

Oxford House: An Association to Meet the National Need

The most natural right of man, after that of acting on his own, is that of combining his efforts with those of his fellows and acting together. Therefore, the right of association seems to me by nature almost as inalienable as individual liberty. ... Better use of association and this powerful instrument of action has been applied to more varied aims in America than anywhere else in the world. ... Finally, associations are formed to combat exclusively moral troubles; intemperance is fought in common.

Alexis De Tocqueville – Part II, Chapter 4, *Democracy in America*, 1835

The National Problem – 2008

More than 25 million Americans are alcoholics and/or drug addicts. In today's world, these individuals not only suffer personal enslavement to addiction but also cause chaos and often violence for family, friends, communities and the nation.

Almost every family knows of a relative or friend afflicted by alcoholism and/or drug addiction. Since 1956 the American Medical Association have recognized both as diseases because one addicted the use of any alcohol or addictive drugs causes compulsive use. Compulsive use causes irrational behavior, self-harm, and heartbreak to loved ones and families and a terrible waste of otherwise good people.

In 2006, about 3.3 million [15%] of those needing treatment received some. Nearly two-thirds of such treatment was limited to self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Of the rest receiving treatment, most is either limited outpatient treatment or three to seven days of in-patient detoxification.¹ Of the treated most stay clean or sober for less than a year.

A Pragmatic Solution

There is no known cure for alcoholism or drug addiction except individual behavior change. For the alcoholic and drug addict such behavior change takes opportunity, motivation, time and peer support. Since 1975, Oxford House™ has demonstrated that it effectively provides all four requirements for the alcoholic and/or drug addict to develop comfortable sobriety without relapse.

In 1988, President Reagan recognized the value of Oxford House and included an incentive in the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, for alcoholics and/or drug addicts to establish democratically self-run and self-supported recovery homes based on the Oxford House model. [See other side.] Since 1988, Oxford House has expanded from 18 houses located in the Washington, DC area to 1,276 Oxford Houses located in 39 states, Canada and Australia. Each new Oxford House™ came into existence because experienced individuals who understood the Oxford House concept and system of operations helped start the new houses one at a time.

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2007). *Results from the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings* (Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-25, DHHS Publication No. SMA 04-3964) Rockville, MD.

More than 157 trained outreach workers have traveled from Alaska to Australia to teach others in recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction how an Oxford House™ works and to explain why living in an Oxford House™ is the best road for achieving recovery without relapse. The outreach worker is trained by Oxford House World Services for the following tasks:

- ◆ Finding a suitable house to rent
- ◆ Getting a charter from OHI
- ◆ Getting an FEIN number from IRS
- ◆ Recruiting initial residents
- ◆ Teaching residents the system of operations
- ◆ Building mutually supportive chapters
- ◆ Balancing supply of houses to demand
- ◆ Developing linkages to providers
- ◆ Developing employment linkages
- ◆ Documenting success/failure

Oxford House World Services has the sole authority for granting groups charters to establish Oxford Houses. The charter has three specific conditions: (1) the group must be democratically self-run, (2) the group must be financially self-supported, and (3) the group must immediately expel any resident who returns to using drugs or drinking alcohol.

Oxford House World Services – like AA – does not own property or accumulate wealth. Its sole purpose is to help start enough houses to provide all recovering individuals the opportunity to make it. Residents run houses and pay household expenses themselves. Contributions and grants help train outreach workers and provide on-going technical assistance to existing houses. The Oxford House Manual[®] and the Oxford House Chapter Manual[®] are the basic texts that lay out the nuts and bolts enabling Oxford House™ to democratically operate from the grassroots up. Download manuals as PDF documents from the Internet at www.oxfordhouse.org.

There is no time limit for living in an Oxford House™ but if a resident returns to using alcohol or drugs he or she is immediately expelled. Fewer than 20% relapse. The average stay in an Oxford House™ is about 11 months and close to 80% achieve long-term sobriety without relapse.² Pass on the good news. The need for many more cost-effective Oxford Houses is great. Funding and partnership with government, faith-based communities, foundations, treatment providers and the criminal justice system can make expansion happen.

² DePaul University NIAAA and NIDA studies 2005.

OFFICE OF NANCY REAGAN

October 10, 2002

Dear Oxford House Residents and Alumni:

Congratulations as you celebrate your 4th Annual World Convention. When my husband signed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, there were only 13 Oxford Houses. Today, as a result of the law he signed, there are more than 900 houses.

You should be very proud to have developed a national network of rented recovery homes built around democracy and self-help. I know Ronnie would be very proud of you, too. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Nancy Reagan

**Oxford House World Convention
Oxford House World Services
1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 400
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910**

The letter from Mrs. Reagan reprinted above was sent to Oxford House in 2002 on the occasion of its 4th Annual World Convention and celebration of Oxford House's 27th anniversary. President Ronald Reagan signed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, PL 100-690, into law November 18, 1988. §2036 of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act led to the establishment of state recovery home start-up loan funds to encourage the development of self-help recovery homes based on the Oxford House model. When President Reagan learned about the Oxford Houses operating in the Washington, D.C. area sometime during July 1988, he had asked if his wife Nancy knew about Oxford House. In early August 1988, Dr. Ian MacDonald, a White House advisor on drug addiction, visited Oxford House-Northampton in Northwest Washington, D.C. – apparently at Mrs. Reagan's suggestion. The inclusion of §2036 in the Anti-Drug Abuse Act was a direct result of the visit to the Northampton Oxford House by Dr. Mac Donald, who convinced the members that obtaining a small *loan* to start a new house would not threaten ownership of their successful self-help program. More than 1,200 Oxford Houses have been established and thousands of recovering individuals have proven they are good neighbors and have become comfortable enough in absolute sobriety in an Oxford House to stay clean and sober without relapse – forever.

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