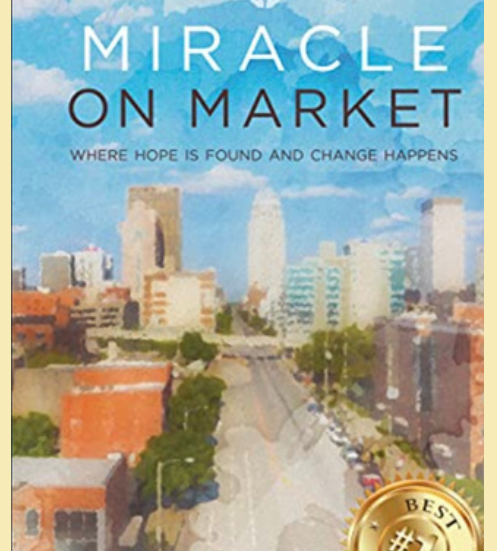


RECOVERY

The official newsletter of the RCORP Rural Center of Excellence on SUD Recovery at the Fletcher Group



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A MODEL THAT WORKS!



by Founder and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ernie Fletcher

Named a “Model That Works ” by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, The Healing Place in Louisville, Kentucky inspired me to launch the Recovery Kentucky program when I was governor of Kentucky—a program that grew to 17 different men's and women's facilities that have helped thousands of Kentuckians recover from addiction.

In 2017, my wife and I founded The Fletcher Group with the express purpose of extending nationwide the innovative, peer-driven model Jay Davidson first pioneered on Market Street, "where hope is found and change happens."

Thanks to a HRSA grant, the RCORP Rural Center of Excellence on SUD Recovery at the Fletcher Group is now helping rural communities across America launch a new era in safe, sustainable recovery housing and best-practice services.

This issue of our newsletter tells the improbable story of how an overnight shelter grew to become a national model. It also commemorates the life and work of Jay Davidson whose legacy of undying devotion and ceaseless innovation will benefit generations to come.



FROM NO PLAN TO THE PLAN

The Healing Place is today a highly structured, tried-and-true model. But it wasn't always that way.

"I didn't have the foggiest idea what I was doing," says Jay Davidson of the day in 1991 when he was hired to serve as director. "They got a hold of my resume and saw that I had been in the military and had a social work degree. They weren't very concerned about what I did with the degree, but figured the military experience would help me run the program."

By living in the shelter the first two weeks, Davidson gained first-hand knowledge of what it's like to be homeless. He was also struck by the high number who had a Substance Use Disorder. "I was doing everything, including the check-in," says Davidson. "I was also nine years sober and knew from my own experience with AA's 12-Step Program that the only way our clients were going to get off the street and turn their lives around was through some kind of recovery program."

Early in his tenure, when told of severe abuses and asked by the board's chairman what he would do, Davidson answered, "I'm going to go back and fire all the staff. And that's what I did."

The innumerable twists and turns that followed were recounted by Davidson in the Fletcher Group's most recent webinar (see link in top right corner) and in Davidson's new book, *Miracle on Market* (see page 4).



WATCH THE VIDEO

of our December 5 webinar with The Healing Place Executive Director Jay Davidson.



But the important thing to remember is that Davidson's success came not from book learning or imitation, but from ceaseless real-time empathy with those in need.

"My journey winds through Vietnam, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Israel, military bases around the world and even a carnival," says Davidson. "It's a journey filled with the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, from feeling on top of the world to the pit of despair. But for three decades I've had the immense pleasure of watching men and women challenge the demon known as addiction and begin new lives in recovery. Their stories of sobriety wouldn't be possible without my own unlikely story. That's why I still ask myself, even to this day: How in the world did I get here?"

By The Numbers

8,000

Alumni

8,000

Served annually

150,000

Served since 1991

\$300,000

Budget in 1991

\$13,000,000

Budget today

THE POWER OF PEERS

The effectiveness—and the economy—of the peer-driven social model are today well-known. "As governor of Kentucky," says Fletcher Group Founder and Chief Medical Officer Ernie Fletcher, "I witnessed with my own eyes the power of the social model—how acceptance and support in a nurturing environment can open the door to lasting recovery. We of course support the clinical model, but you can't transform lives without the compassion, unconditional love, and accountability peers create for one another."

"The power of the social model comes from the credibility of the helper," says Jay Davidson. "One person guiding another through similar challenges. It's the sharing of experience, strength, and hope. That's the 'Gift of Giving' that makes the social model so powerful."

Then and Now

There was a time, however, when the only 'mentors' were clinicians and the 'power of peers,' as we know it today, was yet to be discovered. Davidson remembers when he took the audacious step of creating a 'dry' recovery program that required sobriety for enrollment. "The next day there were protesters in the street stopping traffic and passing out handbills. By 10:30 that morning I had all four TV stations and the local newspapers saying: How can you be so cruel as to kick people out of a homeless shelter?"

