

Transforming lives

Jefferson House helps indigent men overcome substance abuse

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The Michigan Catholic

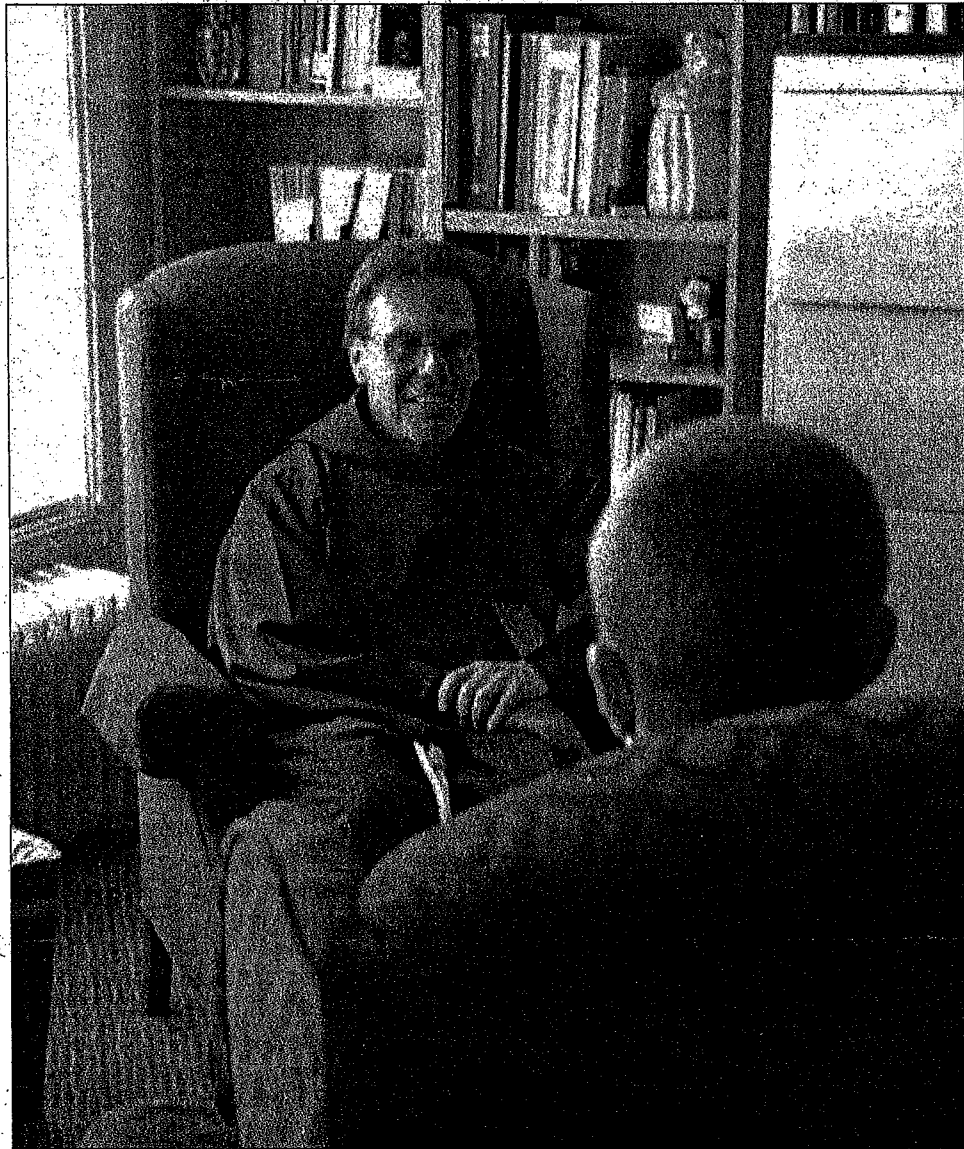
DETROIT — The story of Jefferson House Capuchin Community Center is a story of lives transformed through a combination of modern substance abuse therapy and the age-old loving charism of the Capuchin Franciscan friars.

