

Thursday, June 28, 2007

## Commencing a new life

Breaking the cycle of substance abuse and chronic [homelessness](#) may be the most difficult achievement a person can accomplish. For those who are willing to do whatever it takes to find their way back into the conventional world, [Acadiana Outreach Center](#) offers a residential recovery program. Tomorrow night, 11 students will graduate from the nine-month intensive program with a set of skills which will help them find steady work, housing and reconnect with their families. "This is an experience people won't forget," says Acadiana Outreach Center chief operations officer Vicki Boudreaux. "It's not like the passage from high school to college. We are witnessing the completion of a life change. It's a moving ceremony."

The Acadiana Outreach Center's Job Opportunity and Training Center program is designed to accommodate clients with dual diagnoses--substance abuse and another problem such as a physical, mental or developmental disability, as well as chronic homelessness. Clients must be sober when they enter the program, they are usually referred to Acadiana Outreach by detox units. The five recovery houses can accommodate 32 men and 24 women who work their way through a hierarchy of classes designed to teach life skills such as stress and anger management, parenting, budget management, mental wellness, self-esteem, job readiness and relapse prevention. Acadiana Outreach has tracked graduates for over two years. About 30 percent of the graduates responding to the follow-up study have reported that 82 percent have maintained stable housing, 91 percent maintained consistent employment and 100 percent maintained sobriety.

"There's a high rate of recidivism in the substance abuse world," Boudreaux says. "We feel great about what our graduates have achieved. One of the great transformations is that they realize they are in control of their own lives."

The commencement ceremony will be held at the Acadiana Outreach Center's Community Celebration Center, 124 South Buchanan St. at 7 p.m., Friday, June 29. For more information about the program call Acadiana Outreach's Job Opportunity and Training Center at 237-7618.

¶ by: Mary Tutwiler [10:57 AM](#)