

Inspired by daughter's struggle, Green Bay mother opens nonprofit rehab facility

Paula Jolly of Green Bay wants to bring hope to women suffering from alcohol and drug addiction as the new year begins.

As the mother of a daughter who died from her addictions, Jolly has dedicated her life to trying to spare other families the same grief. That is inspired her to open Amanda's House, a sober living environment in Green Bay.

'On my side of the family was alcoholism,' Jolly said. 'On Amanda's dad's side of the family was alcoholism and gambling. She was predisposed to that. She did the normal things in high school like drinking, but then, in 2009, she got a sports injury playing adult soccer.'

The doctor prescribed opioids for an entire year, and by 2010 when the doctor cut her off, Amanda was desperate for the drugs. She found a friend who worked in a doctor's office and they figured out how to call in prescriptions. Thus began a cycle of getting arrested, going to rehab, getting out, relapsing, going to jail and going back to rehab.

During the time, she had two children that she lost custody of. But she also had a mother who believed in her and never gave up the belief that Amanda would be able to overcome addiction.

'At first, I wasn't educated about addiction and gave her money when she called,' Jolly said. 'Once I learned more about it, I started saying no to money and would offer to pump gas or give her something instead of money that would be spent on drugs. But the more that I did this, the more she withdrew.'

From 2010 to 2015, Amanda stopped communicating with her mom because she wasn't getting the money she requested. Finally, after years of silence, Jolly got a surprise call from her daughter asking if she would adopt her soon-to-be-born child. She was in severe addiction and pregnant.

Then, before giving birth, Amanda was arrested again. While she was in prison, Jolly and her husband finalized the adoption of Amanda's

daughter, Faith. Once she was born, the Jollys struggled as they cared for Faith. Born addicted, the baby spent three weeks crying as she went through withdrawal.

Meanwhile, the cycle continued. When Jolly hoped her daughter was recovering, another relapse would occur. From living through the ups and downs, Jolly concluded that a major issue with the rehab centers is that many times women were leaving too quickly because the rehab facilities separated them from their children.

With Amanda, she began to plan a rehab facility modeled after ones in Milwaukee and Appleton that allowed children to stay with their moms.

'I applied for nonprofit status on Jan. 1, 2020,' Jolly said. 'Amanda died six weeks later on Feb. 20, 2020. I thought, 'I can't do this without her.' But it felt like she was poking at me, and I kept plugging away.'

Along with her husband, Jon, she completed the nonprofit application and received approval about six months later. The next challenge was putting together a business plan.

'I worked in the health insurance industry and had no clue how to write a business plan,' Jolly said. 'A student from NWTTC helped me. For me, there was a lot of guesswork on how to define what I was doing.'

An important part was the mission statement and Jolly decided on, 'Mandolin (the company name) provides safe and supportive transitional housing that will allow women and their children to become independent and productive members of our community. This will be accomplished by providing people a safe place to live for up to two years.'

The business model included the creation of a home where a resident's children could live with their mother during her stay. Jolly said this has been determined to have a significant impact on recovery. In addition, the plan was to provide life skills training, mental health and substance abuse advocacy, and a connection with community resources.

Once the plan was set, the next challenge was finding a space. That took a year.

'I reached out to (realty agents) and we told them what we wanted to do and that we didn't have much money to do it. One had an idea that

we could use a church, but the first number that was thrown out wasn't something we could pay.'

Negotiations continued, and the church agreed to a low-priced rate for the first year.

'We got very lucky,' Jolly said.

They went to work and did the necessary remodeling and painting. When ready for guests, the house consisted of six bedrooms with common areas. Everything is provided except food (it is available nearby at Paul's Pantry). There are program fees, and all guests must sign a contract agreeing to rules and regulations.

Jolly serves as executive director, but also has a board to help in areas where she doesn't have experience. The diverse group of members includes a real estate agent who went to school with Amanda, substance abuse counselors, a secretary and a banker.

She has added to her own skill set, and is a certified recovery coach and peer specialist among other certifications. She earned an associate degree in Human Services from NWTC.

So far, the business model is working. Even before opening in March of 2022, there was a waiting list. And, because Jolly wants to have a high-quality home, Amanda's House is the first sober living facility in Green Bay to become Wisconsin Association of Sober Housing certified.

She is learning much in her journey. One of the biggest challenges has been understanding how to write grants; she has a grant writer helping her. The goal is to hire that person full time when funds are available. Currently, only Jolly and one part-time intern work at the home. The activities and programs are dependent on volunteers; Jolly says she is desperate for more people to join in and help.

A list of volunteer duties and items that are needed is available on its website, [www.mandolin foundation llc.com](http://www.mandolinfoundationllc.com).

Jolly's future goals include expansion so more women and their families can be helped. The current facility combines a church that was built in 1918, a house built in the 1940s and an addition built in the 1980s. The board feels the current location might not be functional in the long term.

While those decisions are being made, Jolly continues the day-to-day work of honoring her daughter by helping others.

'Even though I didn't know what I was getting into, I was open to the fact that I didn't know everything and I like asking for help,' she said. 'I have to remind myself that I'm looking for progress, not perfection. And every day, it helps to remember that I might be saving another parent from going through what I went through.'

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