



State and local government officials, Chrysalis House representatives and benefactors cut the ribbon. Chrysalis House, a substance abuse and mental health treatment center in Crownsville, held a ribbon-cutting and tour of its newly renovated facility, which will allow it to serve 40% more people Thursday. **PAUL W. GILLESPIE/CAPITAL GAZETTE**

Chrysalis House opens new building

By Dana Munro

When then-26-year-old Leslie Beers arrived at Chrysalis House in August 2012 in shackles and handcuffs, she was terrified. She was sent to the Crownsville treatment center for women to fight her addiction to opioids and alcohol.

Ten years later, she watched the construction going on down the block at the place that helped her turn her life around. A \$7.3 million expansion has been in the works for 19 months. Last week, Chrysalis cut the ribbon on its new Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Clinical Wing and expanded child development center.

The expansion will allow Chrysalis to serve more of its target clientele — women who are single, pregnant or mothers in need of substance use treatment. When Beers first entered the program, the mother of a 3-year-old daughter, she was unsure whether the program would be able to help her.

"I went in very broken, immature, naïve,

an adult with no adult skills," Beers, now 36, said Thursday over the phone.

Six months into her stay at the inpatient facility, Beers said she was clear-headed and confident she could get better.

"I was still in this place where I had no freedom, I was around all these women, all their children and just like drama and chaos but I had this sense of peace that I had never known before," Beers said. "I had people in my life that cared about me, truly. I had genuine relationships with my family and I realized it was because I had done this work on myself."

With 20 more beds in the inpatient and transitional housing areas, the nonprofit will now be able to serve about 130 women annually, a 40% increase in capacity, said the organization's executive director, Christopher McCabe.

The expansion will nearly double the size of the child development center.

"We were woefully undersized for the

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Leslie Beers and Kylie at the beach in 2022. Beers now works as the coalition coordinator for Annapolis Substance Abuse Prevention, a coalition designed to help prevent and reduce alcohol and drug use among young people in Annapolis. **COURTESY PHOTO**

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number of children that we were serving and want to serve," said McCabe, a former secretary of human resources under Gov. Bob Ehrlich and a state senator for Howard and Montgomery counties.

The project was funded by more than \$4 million from state government entities and other funding from Anne Arundel County government and individuals, groups and businesses.

The top floor of the new wing will house beds and offices for staff. The first floor will have individual rooms for meetings between therapists and clients. The wing will be the complex's new hub for counseling and therapy activities including art therapy, creative writing courses, drug education and relapse prevention classes.

The addition is much needed, added Beers, who now works as the coalition coordinator for Annapolis Substance Abuse Prevention, a coalition designed to help prevent and reduce alcohol and drug use among young people in Annapolis. Simply knowing there's a place available to people in recovery can be helpful, she said.

