Panels. There are also the fine managers who have been employed by Odyssey and, in particular, our two chief executive officers, initially Milton Luger and, more recently, James Pitts. Also staff and volunteers. There has also been the magnificent generosity of many individuals and organisations which have helped with donations.

To all of these people, too numerous to name, my heartfelt thanks as we look with optimism to the future of Odyssey House.

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Every now and then, of course, we need reminding of the positive impact the Odyssey program can have on individual lives.

The Board had such an experience at a recent meeting when three recent graduates addressed us; Rebecca, Kristen and Neil. They spoke frankly of their lives before Odyssey, how the early weeks in the program had been very difficult, but how, after some months, they started feeling more positive and proud of themselves as they found themselves reaching out to help more recent residents. Each concluded by telling us of their current employment and hopes for themselves and their families.

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Help us to help our young residents

Donations to Odyssey House McGrath Foundation of \$2 and above are tax deductible

IN RETROSPECT

In June 1977 Milton Luger arrived from New York to establish the Odyssey House model of a therapeutic community in Australia. He had been recruited by Walter McGrath and the Foundation's Board of Directors, and was followed out in September by three other treatment staff from Odyssey Houses in the United States. Milton Luger remained as Odyssey's Chief Executive Officer until his retirement in December 1994. In 1977, however, the immediate task was to locate suitable premises for a residential treatment centre. He gave many media interviews, talking about the plans for Odyssey and the need to find a building. The all-important phone call came through, as recounted below, and by the end October 1977 Odyssey House at Eagle Vale had opened its doors. Since then Odyssey has helped more than 6,000 young men and women in the residential program.



Our house is a mighty, mighty fine house

Milton Luger was asked to contribute a retrospective view of the work of Odyssey.

For two decades now Odyssey House has been providing intensive treatment for young men and women who have been troubled through substance abuse. Our policies and program have recognised the need to implement practical, supportive services for the extended families of those in care with us. Thus, the children and parents of Odyssey residents have always been a high priority.

Interestingly, in 1977, it was a young constable who called from Campbelltown and alerted us to the possible availability of an adequate building which might accommodate the then proposed Odyssey program. We made enquiries and discovered the true meaning of community involvement and good neighbours. City officials, as well as regional planning authorities, were co-operative and helpful in assisting us to gain access to the physical structure and they have maintained their support and understanding for 20 years.

As a matter of fact, two years after our New South Wales launch, when we were attempting to establish a second Odyssey House, those same individuals travelled to Melbourne at their own expense to testify before worried locals there about Odyssey's reliability, responsible approaches and accountability.

This hard-earned reputation was achieved because we were determined to operate a program which maintained our integrity and practicality. Our fiscal records were always available to the public; treatment services were open for scrutiny by government funding sources, community supporters and other drug and alcohol workers - academics and researchers were welcomed.

We are proud of our accomplishments. From the outset we recognised that because of the length and intensity of our programs, they were not required for casual, recreational substance abusers. But thousands of out-of-control, self-destructive individuals headed towards an irresponsible lifestyle, incarceration, or death have been assisted through our efforts and their own courage and commitment.



Odyssey residents make themselves at home

The current multi-faceted treatment offerings in our residential and non-residential programs have developed through a common base of integrity and honesty. They would not have been available today without the understanding, co-operation and assistance of our Board of Directors, as well as many caring individuals in the public and private sectors. Most of all, tremendous credit is due to the young, troubled program participants, who modified their mistrust, cynicism and hopelessness to believe in us and, importantly, themselves.

A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Continued from page 1

It was a moving experience for those of us who have not had to face the same harsh realities of life to see the optimism with which each of these young people looked to the future.

* * *

I hope you will purchase a ticket in the 20th Anniversary/AAP Raffle for a Landrover Discovery (form and reply paid envelope enclosed) and help build a future for the many young people, and their children, seeking our help.

Director Profile - Walter Dinale

As with all charities, staying within the annual budget and keeping a close watch on "the bottom line" is of critical importance to Odyssey House.



Odyssey is fortunate to have as Director and member of its Finance Committee, Walter Dinale, a Partner with Dinale Croker Partners, Chartered Accountants of Campbelltown.

We are aware that Dinale Croker Partners has a staff of 20 and acts for many businesses in the Macarthur region. Also, Mr Dinale has over many years maintained a high public profile within the area, including acting as President of the Macarthur Chamber of Commerce and Director on the board of West's Football Club and Macarthur Business Enterprise Centre. A growing family also has demands on his time.

