

Chapter 17

Synopsis of Talk by Sara Snyder, Grateful Home

Margrit Bergholz

Sara J. Snyder, executive director of Grateful Home, Inc., is the director of one of the oldest treatment programs for women in the state of Michigan. She is a certified addiction counselor (CAC), and has an Associate Degree in Mental Health. She has worked in the field of chemical dependency for sixteen years and has been the director at Grateful Home for six years. Previous positions include crisis counselor at the NSO Walk-in Center, substance abuse counselor at Columbia Hospital, counselor at Women in Transition (domestic violence shelter), therapist at Marion Manor Medical Center, and at Interim House/Women and Children's Chemical Dependency Program.

Ms. Snyder has been director of the Grateful Home Non-profit Corporation for 6 1/2 years. She is also an alumna of the program, having graduated in 1974. At that time, Grateful Home was the only treatment program for indigent, chemically addicted women in Michigan. The other program for women was at Brighton Hospital and was open only to women who had good medical insurance.

Grateful Home, at 30 years, is the oldest program serving chemically addicted women in Michigan. For its first 24 years, however, it was only a half-way house, providing food and a bed. For 4 1/2 years after Ms. Snyder became executive director, she worked to make the kind of social services and counseling available she would have liked to have had when she was a resident there. In addition to adding support services to Grateful Home, Ms. Snyder had two primary goals to improve the program. The first was to increase its size. There are at least 500 chemically addicted women in Detroit, at any given time, in need of shelter. Yet Grateful Home had only nine beds available. The second goal was to create a system to help women in the program regain custody of their children.

For the last year and a half, Ms. Snyder and other formerly chemically addicted women have worked on the Dreamweaver Power Project. This project began when Ms. Snyder learned, at a community meeting, that the Archdiocese of Detroit had offered the land and buildings of the closed St. Bernard parish to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for one dollar. Ms. Snyder learned the site was well located to serve their client base. The site was central to the 48213, 48214, and 48215 zip codes, the most service-deprived areas in Michigan. The land comprised an entire city block with four large buildings: a four-story former elementary school, a two-story former convent, a nine-bedroom former rectory, and a church, in addition to a playground and a parking lot.

Because Grateful Home was not a Catholic organization, however, the real estate office of the archdiocese wanted market rate for its purchase, which was \$250,000. Grateful Home could not afford that purchase price, but Ms. Snyder went to the Bishop of Detroit with a description of the services Grateful Home offered and \$34.50 which had been collected from current clients in the program. The Bishop agreed to sell the site to Grateful Homes for the \$34.50, but the real estate office, which was responsible for selling numerous closed parishes in Detroit, was afraid that, if they gave such an advantageous price to Grateful Home, other non-profit

organizations would expect similar prices. During these negotiations, the Junior League of Detroit, which was working with Grateful Home on another project, learned of Grateful Home's interest in the site and committed itself to funding for the purchase of the property. The property was ultimately purchased for \$125,000.

Once Grateful Home occupied the property, they realized that the 35,000 square feet of floor space on the site was far more than their program could utilize. Ms. Snyder, therefore, proposed to her board that they lease some of the space available to other non-profits. At this point, six non-profits are renting space on the site. The non-profits chosen provide services needed by Grateful Home clients. Their lease agreement requires that they provide free services to Grateful Home residents, in exchange for discounted lease rates, and to provide services in a way which conforms with the Grateful Home philosophy, namely, they emphasize empowerment, bonding, and a family-style environment for their clients. The non-profits operating on site are:

- St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank
- Women and Community Services (Job Bank)
- Detroit City School G.E.D. Program
- Drama Therapy
- Bon Secours Health Clinic
- Life Directions (Teen Outreach)
- Black Family Development

All these groups provide services to the general community as well as to residents at Grateful Home. In addition to these social services, the former convent is being operated as a child care center.

While the Dreamweaver project was being developed, the Governor of Michigan cut General Assistance (GA) welfare payments to 83,000 people in Michigan. To help meet the needs of the numerous women who became homeless because of the cuts in GA, Grateful Home converted the church on the Dreamweaver site into a 60-bed emergency shelter. In operating the emergency shelter, Grateful Home found that 90% of the women housed there were eligible for their substance abuse program, and the shelter has become a major source of women who enter that program. The rectory is being used as a post-treatment transitional living center for women after they graduate from the residential care program, which is still housed at its original site on East Grand Boulevard.

Although the state pays for only 90 days of treatment for the substance abuse program, Grateful Home allows

clients to stay as long as they need to. Ms. Snyder believes it is important in a successful substance abuse program to remove the roadblocks of transportation and child care from treatment. The Grateful Home programs provide all the social services the women in the substance abuse program need on one site, along with child care.