

A place of renewal

A Medford halfway house named for a toddler killed in a crash involving a drunk driver needs donations so it can keep helping addicted women

By **JONEL ALECCIA**
Mail Tribune

Heather Frederick would have been 15 now, a dark-eyed, dark-haired high school freshman still adored by a doting grandmother.

But in 1988, a drunken driver speeding 70 mph around a curve on Vilas Road in Central Point smashed head-on into a car driven by Heather's grandma, Betty Frederick.

Heather, a 15-month-old toddler, was killed; Betty Frederick spent months recovering in a wheelchair.

Today, the most visible legacy of Heather's life is the Medford halfway house that bears her name. Heather's Haven, a transitional center for women addicts has been Betty Frederick's answer to grief for a decade.

"We wanted to make something good out of something bad," says Frederick, now 60.

She and her husband, Max, 63, created the refuge tucked into a 1910 Craftsman-style bungalow at 726 W. Fourth St. Now entering its 10th year of operation, Heather's Haven has helped an estimated 3,000 female alcoholics and drug addicts seek sobriety, organizers say.

Privately funded and privately run, the center has quietly pursued its goal: to give women committed to living without substance abuse a safe and affordable place to learn how.

For the first time, however, the operation with a \$50,000 annual budget has decided to seek public notice and, organizers hope, public



Mail Tribune / Jim Craven

It's been 10 years since Betty and Max Frederick opened Heather's Haven, a transitional house for women on the road to recovery from substance abuse. For the first time, the Fredericks are asking for public donations to help keep the center operating.

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Betty Frederick,

explaining why she and her husband founded Heather's Haven

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donations. The first step is an open house planned from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. today at the site.

"You're talking about people who are so mission- and purpose-driven, they don't think to go out and ask for money," says Eric Guyer, director of the Jackson County Youth Shelter and a new Heather's Haven board member. "I want to help them articulate their story so it will be known."

The simple story is that Betty Frederick was determined that the death of her first grandchild would not be in vain.

After recovering from her injuries, Betty Frederick researched issues surrounding substance abuse and discovered that the period just after rehabilitation is especially difficult for vulnerable addicts. She and Max, a retired TRW scientist, bought the dilapidated Fourth Street house in 1992.

They decided to renovate it and open it to women emerging from treatment.

From the start, support was difficult to find. The Fredericks briefed the Medford City Council on the project, not because they wanted money, but just to offer information. The response was not warm, Max Frederick recalls.

"Betty said, 'I don't care what you think, it's going to work,'" he says.

And it has, though not without some bumps. Early on, the couple learned that they had to hire on-site management and they had to establish firm rules: Incoming

clients must be clean and sober for 30 days; intoxicants are forbidden and so are overnight visits from men.

There's an 11 p.m. curfew on weekdays, 1 a.m. on weekends and everything is monitored.

"We learned that I am a very trusting person," Betty Frederick says ruefully. "We also learned lessons about keeping things locked up."

Women who don't want to abide by house rules are invited to leave, the Fredericks say.

"Some have left after one day," says Max Frederick.

But many others have stayed for months, even years, paying the \$300 a month rent that provides about half the cost of running the house, the Fredericks say.

Tania Pitetti, the house manager, was a client when she came to Heather's Haven. Seven years sober now, she's a health assistant at the Jackson County detoxification unit. She says her life has been transformed.

"I had like a year before I realized that I had great morals and great boundaries, that I was a great person," says Pitetti, 42.

She credits the safety and the structure of Heather's Haven with helping women remain sober.

"I think that the addiction lifestyle has no boundaries," she says. "There's just the lifestyle in general with the men and the partying. You bring it with you."

At Heather's Haven, women learn, some for the first time, what it's like to exist without substances

to cushion the bumps and dips of daily life, she says. That can include learning simple chores like making a bed or more difficult tasks such as learning to resolve conflict peacefully.

It's an important service, says Rita Sullivan, director of OnTrack Inc., an addictions recovery center in Medford. Quality transitional housing, especially for women, is in short supply locally.

"We've used it a lot and we wish there were more," she says of Heather's Haven. "What I can tell you is, every time there's an empty bed, either we or some other agency signs right up for it."

Pitetti's tale is one of hundreds of success stories from Heather's Haven, but the organizers are candid about the difficulty of maintaining sobriety. They estimate that about one-third of the women they house will stay sober, or about 100 of the 300 women served each year.

There are times when that is discouraging, when it seems like too much work for too little reward, Betty Frederick says. Then she remembers that turning one life around, let alone 100 lives or 1,000, could have made the difference with the drunken driver that killed her granddaughter.

"You always keep trying," says Pitetti. "The worse thing that can happen is to give up. We never give up."

Reach reporter JoNel Aleccia at 776-4465, or e-mail jaleccia@mailtribune.com