

# Grant will help make detox center a reality

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Florida Weekly Correspondent

Southwest Florida Addiction Services is \$250,000 closer to building a new detoxification center and outpatient treatment facility after a donation from The Kleist Family Foundation.

The money will be used to help equip the detoxification wing of the complex that is being constructed on Evans Avenue in Fort Myers adjacent to Southwest Florida Regional Medical Center.

"We are very grateful to the Kleist family for recognizing the importance of providing treatment for residents with the chronic disease of addiction, which impacts one in five people in our community," said SWFAS CEO Kevin B. Lewis.

The Kleist Family Foundation gift is the second \$250,000 pledge SWFAS has received. Earlier this year, Jim and Donna Sublett pledged \$250,000 for the Outpatient Treatment wing, which will be named in their honor.

Peter D. and Eleanore A. Kleist, who retired to Fort Myers from Ohio, set up the Kleist Family Foundation. It has made multiple financial contributions in both locations. According to daughter Kathryn Kleist, some of those contributions have gone to the Salvation Army, Florida Gulf Coast University and to local environmental organizations. Peter Kleist is a senior advisory trustee of the Southwest Florida Community Foundation and was the developer of Town & River Estates in Fort Myers in the 1960s.

Kathryn Kleist said that the foundation had made several multi-year commitments before the economy dipped. As those grant periods ended, she began to look around.

"I was looking and mother was looking at

where we could put some of the foundation money," she said. "There were things dad had set up, where he had part interests, and this fell within those guidelines. I had suggested we look at a two to three year gift so we could do something substantial, but this was completely her decision to gift this amount over the time frame. It is what she has chosen to do. I am basically assisting."

Following Peter Kleist's stroke, his wife has become more involved with the foundation although each of his children also receive smaller allocation rights.

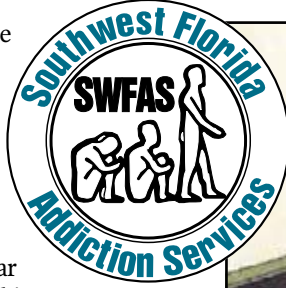
"I gave her information to read, a series of articles that had been done in the paper," Kathryn Kleist said about how her mother learned about the detoxification center. "She was excited about it."

SWFAS now has raised more than \$5.7 million toward the \$9.5 million cost of the new facility. Other major gifts have been received from the Lee County Commission, State Housing Initiatives Program (SHIP),

US Department of Health & Human Services, Southwest Florida Community Foundation, Lee Memorial Health System, Claiborne and Ned Foulds Foundation and Gannett Foundation.

"There isn't a day that passes that we aren't forced to turn away people in need of immediate detoxification because there are no beds available," Lewis said. "Each day the headlines tell the stories of tragedies associated with untreated substance use disorders, and these consequences will continue until we can respond to this unmet need."

While the population at risk has nearly tripled in the past 20 years, Lewis said the num-



COURTESY PHOTO

Rendering of new Detoxification Center & Outpatient Treatment Center

ber of detox beds has decreased from 28 beds in 1984 to 25 beds in 2007, due to the lack of resources to treat this chronic disease.

"Families need a place to turn in times of crisis," Lewis said. "The Board of Directors is acutely aware of this need and is committed to raising the money needed to build a new facility."

The new 40-bed detoxification center will be built on land donated by the city of Fort Myers under a long-term lease. The four-acre parcel on Evans Avenue formerly was the home of the Fort Myers Recreation Center. The planned 44,000 square foot facility also will include room for outpatient counseling and prevention offices now located on McGregor Boulevard as well as administrative staff.

SWFAS plans to break ground in February with completion one year later.

SWFAS is Southwest Florida's most comprehensive substance abuse treatment and prevention program, serving 6,000 people per year from ages 9 to 90. SWFAS offers outpatient and residential programs for both adults and youngsters from nine locations throughout Lee and Hendry counties. In addition, SWFAS provides detoxification services for adults, prevention programming for all ages, and an Employee Assistance Program for about 60 Southwest Florida businesses.

Fees are charged on a sliding scale, based on family income. In many cases, private insurance is accepted. SWFAS is a United Way agency. ■

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