

ODYSSEY  
HOUSE*A Calm in  
the Sea of  
Addiction'*

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## When I wish upon a star

For Olivia, a 21-year-old resident who has recently reached the final stages of the Odyssey House drug rehabilitation program, this Christmas will be the happiest of her life.

Olivia had a terrible childhood – there was sexual, physical and emotional abuse from both her parents. Amazingly, despite her dysfunctional family life, Olivia was able to excel at school, becoming a school prefect and winning the Australian National Judo Title for her age and weight category.

However, at 13 years of age Olivia found she was unable to hide the pain and loneliness of her childhood any longer. Around the same time, her brother introduced her to intravenous drug use.

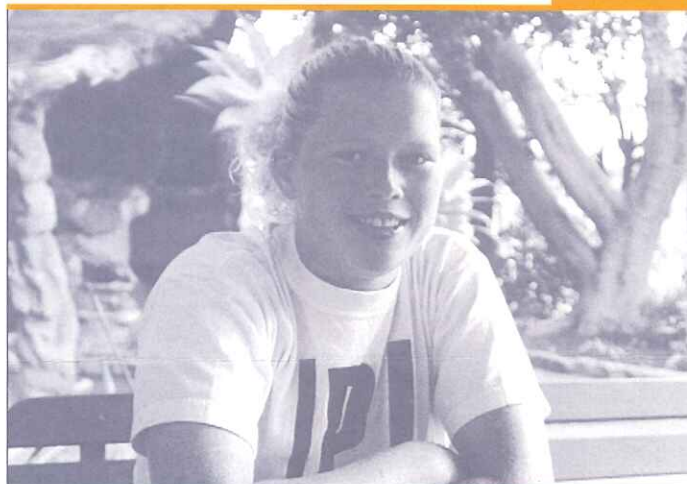
Olivia started using recreationally but it wasn't long before she was taking speed and ecstasy tablets every couple of days, despite still going to school. By the time Olivia was 15, she had also started to use cocaine and was asked to relinquish her position on the school council.

Not long after, Olivia's drug taking meant she could no longer compete at judo and she also left school.

"Judo was the only release where I could get away from what was happening at home. It was the one time I felt I was able to be myself and where what had happened in my life didn't matter. It also motivated me and gave me goals to look forward to."

Despite the turmoil that her drug use had created, after leaving school, Olivia was successful in securing a carpentry apprenticeship. She did this for a year but the collapse of a long-term relationship with her partner left her feeling particularly vulnerable.

Olivia moved interstate away from her dysfunctional family but yet again got caught up in the drug scene. She became involved in selling drugs and by



*"Dreams can come true", says Olivia.*

the time of her arrest at 18, Olivia weighed 43 kilos and was taking three ecstasy tablets a day, along with speed and cocaine. She had also suffered a complete emotional breakdown.

"When I first arrived at Odyssey House I thought it was impossible for me to want to live; I'd given up on life completely. I thought what's the point – life is too hard and is full of too much pain. I was just waiting and hoping that my drug use would slowly kill me."

Olivia has now been drug-free for two years and has turned her life around, thanks to the rehabilitation program at Odyssey House.

"The love and care I have received by the staff and other residents at Odyssey was exactly what I needed. For the first time in my life, other people were investing their love and trust in me. It was a struggle for me to let people know about my past and for me to place trust in others. But I succeeded and life is now good and definitely worth living," says Olivia.

"Christmas used to be a time that I regretted but this year it will be filled with love and a sense of achievement. I have people to share it with that I genuinely care about and although they may not be blood-related family, they are my

friends and people that I am close to," says Olivia.

Olivia is now studying design fundamentals at a Sydney TAFE and is living in a house in the inner city. She works at a hairdressing salon and her dream is to continue her studies and eventually find work in the advertising industry.

This Christmas, please help Odyssey House offer hope to other young people like Olivia – your donation no matter how small, will make a difference and can make dreams and Christmas wishes come true.

