

NEW TREATMENT CENTER OPENS IN FAIRMONT, WV

WHEN OFFICIALS FROM VALLEY HealthCare System celebrated the opening of their new treatment center in Pleasant Valley, W.Va., there was also a somber moment as the community remembered those who suffered from a substance use disorder.

The new Valley Treatment Center was completed in March, and the official ribbon-cutting ceremony took place on May 24.

Set on a nine-acre campus, the center has room to expand, although the three finished buildings amount to 40,000 square feet. The center was designed to accommodate people in all stages of recovery, including detox, respite care and peer-supported follow up.

“The funding for our new treatment center is from a \$3 million grant from the state that we augmented with \$4 million to make it more comprehensive,” Valley COO Gerry Schmidt said. “The state funding came from the Ryan Brown Fund, which is administered through DHHR.”

The Ryan Brown Addiction Prevention and Recovery Fund was started after Cece and Bobby Brown lost their son Ryan to an overdose in 2014. “Ryan was 27,” Cece said. “There was so much grieving, and we didn’t know how to cope.”

“I wanted to blame someone,” Cece said, “but we knew that wouldn’t do any good.”

Over the course of the next year, and without much healing, the Browns’ son Aaron spoke up. “Aaron said, ‘Mom, you can either focus on one, or you can help a hundred,’” Cece said. That thoughtful advice from their son became a turning point for the Browns.

MORE ...



Photo by Dustin Merrill

“I wanted to blame someone but we knew that wouldn’t do any good.”

— Cece Brown, mother of Ryan Brown, a WVU student who died of an overdose. Cece and her husband, Bobby, started a fund that would lead to the construction of the new treatment center in Fairmont, W.Va.

Cece and Bobby began speaking to legislators about the possibility of creating a fund to help families and individuals in crisis. They talked about the idea to friends, clergy and anyone who would listen. In 2017, the West Virginia legislature voted in favor of creating the Ryan Brown Addiction Prevention and Recovery Fund as a special revenue account in the state's treasury.

When DHHR awarded \$3 million to Valley Healthcare System, the timing couldn't have been better. Opioid overdoses had been climbing throughout the state and Valley had begun looking at the possibility of building a new facility in Fairmont.

As the plans were solidified, Valley's leadership team and board of directors agreed that the treatment center would need to provide the full range of services that are needed for substance use disorders.

"This is an expansion of services that have been around since the 1980s," Valley CEO Brian Sharp said. "We're doubling the number of people we can help. At our Morgantown location we could serve eight people. Now we can help 16 at a time."

Construction began in 2020, and was completed in March 2022, when the first residents began to move into the center for treatment. The three buildings were designed specifically to provide separate facilities for men and women.

In their decision to award funding to build Valley's new treatment center, state officials confirmed their commitment to help West Virginians with substance use disorders.

"This new facility will provide expanded substance use disorder treatment access for Fairmont and the North Central region of the state," said Christina Mullins, Commissioner of the Bureau for Behavioral Health at the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources. "We are pleased to have Valley Treatment Center join the other Ryan Brown projects to provide high quality care to the residents of West Virginia."

"At our Morgantown location we could serve eight people. Now we can help 16 at a time."

— Brian Sharp, CEO, Valley HealthCare System