In 2015, when McCabe came on as executive direc-

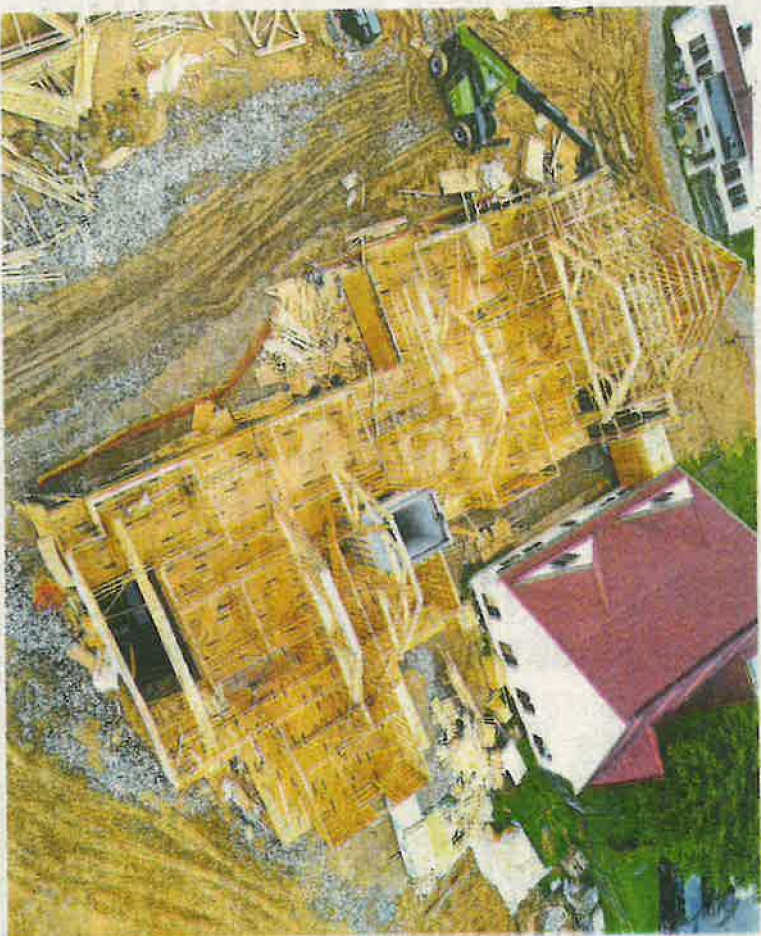
tor, the opioid epidemic was on the rise. He and the team saw the need to add more space.

"Internally, we were saying, 'We want to do more,'" McCabe said. "We believe that our mission is to empower women to build a better life for themselves by literally transforming their lives by our services."

McCabe said single women are usually in the inpatient unit for about 90 days and tend to stay for another four months while participating in outpatient programs. Mothers usually stay six to eight months on site, and then can live in supportive housing around the county that Chrysalis leases. All the women they serve are on public insurance, so they don't pay for Chrysalis services, he said.

Beers said her daughter, now 13, vividly remembers their time spent at the supportive housing — the home, bedsheets, the things they did, the things they watched. It was also a time when her parents started to trust the work Beers was doing on herself. At 18 months sober, they gave her a key to the house again.

Around this time, Beers learned there was a warrant out for her arrest for violating probation. She spoke with her outpatient counselor at Chrysalis who advised her on how to



The Chrysalis House expansion includes building its new Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Clinical Wing. COURTESY PHOTO

proceed. She didn't want to disappoint the mentor she'd grown so close to.

"I handled that situation with dignity and grace because I knew it was the right thing to do to turn myself in. I just never would have done that before," Beers said. "I had so much support when that happened."

While there are several other addiction clinics

close by, it's important that women and moms have a place of their own, McCabe said, otherwise they might be prone to try to hide their addiction so they're not at risk of being separated from their kids. Once kids are "in the system," it's very hard to get them out, Beers said.

Chrysalis also allows clients to be with their kids, which is critical, Beers said.

Often times, when a mom starts to get sober, she wants to see her kids again, she said. That ultimately can send them to using drugs again.

"Giving women a place where they can safely get sober and be supported while having their children or relearning all those parenting skills is so inval-

able," Beers said. "I'm very passionate about that."
"I think one of the really neat things is, in a sense, you may have 32 moms here," McCabe said. "Even the moms who don't have children here act as moms for the women who have children here."

In her first few years after her time at Chrysalis, despite relapsing, Beers graduated with honors from community college, got full custody of her daughter, completed five years of supervised probation and paid off nearly \$30,000 of restitution.

Then, in early 2020, tragedy struck. Her boyfriend, newly freed from incarceration, was found dead of an overdose in February. She's been sober since then.

The next obstacle ahead for Chrysalis will be hiring staff to meet the needs of the extra clients during a nationwide shortage of healthcare workers and mental health experts. McCabe said he hopes the expansion will show health care workers how dedicated Chrysalis is to helping people.

"That's been the biggest challenge in this environment for behavioral health providers is finding and retaining staff," McCabe said. "Because it's high-stress work, a lot of competition for employees in new programs that are starting up."