

Janus changing with the times

Drug Abuse Center
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SANTA CRUZ — In 25 years of working the front line of alcoholism and drug addiction, Martin Morales has seen a world of change at the 10-bed detox facility at Janus of Santa Cruz.

It's been a sea of broken lives, regret and sickness. But he says there has been more hope than despair.

"I never get discouraged. They're sick people, and they need help and that's what I'm here for," Morales said. "There's people that take a lot to sober up, but eventually they do. As long as they're alive, they can get sober."

Morales arrived in Santa Cruz in the mid-'70s to evaluate what was available for low-income alcoholics after Santa Cruz County contracted with his boss to establish a new approach to dealing with alcoholics. What he found wasn't promising at first.

Detox included medication, a pack of cards and dominoes.

"We used to call that the revolving door," said Charles Woll, a Santa Cruz licensed therapist who served as executive director of Janus. "They'd be brought in for detox, usually about three days, then let go. They'd get brought back in again the next week."

In 1976, Santa Cruz County awarded

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a treatment contract to Robert G. O'Briant, a physician, who touted a social-model setting treatment program as a low-cost, more effective alternative to the expensive hospital-based treatment that was flourishing at the time.

The new idea was to expand the detox program so a person got a chance to sober up, learn some life skills through behavior modification and counseling and find out about ongoing resources like the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Social-model treatment emphasized the idea that alcoholism is a disease and not a moral issue.

O'Briant and his partners Bill Peterson and Frank Wright ran the Guerrero Street Detox Center in San Francisco at the time. O'Briant was a big name in the small, but growing, field of alcoholism studies and set up a local lecture series about aspects of alcoholism.

"That there was a road to recovery that was attainable for people — that

was a concept that not everyone had," said Jane Dawson, a local licensed marriage and family therapist and certified addiction specialist who served on the county Alcoholism Advisory Board in the mid-'70s. Early efforts included breaking down barriers to treatment for women and minorities.

According to the Janus Web site, O'Briant chose the name Janus from the mythological god who is the keeper of the gates, "the doors to new beginnings." The agency was never profitable as a private firm, however, and with Woll as director, became a private nonprofit organization in 1981.

Residents now are admitted for both drug and alcohol addiction. They receive nutrition therapy and vitamin supplements and acupuncture. Neurotherapy, the analysis of brain wave patterns, is available as well as cognitive behavioral therapy.

Janus revamped its "rest and recovery" detoxification program to include educational activities aimed at long-term continuing recovery.

"They restore people twice as fast because they're doing exercise and keeping themselves busy," Morales said.

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