

VOA Expands Freedom House to Southeastern Kentucky

GOING WHERE WE ARE NEEDED MOST

For more than 20 years, Freedom House, Volunteers of America's nationally-recognized program for pregnant and parenting women overcoming substance use disorder, has been providing comprehensive care to women in Louisville.

But VOA knows the need for comprehensive and effective addiction recovery services is urgent throughout the area served by VOA. That's why VOA is now serving the residents of Southeastern Kentucky with a Recovery Community Center and will open the first Freedom House outside of Louisville in the coming months.

"Where we see the need, we meet the need. Our expansion into Clay County will not only change lives, I am convinced it can change the entire narrative of this beautiful part of our Commonwealth," Jennifer Hancock said.

This expansion was made possible by a significant grant by the Commonwealth of Kentucky as well as the generosity of VOA supporters. Kentucky State Senate President Robert Stivers is among the local donors and is a key driver in

making the project a reality. Expanding into Eastern Kentucky was motivated by a simple philosophy: to change lives wherever there is a need. "We know that communities in southeastern Kentucky have been affected more deeply by the opioid and addiction epidemic than almost any area in the nation. We know we have a solution that works. We know we can make a

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- Jennifer Hancock

difference and want to be there for families in Clay County and beyond," Hancock said.

The Recovery Community Center is already open and thriving in Manchester. The RCC serves as a welcoming home and gathering place for anyone looking for community, support and camaraderie. It hosts meetings and speakers, and features comfortable couches and game tables. It's a place to share stories and learn about addiction recovery – but also simply a place to relax and talk with your neighbors and friends.

In the coming months, the recovery center will be joined by the new Freedom House, which will provide a home to 16 pregnant and parenting women and their children. Freedom House focuses on comprehensive and life-changing services, including individual and family therapy and parenting and life-skills classes. VOA's trained, professional staff will work with residents to locate transitional housing as well as employment and educational opportunities.

A key focus for Volunteers of America has been partnering with and learning from local

leaders to make the RCC and Freedom House as effective as possible.

Tracy Farmer, Dental Director for the Elgin Foundation, has been one of many essential community partners in Clay County.

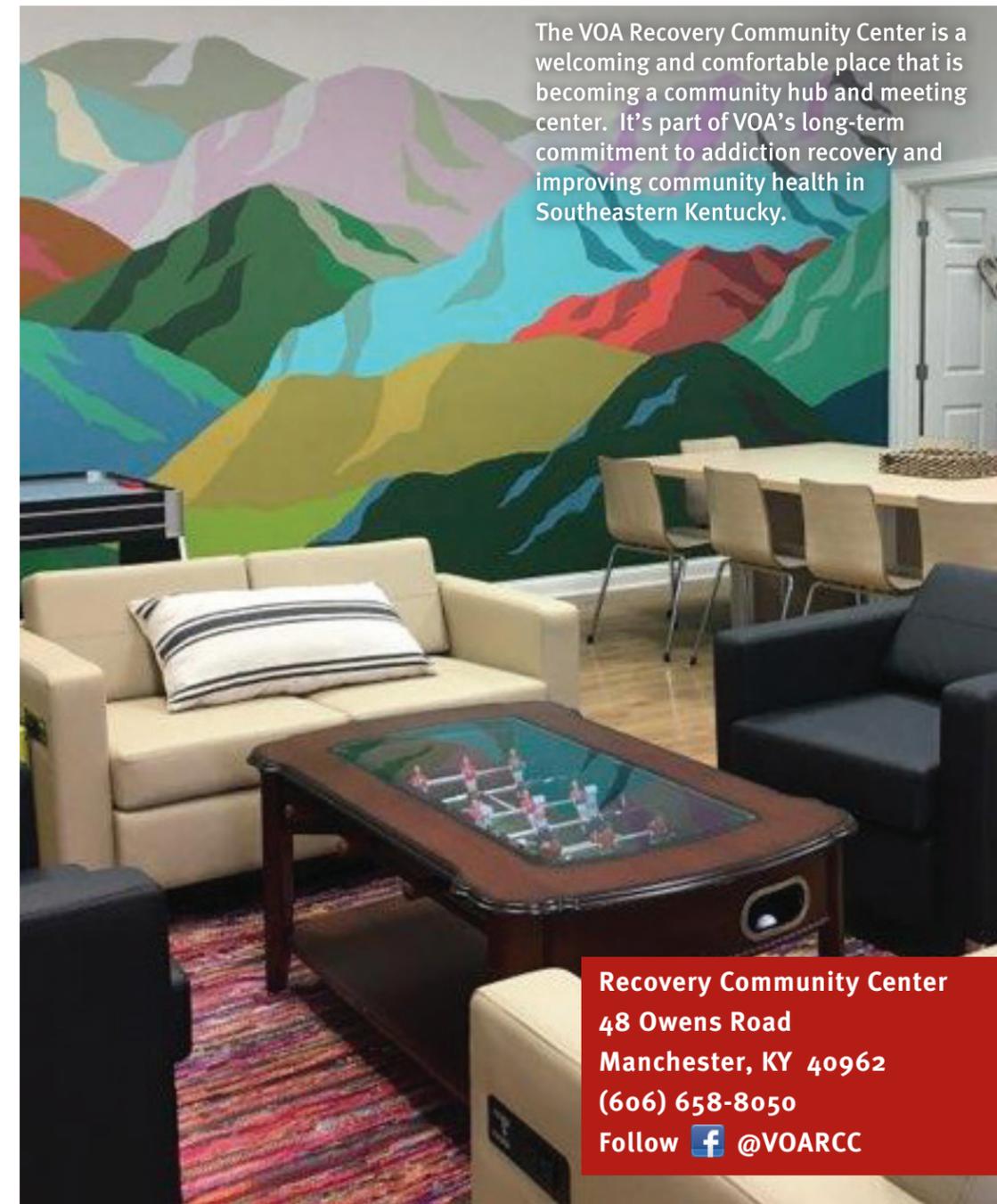
"We've seen so many people come here who didn't want to get embedded into the community. They might want to invest some money or start a program and then go on their way. I was just so impressed that VOA wanted to learn and be part of the community," Farmer said.

As Volunteers of America began work in Manchester, Tracy was among many leaders who were instrumental in making connections and helping VOA become a member of the giving and tight-knit southeastern Kentucky community. The Axis Coffee Shop & Gathering Place, which is an outreach of the Manchester Gospel Mission, a local church pastored by Tracy's father Tess Lipps, is adjacent to the Recovery Community Center.

Axis donated the building that became the Recovery Community Center and is an essential partner in helping it thrive and become a community hub for any resident who needs access to crucial addiction recovery resources.

For Tracy – and so many Manchester area residents – helping VOA to help more people is simply a way of life.

"The first time you visit Manchester you're a visitor, but the second time you're one of us. The staff at VOA are one of us now," Tracy said.



The VOA Recovery Community Center is a welcoming and comfortable place that is becoming a community hub and meeting center. It's part of VOA's long-term commitment to addiction recovery and improving community health in Southeastern Kentucky.

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Community leader Tracy Farmer with her daughter Ashton at the Axis Coffee Shop and Gathering Place next to the Recovery Community Center.

Still, there are tough problems to solve, and VOA is committed to providing long-term solutions.

"Our work started as solving for an addiction crisis, but the more we have built community around our work here, it has become clear that we can't just solve for addiction, we have to solve for housing, we have to look at job creation and economic development opportunities that go along with it. We are so grateful to be here working in this beautiful community. We're here to stay," Hancock said.