**Christmas  
Card Orders**

Don't forget to place your order for Christmas cards to send to your colleagues, family and friends this year and help raise much needed funds for Odyssey House.

Each pack costs \$12 and includes 10 cards and envelopes with a message that reads, "proceeds from the sale of this card benefits Odyssey House".

Orders can be made by phoning Julia, Marketing Officer on (02) 9820 9999.



## A message from the Chairman



Allan Rogers

Christmas is a special time of year and on behalf of the Odyssey House McGrath Foundation Board, I

would like to take the opportunity to thank the generous community of supporters and dedicated staff that has ensured a very successful year at Odyssey House.

One of the most gratifying manifestations of our progress over the last year has been the important relationships Odyssey House has formed with leading companies, community groups, philanthropists, media and other individuals. These partnerships are important to Odyssey House and we acknowledge each supporter's role as being vital to our continued success.

Throughout the year, we have maintained a record number of residents enrolled in the programs at Odyssey House and achieved a break-even financial state of affairs. Our number of financial supporters has also increased dramatically.

Over \$450,000 has been raised to commence development of stage one of the refurbishment program of the main Odyssey House building at Campbelltown, which will commence in 2002.

I wish all our readers, supporters and Odyssey House staff a Merry Christmas and best wishes for good health to all in the New Year.

Allan Rogers

# The One Day Only Appeal

The *One-Day-Only* appeal for Odyssey House, run throughout October has raised over \$9000. The money was raised via bucket collections at various local shopping centers and through the sale of Odyssey House merchandise and a direct marketing campaign. The appeal culminated with the celebration of a family fun day and open day at the Odyssey House facility.

The *One-Day-Only* appeal was themed around the premise that if each person in NSW supported one resident in Odyssey House for one day by making a \$110 donation, we would be able to help many more Australians with drug, gambling and alcohol problems as well as significantly reduce current crime rates.

The appeal was successful in raising awareness about the life saving work of Odyssey House, with feature articles on residents in metropolitan and local newspapers, interviews with James Pitts on radio and on Good Morning Australia and television community service announcements on Channel 9 by media personality, Steve Liebmann.

Donations to the *One-Day-Only* appeal can still be made by calling 1800 644 661.

Residents and staff would like to thank the following organisations and people for their generosity and support of the *One-Day-Only* appeal.

The Chronicle newspaper  
C91.3 FM



2-DAY FM & The Black Thunders  
Nine Network  
Steve Liebmann  
Pat Farmer  
Andrew Daddo  
Shane Heal  
Ron Moore  
Derek Rucker  
Kevin McGuinness  
Al Baxter  
Trike Hire Ingleburn  
Eagle Vale Meats  
Country Women's Association, Campbelltown

## GRADUATES HONOURED

Ten residents graduated at the recent Odyssey House 24th anniversary and open day celebration. Special guest speaker, media personality Andrew Daddo paid tribute to the outstanding effort and dedication of the graduates - Craig, Steve, Marianne, Ronnie, Stephen, Jason, Stephanie, Philip, Quentin, Leanne & John.

Over 1,000 people attended the celebration to acknowledge the life saving work of Odyssey House and to help raise money for the *One-Day-Only* appeal.

The hard work of all the staff, volunteers and residents involved in the organisation of

the day is commended. Visitors enjoyed food stalls, sporting celebrity autographs, an animal farm, a jumping castle, face painting, art and craft stalls, trike rides and multi-cultural

dance performances.

Congratulations to all the residents that graduated on realising their dream of a drug-free existence!



James Pitts and Andrew Daddo congratulate Craig, an official graduate of the Odyssey House drug rehabilitation program.