Board meetings were usually lightly attended, but the emergency gathering that night drew all 18 members. "We took a vote and wouldn't you know it: Nine voted wet and nine voted dry. So I said maybe we can do both, with the overnight wet part upstairs and the dry recovery program downstairs. The board asked what I would need and I said more staff. They asked how much it would cost and I said maybe a hundred grand. They said okay and went out and got it. That's how our recovery program began in January of 1993, with ten men mentored by four alumni from the River City Jail. We didn't even call them mentors back then. We called them elders."

The Healing Place today has over 8,000 alumni who continue to share their positive recovery experience. "The alumni are your key to success," says Davidson. "That mutual aid idea that originated with Alcoholics Anonymous is indispensable."



Findings from the Recovery Center Outcome Study

2024 Report

YES, IT WORKS!

Now in its 13th year, the nation's first multi-year systematic evaluation documents the continuing success of the Recovery Kentucky model we promote.

[CLICK HERE](#)



According to Davidson, peer mentorship is particularly effective at helping people pinpoint the source of their story and the beginning point of their journey.

"Those misusing substances can create an incident that has lasting consequences. But as time goes by, those consequences become disassociated from the original incident. You'll hear them say, 'Why is this happening to me? I don't understand.' But their peers know why it's happening and what's caused it. That's how peer-driven therapeutic communities create accountability. They help people connect the dots and assume responsibility for their actions and choices. It can be hard, but there's no better way of changing behavior."

CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS

For recovery homes, especially those in rural areas where resources may be scarce, alumni are the key to both individual recovery and a facility's economic sustainability. What you may not know, says Jay Davidson, is that alumni are also the key to funding.

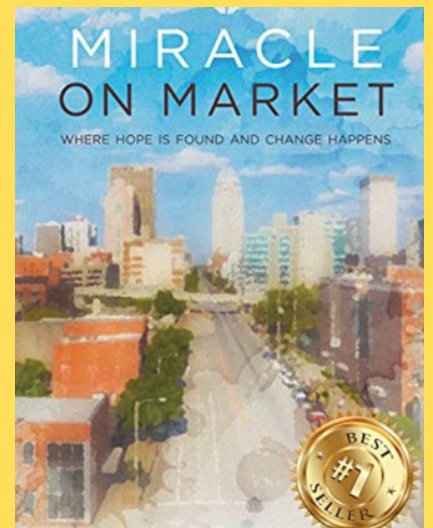
"The biggest selling points for our model are alumni testimonials," says Davidson. "As all storytellers and moviegoers know, it's the overcoming of pain and loss that touch and move people the most. That's why alumni testimony, particularly when it's done in person, is worth millions. We use that approach every time we need to win the support of a neighborhood association, a business group, a chamber of commerce, or any other organization that can help us."

If at all possible, it's best to showcase an alumnus from the very town or community you're presenting to. "You can say here's a hometown guy, one of your own, someone you might even know who's successfully used this model to turn his or her life around." Taking an inventory of one's life in front of others isn't easy, of course, but it shows people that recovery does work, that belief in a better day is worth supporting.

Alumni testimonials work wonders in other ways, too, by reducing stigma, countering NIMBYism, and helping the public understand the true nature of recovery as a lifelong process that, despite setbacks, can make an enormous difference on many different levels.

That brings Davidson to the subject of ROI. "You've got to talk about Return On Investment. We always stress the cost efficiency of the social model by comparing the low per-day expense of roughly \$30 per person with the social and financial benefits of returning someone to society as a positive role model and an exemplary student, employee, son, daughter, mother or father. That giving back/community asset pitch is crucial when talking to potential funders. We calculate, for example, that we save Metro Louisville taxpayers more than \$13 million every year in judicial and prison costs and more than \$7 million each year in emergency room visits and other healthcare costs."

"We have objective data showing that that this model matches or exceeds anything in the country," says Ernie Fletcher who used The Healing Place program as a model for the 17 Recovery Kentucky facilities he helped



READ THE BOOK

How an overnight shelter became a nationwide model, by Jay Davidson.

[CLICK HERE](#)



launch when governor. (Readers interested in that data, as well as a tool for calculating ROI, are encouraged to visit fletchergroup.org.)

A Legacy of Hope

Davidson appreciates the Fletcher Group's promotion of the model he developed by trial and error over three decades. "We're doing everything we can to bring it to as many people as possible," says Fletcher.

"I'm so proud to be part of all this," adds Davidson.

"That's why I decided to write a book about it, in the hope that it can be passed on and continue answering that desperate cry for help that first inspired me to do this work."