

GAAMHA

Women's Supportive Housing Program

2017 Activation Fund Grant





Opened June 1, 2018

With the help of an Activation Fund grant of nearly \$100,000, GAAMHA, Inc. opened a Supportive Housing Program for Women in Gardner, an area with high unmet need.

The program provides housing, a safe environment, and case management services for women with substance use disorders.

The Foundation's funding was used for remodeling work and to purchase appliances such as a washer/dryer and refrigerators and living room and bedroom furniture.

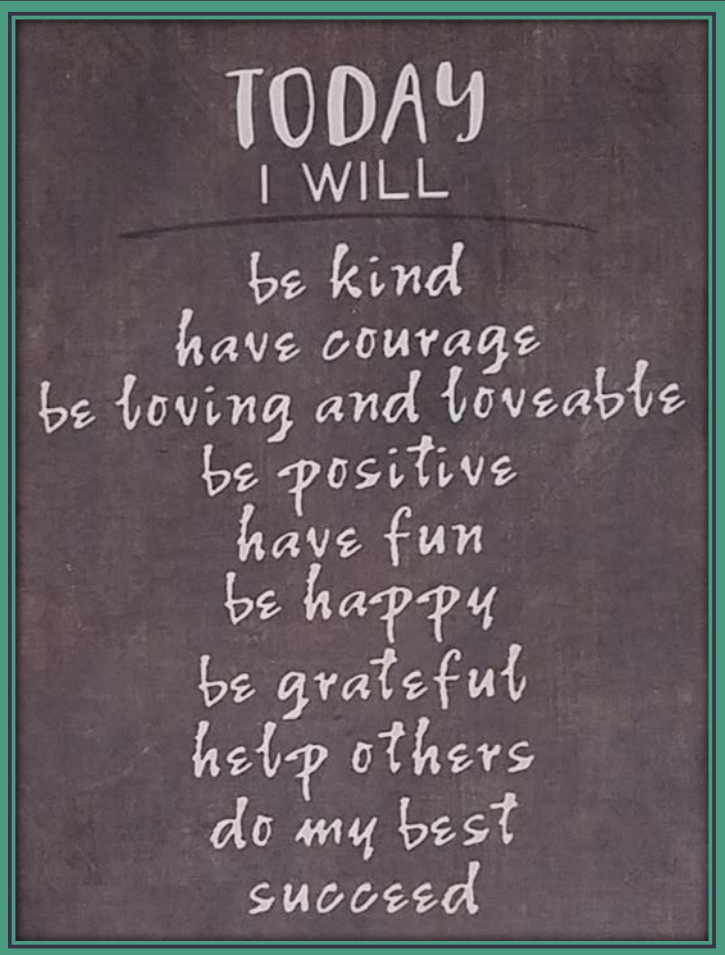


The program has filled a void for support services for women with Substance Use Disorders in the North Central area, becoming a next step for those who had recently completed programs or were already in recovery.

Full occupancy occurred within 60 days of opening with additional women being placed on a waitlist. 75% of the women participating in this program have been referred by other providers of substance use services.



This project is sustained through funding from the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services and rent collected from residents.



TELEGRAM & GAZETTE



Alyssa M. Crawford, who has struggled with substance abuse for years, is living at GAAMHA's new supportive housing program in Gardner. [T&G STAFF/CHRISTINE PETERSON]

'I need help or I am going to die'

Substance abuser talks about road toward recovery

By Paula J. Owen
Correspondent

GARDNER — Alyssa M. Crawford struggled with sub-

A Nichols College graduate working in the accounting field, Ms. Crawford, 32, is working to get her life back together at GAAMHA's new supportive housing program on West Broadway for women with substance disorders.

She started using at age 10. she

RECOVERY

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boyfriend did, she said.

"I was using when he used," Ms. Crawford said.

When she left college in Florida and moved back to Worcester, she continued her education at Nichols College, she said. She graduated with a finance degree in 2013, still using and drinking a lot. Then, she left her boyfriend and started on a downward spiral.

"I was single and decided to be party girl," she said. "I was out all the time and drank."

After an entire weekend of partying with drugs and alcohol and blacking out, Ms. Crawford said she had had enough.

"Monday morning when I woke up, I decided I wanted to die or do something," she said. "I called my family and said, 'I need help or I am going to die.'"

Her family rallied around her, she said, and she started

my husband to have an addict wife and have to babysit me anymore," she said. "I asked for the divorce because I wanted better for him. He was an amazing man, but would never fully understand. I felt I put him through enough."

Ms. Crawford said she knew for a successful recovery she needed to get out of Worcester. She went through a 30-day rehab program in Ashby and was looking for somewhere to go from there, she said, when her research led her to GAAMHA's women support housing program that opened in June last year. She moved into the home in August straight out of the program in Ashby, she said. She is now house manager and is working at Dunkin Donuts.

Ms. Crawford said she likes that residents are required to set goals, go to meetings, do chores and make curfew in the program. They are also submitted to drug testing and must work or volunteer.

"I am a good fit for the

death."

Tracy L. Hutchinson, CEO of GAAMHA, said the agency purchased the home in 2017 and completed \$100,000 in renovations with a grant from the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts.

GAAMHA has five housing programs including the one for women on West Broadway in addition to supportive and permanent housing programs for men including the Carl E. Dahl House at Cass Farm in Athol, a private-pay therapeutic farm supportive housing program where residents work with animals; and residential programs for men or women, all near downtown Gardner with access to public transportation. Additionally, the agency opened another women's housing program Jan. 3 in Greenfield, Mr. Hutchinson said, that will accommodate up to 12 women.

"Our programs are person-centered," Ms. Hutchinson said. "We ask, 'Where are you and what do you want to accomplish?'"

Funded through the

"Since 2013 I tried everything. It wasn't until I moved into this house that I got a stable footing and started working to the best of my ability and concentrating on recovery... There are expectations in this house that are followed up on and you are held accountable. They hold up a higher standard and expect a lot for you, and a good recovery means life or death."

- GAAMHA House Manager
Alyssa Crawford



Thankful