

Drug treatment facility opens in Manhasset

BY MAX ZAHN

A new substance abuse treatment center opened its doors in Manhasset, where people suffering from addiction can receive a variety of outpatient services, including individual and group counseling as well as family intervention.

The center is one of six outpatient facilities on Long Island operated by Seafield, which has provided substance abuse treatment for 31 years.

Approximately 100 people attended a ribbon cutting and open house at the facility at 585 Plandome Road last Wednesday. Among those at the event was Republican state Senate candidate Elaine Phillips as well as representatives from the Nassau County Department of Social Services and New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services. Private therapists, health insurance officials and other area professionals in related fields toured the facility.

Mark Epley, the Seafield CEO, said the decision to open an outpatient center in Manhasset did not come in response to a particularly acute need in the area, but rather a dearth of services. "There are not a lot of treatment options in the North Shore," he said.

The region's rate of substance abuse is right around the average for the State of New York, he said, which stands at 12 percent among those 12 years old or older, according to the New York State Department of Health.

An analysis of calls received and treatment provided by other Seafield locations found that many addicts from the North Shore were traveling long distances to seek services that were not available in their vicinity, Epley said. That long trip can prove a significant barrier for those looking for help. People rarely travel more



Seafield CEO Mark Epley with Village of Flower Hill Mayor Elaine Phillips.



The lobby of the new substance abuse center in Manhasset

than 20 minutes for treatment, Epley added.

The treatment center is run by Kieran (Dwyer) Gallogly, the executive director, who said its services target the professionals and parents who make up a large portion of the North Shore communities.

"I grew up in Manhasset and went to Manhasset High School," she said. "I understand the needs of people who go to work at 6:30 a.m. and have kids playing sports after school."

In addition to holding therapy sessions before and after normal work hours, the center emphasizes offerings that help family members handle living with an addicted relative. "Substance abuse doesn't just affect the addict; it affects the whole family," said Pedro Pereira, the clinical director at the facility, who also lives in Manhasset.

Epley said that Seafield has received some complaints from Manhasset residents worried that the center will bring addicts to the neighborhood. He played down the criticism, saying "there are comments anytime we go into a new location." Also, Seafield has heard concerns that prescription drugs will be distributed at the facility, which will not be the case, he said.

Though they rejected the stigma attached to addiction, the Seafield officials understand that it's a reality. They underscored their commitment to confidentiality for all patients who seek treatment at the facility.

Many residents will never know exactly who the Seafield Manhasset center has helped, or how it has done so.

"Everyone's life has been adversely affected directly or indirectly by drug and alcohol abuse," said Epley. "We're here to make positive changes in people's lives."

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