

On a Mission to Treat Addictions

At the height of his career, Tom Bond had a prestigious job, a house, a company car and a big salary. But the Harford County native says he never felt fulfilled by his fancy job and soon turned to drugs and alcohol. After losing several good jobs over a dozen years, he began bartending, a lifestyle that supported his addiction to cocaine. Soon he was also using heroin and eventually became destitute and homeless.

Bond found an abandoned house in East Baltimore, where he lived until he got locked up. His cellmate told him about the Helping Up Mission, a nonprofit, faith-based mission that offers a residential addictions recovery program. Bond perked up. “I didn’t want to spend another winter without a shower or a roof over my head,” he says.

Today, 13 years since that encounter, Bond is not only clean, but as director of programs for the mission, he’s helped thousands of other homeless men to reclaim their lives through the shelter’s 12-step recovery program, daily classes, and career and spiritual guidance. And for the past several years, Bond and treatment coordinator Michael Gray—another recovering addict—have shored up the mission’s efforts through a partnership with Johns Hopkins addictions experts, who come to the site daily to provide supplemental care.

Launched in 2012, in response to the mission’s request for Johns Hopkins addictions expertise, the Cornerstone Program merges Johns Hopkins’ established clinical addictions treatment with the mission’s spiritual supportive community. “The program enables both organizations to draw from each other’s strengths in a novel way,” says Cornerstone director **Denis Antoine**, who also directs Johns Hopkins’ Motivated Behaviors Unit, an eight-bed inpatient psychiatric program. “You meet the people where they are. If that includes spirituality and church activities, that’s incorporated.”

Staffed by a clinical supervisor, patient coordinator and three counselors, Cornerstone is a five-days-



Johns Hopkins psychiatrist Denis Antoine leaves the 500-bed Helping Up Mission in East Baltimore, where he oversees the Cornerstone program. Since its launch in 2012, the partnership has doubled its capacity and completion rate. Inset: Antoine discusses the program with Tom Bond, left, the shelter’s director of programs, and treatment coordinator Michael Gray.

a-week program that uses individual and group psychotherapy and an evidence-based system of evaluation and reward. Program leaders give various incentives to clients for completed goals, like four hours of exercise and regular attendance.

About 85 percent of the men are referred for psychiatric counseling beyond the mission’s program. And some will require inpatient detoxification. “Many clients have comorbidities like depression, bipolar disorder and HIV—making it important to get the person better now, but also for the long term,” says Antoine.

How does one measure success in a population estimated to experience a 50 percent to 90 percent likelihood of relapse? “The high rate of attendance and just completing the program,” Antoine says, “are significant first steps.”

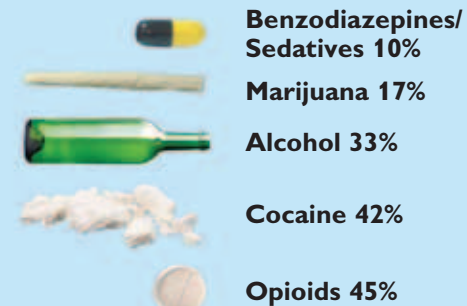
Last April, on the day civil unrest erupted in Baltimore, Antoine stopped by the mission to make sure everyone was OK. People—many with close ties to the community—were tempted to go out but worried that if they did, they’d resume using. Antoine saw a teaching moment. “Whether you experience unrest, a parent dying or divorce,” he told the men, “the key is to ask, how am I going to find a way to stay away from the drugs?”

There’s no magic bullet for addiction, says Bond. “There’s a lot of heartache but a lot of amazing success. In this community within a community, I’m OK, I’m loved, and I can become my true self.” ■

The Uneven Road to Recovery

For Helping Up Mission treatment coordinator Michael Gray, addiction began in the late 1960s, when he started using recreationally but ended up with “a lifestyle” that broke up his marriage and ruined his career as a longshoreman. Desperate for help, Gray came to the mission, completed its program, stayed clean for 10 years, relapsed in 2011, then returned in 2012 dealing with serious medical problems. Among the first to complete the Cornerstone program, Gray admits he dreaded the thought of it. “But once I got to know the counselors—a bunch of people who really want to help—I started to relax,” he says. “They gave me practical coping skills for daily life.”

PREVALENCE OF CLIENT DRUG USE WITHIN 30 DAYS PRIOR TO PROGRAM ENTRY:



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— DENIS ANTOINE



Learn more about the Cornerstone Program: **410-550-2796** and more about the Motivated Behaviors Unit: bit.ly/JHmotivatedbehaviorsunit.