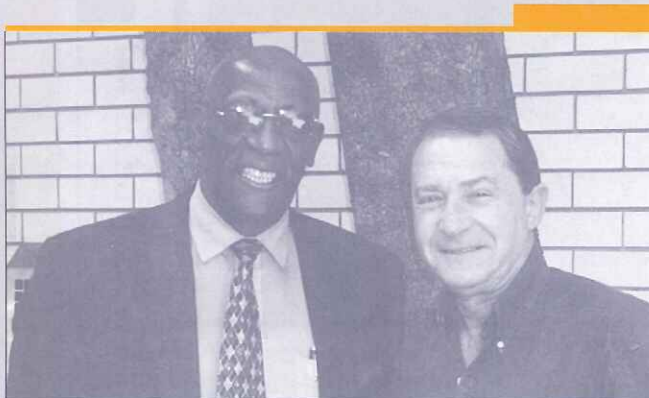


# With a little help from our friends

Ten high profile members of the community have made a strong commitment to help fight the growing problems associated with drug misuse by announcing their involvement in the *Friends of Odyssey* scheme.

The *Friends of Odyssey* will assist Odyssey House in raising its profile and help raise much needed funds.

Preliminary supporters include media personalities Steve Liebmann and Julie McCrossin, sporting personalities Shane Heal and Pat Farmer, social identities, Noelene Keen-Ward and Christina Green and politicians Mark Latham, Meg Oates, Peter Debnam and Charlie Lynn.



*James Pitts thanks media personality Steve Liebmann for his support*

Steve Liebmann, is looking forward to doing something positive about Australia's growing drug problem.

"Drugs have a major impact on crime rates, health care costs and family

functioning. The drug rehabilitation programs at Odyssey House have shown to be cost-effective and efficient in helping people with a drug dependency," said Steve.

## A Road to RECOVERY

To demonstrate the real work of Odyssey House, this column features an Odyssey House resident's story.

For 38-year-old Steve, Odyssey House has enabled him to discover his true beliefs and values and most importantly, accept himself for the person he is.

Having recently graduated from the Odyssey House program Steve has successfully overcome his decade long struggle with an addiction to heroin.

Steve grew up in a loving, nurturing and stimulating household with well educated, successful and loving parents.

During his childhood, Steve's family spent over three years living in Washington DC and then returned to Melbourne, where Steve went to an exclusive private boys school.

"I found myself immersed in a cloud of enormous wealth and elegance and although I knew this didn't make me happy, it was my reality," says Steve.

Steve completed high school in 1980 and got the marks to do whatever university course he wanted. He moved to Sydney and started studying for a Bachelor of Economics degree.

"I chose what I believed was the easiest option and proceeded to do as little as possible. I continued to live a shallow life. It was around this time that I first tried heroin."

After completing his degree, Steve gained a position at a large computer company and quickly moved through the ranks.

"My life outside work was one of indulgence. I was partying hard, spending all my money and living the high life. I was also smoking pot and snorting cocaine like there was no tomorrow."

Steve's drug use continued over many years. After receiving a redundancy from his work, he married and went overseas.

On returning to Australia, Steve's addiction escalated at a rapid rate, "I had no purpose and no integrity. My soul felt tired."

After Steve's marriage ended, he moved in with his parents and his life continued to go downhill until he entered the Odyssey House program.

Steve believes his year and a half stay at Odyssey House has been an incredibly grounding experience.

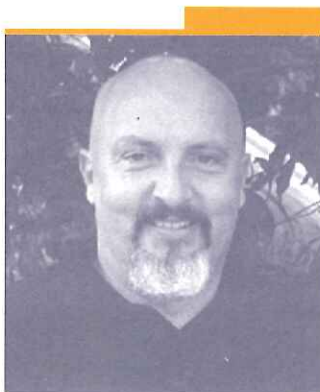
"I am now able to make the choices

as to where my life goes. I have learnt to handle the everyday frustrations that life dishes up, without becoming overwhelmed.

Today, Steve couldn't be happier. He has a place of his own and is working.

"I have established a network of strong positive friendships that will help me through any challenges that lie ahead. Above all, I've had the privilege of getting to know some extraordinary people."