Accordingly, we asked Mr Dinale how he finds the time to provide such valuable support to Odyssey on a regular basis. He told us, "Finding time is not a problem when you are making a contribution in assisting the community, and the Foundation is achieving its goals in a difficult and very contentious issue such as drug and alcohol rehabilitation." He added, "Awareness, government funding, police enforcement and community support are all required on a continuing basis."

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES REGARDING ODYSSEY

The average age of residents: 23.6 years

The average age residents started drug use, eg alcohol etc: 11 years

The average age residents started using illicit drugs: 14.7 years

During the year prior to entering Odyssey House:

- 10% spent some time incarcerated

- 23% were hospitalised

TO REHABILITATE
A RESIDENT AT
ODYSSEY COSTS \$24,482 pa

JAIL COSTS \$65,000 pa

HOSPITAL COSTS \$140,000 pa

Thank you to . . .

St George Foundation

Sylvia & Charles Viertel Foundation

Grace Bros Staff Aid to Charity

James N Kirby Foundation

Variety Club of Australia

AMP Foundation

A PARENTAL JOURNEY

When Ida and Andrew, with their newborn daughter, Tanya, first entered the Odyssey program it was with a great deal of anger, insecurity and anxiety. Over recent years neither Ida nor Andrew had been out of the drug scene for more than a few weeks at a time. The decision to enter the program was a difficult one. Pressure from their families, who were particularly concerned about Tanya's welfare, was a key factor.

Ida had been finding the task of caring for Tanya more and more difficult, especially while trying to score drugs on a daily basis. Andrew was becoming more and more abusive to both Ida and Tanya.

At first Ida felt the various rules at Odyssey a bit strange but, with the help of others in the Parents and Children's Program, she accepted the need for them.

Andrew was less understanding and resented being told what to do. Over time Andrew grew less angry, although the rules continued to be an issue for him.

However, they both liked the certainty of the daily routine, dropping Tanya off at childcare, going to their respective job functions, and getting to know other residents. Slowly, and with a great deal of encouragement from staff and peers, some of the doubt about their ability to give up drugs subsided.

Andrew learned he had talent as a carpenter. He had always fooled around with the wood in his dad's shed, but had never pursued this interest. Soon he was head of the Woodworking Department, under the tutelage of a staff member.

Ida liked the computers the first time she sat down in front of them. She had typed a little at school, had always wanted to use a computer, but had not had the courage to try. That's one of the things she came to like about

Odyssey; the fact that you can make mistakes. In fact, you are expected to make mistakes. How else can you learn? Ida became so good on the computers she was assigned to work in the business office.

Before long Ida and Andrew found they could discuss difficulties in their own relationship. Through the guidance provided by the Parents and Children's Program, Andrew started helping to care for Tanya. Both watched with pride as Tanya thrived on the care and love she was receiving.

During their stay at Odyssey, Ida and Andrew have found new friends, discovered new opportunities, regained the respect and confidence of their families, and learned to accept responsibility for their lives and that of their daughter. They know they can now make a good life as they plan for their move back into the community.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The Odyssey House logo is that of a ship carried by two substantial waves representing the long and arduous journey of the ancient Greek hero, Odysseus. The logo signifies the same long and arduous journey Odyssey residents travel as they progress from problem behaviours associated with their drug usage to a healthier and more rewarding life, free of drug use. After twenty years the Odyssey House journey continues to be difficult; however, the reward of seeing troubled young people change their attitudes to life is worth the effort.

As we celebrate twenty years of service to the young men and women (and their dependent children) who have been adversely affected through their substance misuse, we can reflect with pride upon our achievements. Over time we have been able to adjust our program to meet the legitimate needs of the residents in our care. Achieving this has required insight, courage and patience to meet the challenge to provide a quality service which is user friendly without compromising the integrity of the program for the sole purpose of greater popularity.

DON'T FORGET OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY/AAP RAFFLE FOR A LANDROVER DISCOVERY

Fill in the enclosed ticket application and
send it back straightaway in the enclosed
reply paid envelope

Odyssey House McGrath Foundation ACN 001 418 257
is located at:

- Level 1, 431 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010
PO Box K1115 Haymarket NSW 1240
Telephone: (02) 9211 2400
Facsimile: (02) 9211 2368
- PO Box 459 Campbelltown NSW 2560
Telephone: (02) 9820 9999
Facsimile: (02) 9820 1796