"I am now living the way God intended me to live. I now know what I need to stay in my recovery," says Michael, a graduate of the program.

Michael (not his real name — all names of program participants are changed to protect their identity) came to Jefferson House after two other treatment programs failed to have any lasting effect. "Back then I was caught up with myself. I didn't think I could stay clean for one day. I had hit bottom," he says.

Jefferson House is a residential treatment program for indigent men with substance abuse problems, and part of the ministry of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen.

Michael says Jefferson House made him work hard to open up to others and to look for the positive: "J House's approach was different. It made me look inside me. It's more of a mental process vs. a physical process."



**Capuchin
Bro. Joe
Monachino
counsels a
resident at
Jefferson
House, a
substance
abuse
treatment
program in
Detroit.**

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And he credits its director, Capuchin Bro. Joseph Monachino, for helping him succeed. "Bro. Joe worked with me to get the 'stuff' out that was causing me to do drugs. Once I started sharing, I could see a difference. Even now, when I find I get cocky, I realize I need to step aside, I need to listen," says Michael.

Marvin, another graduate, says, "J House was a blessing. My life was out of control."

Now 58, Marvin started using drugs at 14. He started using heroin in 1968, and took up crack cocaine in 1995. Drugs "became a way of life for me," he says.

"There's a fine line between doing drugs and functioning, and doing drugs and not functioning. I crossed that line in '95. I was high so long that I didn't know the difference," Marvin says.

Marvin was in three treatment centers before Jefferson House. "You need to be tired of being sick and tired. I now see that it's up to each individual. People stop when they're ready," he says.

Situated on East Jefferson Avenue in Detroit's Indian Village area, Jefferson House occupies a large old house that originally belonged to a wealthy family and

later housed Detroit's Hare Krishna community.

Since 1979, it has helped more than 725 men kick their addictions — men who have been through other programs, but found themselves right back where they started.

Those who complete the Jefferson House program will not only have overcome their addiction, but also have a job and be ready to move into an apartment by the time they leave.

With up to 12 residents at a time staying six to nine months, the Jefferson House program is longer than most other programs, and Bro. Monachino says it is "a very spiritual program, because I can see how God works in people's lives."

"The people who come here have lost everything. They are spiritually, physically and emo-

To help

Donations to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen benefit Jefferson House and other ministries — two soup kitchen locations, a food distribution program, and children's programs. Earmark checks specifically for Jefferson House. Send to: Capuchin Soup Kitchen, 1820 Mount Elliott Ave., Detroit 48207.

tionally bankrupt, and Jefferson House gives them the opportunity to work on the recovery of their physical and emotional state, and their spiritual state," he says.

Because it follows the 12-step approach made famous

first by Alcoholics Anonymous and adopted by other addiction recovery programs, all of the residents who enter the program have acknowledged the need for a "higher power" in their life, and that their recovery will come with the help of that higher power, Bro. Monachino says.

Although the AA approach does not spell out the nature of that higher power, he says those who succeed in the program are almost always the ones for whom that higher power is God.

"I find the people who are the

most successful will either go back to their spiritual roots or will embrace another religion," Bro. Monachino says.

While about 30 percent of those who enter the highly structured program will leave after a few weeks, those who complete it have a good chance of staying clean and sober.

"We track them for five years, and we find a 70- to 72-percent rate of success after five years," Bro. Monachino says.

A portion of any contribution to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen goes to support Jefferson House, but donors may specify all of their contribution should go to it.

Besides welcoming donations for current operations, the Capuchins have also established the Edmund T. Ahee Endowment Fund to help ensure funding for Capuchin Soup Kitchen ministries in the future. The endowment is named to honor the support of the Ahee family of Edmund T. Ahee Jewelers in Grosse Pointe Woods, which sponsors the annual Souper Summer fund-raiser at Comerica Park.