"I now feel that I have finally become a complete person – no empty spaces to fill with drugs or the other artificial realities I indulged in. Drug use is no longer a choice for me."



*Odyssey House graduate Steve has found meaning in his life*

## A message from the Chief Executive Officer

This edition of our newsletter highlights the most recent activities and initiatives of Odyssey House.



*James A. Pitts*

It is also one of our most important editions as it reminds us of the forthcoming Christmas season that commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ.

In the spirit of Christmas, we are all called upon to promote the concept of peace on earth and goodwill towards men. The staff at Odyssey House are mindful of these principles as we teach them to the young men and women undergoing our various rehabilitation programs and practice them in our daily program activities.

Perhaps this year, more than any in the past, the Christmas message of peace and goodwill needs to be remembered, practiced and promoted. I was in New York City the weekend prior to the awful tragedy of the destruction of the World Trade Centre by terrorists. In the aftermath of the tragedy we have all been touched, and/or affected in some way. It has made us all reflect upon the world in which we live in and the certainty of institutions we always thought of with conviction.

On behalf of all the residents and staff at Odyssey House, I would like to ask all our supporters to be especially conscious of the true meaning of the Christmas holiday season. To the families, friends, colleagues, institutions, sporting teams, clubs and all other organisations that have supported us during the past year, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks for your support. Your encouragement has enabled the staff and residents at Odyssey House to develop and reach their goals to their full potential throughout the year.

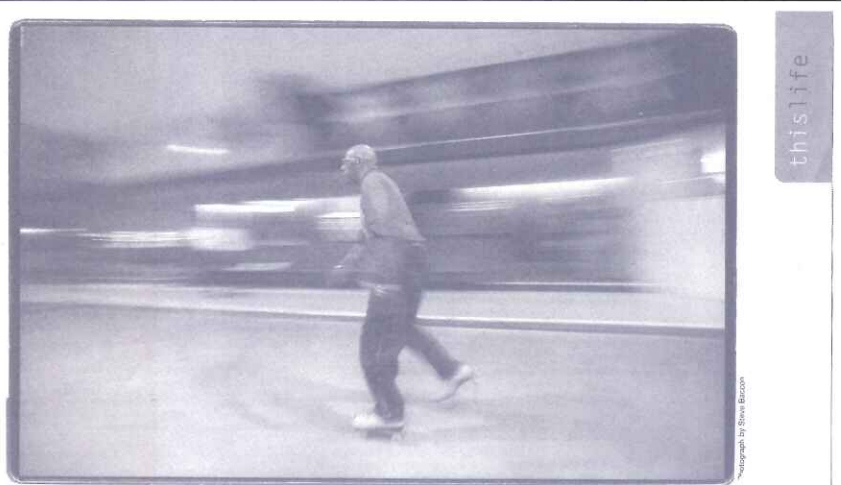
We would also like to extend to you all a Christmas message of peace on earth and goodwill to all men.

*James A. Pitts*



# In The Press

Odyssey House regularly receives public recognition and support from the media in its commitment to helping people with drug, alcohol and gambling problems overcome their addictions. Here is a sample of news features that have appeared on Odyssey House over the last few months.



**24 hours**  
**James Pitts** CEO, Odyssey House

**6.55am** "To do this job effectively, I need lots of energy," says James Pitts, 34, CEO of drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre Odyssey House, who starts each day with a one-kilometre swim and rigorous gym workout.

**8.55am** Wearing jeans and giant-sized Reeboks, the former pro-basketballer (he played in the late '60s with American team Minnesota Pipers) stretches his long legs under the desk and begins phone networking. Organises meetings, rallies media support.

**10am** Plans to write a paper on the cost benefits of running his facility. "Everyone's trying to get money so you need to substantiate what sort of efficacy you have." Pitts left home-town Detroit to run Australia's Odyssey House: his two-year stint has lasted two decades.

**10.05am** Phones Today Show host Steve Liebmann, a supporter. "We're planning a one-day appeal to try and get the public to contribute what it costs to keep a person in treatment for one day, which is \$110. We figured you'd be a good person to spearhead that. Maybe we could show some footage I could come out to the studio. OK Steve, thanks a lot."

**10.10am** Discusses the "one-day" appeal with PR staff. "It's no piece of cake" raising \$400,000 to \$600,000 each year to supplement government funding. "We have a hard product to sell. People look at drug users and say, 'They got themselves into it, let them get themselves out of it'. But these people have problems they're willing to face up to. They're not sitting in their pyjamas going 'woe is me'."

**10.20am** Chats to some of the 130 live-in residents of his Campbelltown facility. "Every day of treatment is a drug-free, crime-free day. Last year, we saved the community \$22 million. That's the truth."

**10.50am** Steve, 38 and Geoff, 36, both residents for 17 months, talk about how newcomers are adapting to the family-like environment. Having beaten his 16-year habit Steve says he's ready to "re-enter the community" with a job in corporate fundraising.

**11.15am** It's recreation day so most residents are at the local rollerskating rink. Pitts joins them. "What's the biggest size skates you've got?"

**11.20am** "I used to be pretty good at this," Pitts laces his size-13 skates, glancing at the twentysomethings whizzing past him. "I'm hoping it's like riding a bike, that it all comes back to me and I don't break my neck."

**12.30pm** Changes into suave black suit. Lunch at The Rocks with general manager of Bell Shakespeare Company, Richard Evans. The pair met recently at Boston's Harvard Business School, where Pitts was awarded a fellowship. Over chicken panang and green tea Pitts says theatre is a great way for his residents to express themselves. They discuss possible future collaborations.

**2.30pm** Drops into Odyssey House's Surry Hills admission centre where addicts are assessed for treatment. Pitts does one-on-one counselling here, from young parents to NRL players. "I counsel high-profile people and sportsmen who want anonymity."

**3pm** Meets with fellow Odyssey board member vetric Hoogstad at Australian Catholic University. Over Tim Tams and coffee, they discuss family counselling, literacy classes and the penalties of smuggling drugs inside the house. Urine tests are usually fool-proof.

**5pm** Surry Hills. Shoots off emails and drafts letters to the Prime Minister and state and federal health ministers regarding funding issues.

**7.30pm** Teleconference with Alcohol and Drug Council of Australia.

**9.30pm** Dinner. Watches Sky news, reads mail from Michigan University about a basketball reunion. Wife Lorraine is already in bed; she, too, is a drug and alcohol worker. "We understand each other's frustrations."

**12.10am** Sleep. ☾

— Gina Leroy  
SunstyleLife 5

The Sun-Herald Magazine - 26th August 2001

## Odyssey Recognition

We would like to thank the following family and friends of Milton Luger, founding Executive Director of Odyssey House at Campbelltown, for their recent generous donations in loving memory of Milton.

R. Luger  
J.P Austin  
K. Swan  
D. Wilson  
T. Wilson  
N. Gleeson  
S. Moore  
M. Phillips  
E. Freedman  
M. Luger  
E. Rosenfeld

**YES! I would like to help Odyssey House assist young Australians to live a drug free life.**

Please find enclosed my donation of: (please circle) **\$50.00** **\$100.00** **\$500.00** or \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my cheque / money order made payable to the Odyssey House McGrath Foundation or charge my credit card.

☐ Bankcard ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Amex ☐ Diners Club

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: (Dr/ Mr/ Mrs/ Ms/ Miss): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Facsimile: \_\_\_\_\_

DONATIONS OVER \$2.00 ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

For more information on Odyssey House, visit [www.odysseyhouse.org.au](http://www.odysseyhouse.org.au)

Telephone: (02) 9820 9999 ~ Facsimile: (02) 9820 1796

Please return this coupon and your donation to:  
Odyssey House McGrath Foundation, PO Box 459 Campbelltown NSW 2560

