

# BUSINESS PROFILE

## Kevin Lewis looks at addiction as a treatable disease

BY EVAN WILLIAMS  
ewilliams@floridaweekly.com

Southwest Florida Addiction Services CEO Kevin Lewis, 53, didn't know much about addiction when he was young. He didn't take drugs; his parents drank, but not copiously. He may have had an uncle who drank one too many now and then, but real addicts were still "those people:" a group of unfortunates that lived in another world.

"I didn't have a lot of understanding of the disease," Lewis said.

He graduated from college at Grand Valley State University in Michigan with a degree in criminal justice and moved to Florida in 1977. One of his first jobs was being a prison guard. But during an internship at the Alcohol Treatment Center in Avon Park, a state hospital, he enjoyed working with the patients so much it changed his career path.

"They were really bright, creative people," he said. "Fun to work with...It was like an ah-ha thing for me."

Lewis went back to school in Orlando for a Masters in social work so he could continue in the field of helping addicts; he started as Assistant Director of the six-year-old SWFAS in 1986 and became CEO soon after. Then, he said the most common drug of choice was alcohol. Now, it's opiate based prescription medication like OxyContin, Vicodin and Percocet.

One thing Lewis said hasn't changed is the obvious correlation between Lee County's growing population and a higher number of people in the area with addiction problems. "It's a recurring theme. It's anybody

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."

in a culture where we're pretty sure we don't have to put up with pain and suffering. In real life, occasionally there's some pain and suffering... At the other end of the pill, I still have to deal with the relationship issues. My wife's still mad, my bills still aren't paid and my boss still might fire me."



FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTO / EVAN WILLIAMS

Southwest Florida Addiction Services CEO, Kevin Lewis

He says his life is boring to talk about, which is okay with him. His eyes are liquid calm, some people might even say laconic, with a low voice that can disappear at the end of a sentence, as if someone suddenly turned the volume down. But these features add pleasant balance to his quick, wide-spread curiosity which takes in everything from historical epic novels on the Civil War to the back of cereal boxes.

"I read everything," he said. "My wife makes fun of me because I stop to read the historical markers."

And he takes close, careful looks at people too, especially the patients who have captured his attention for so long.

"What I've learned probably from my patients is, addiction is really not a choice and recovery is possible," he said. "It's certainly not easy." ■

# Big Interest.

Small Window of Opportunity.

4.05%

13-36 Month High Yield CD

Available for a limited time.

If you're looking for an FDIC-insured opportunity to grow your assets quickly, Orion Bank's high yield CD is for you.

For details, call 800-234-5397 or visit the branch nearest you:

- 4670 Summerlin Road, Ft. Myers
- 6651 Orion Drive, Ft. Myers
- 2225 First Street, Ft. Myers
- 1715 Cape Coral Parkway West, Cape Coral

ORION BANK

Extraordinary Bank. Extraordinary People.

- Orion is nationally ranked in the Top 1% of banks and thrifts based on financial performance
- #1 in Florida based on financial performance
- Top 200 bank holding company in the United States based on asset size

www.OrionBank.com

\*Annual Percentage Yield (APY) accurate as of 3/31/08. A minimum of \$50,000 new deposit money (no public funds) and an Orion Bank checking account is required to obtain 4.05% APY. Choice of certificate maturity term is a minimum of 13 months with a maximum of 36 months. Certificates automatically renew at maturity. Penalty may be imposed for early withdrawal. Fees could reduce earnings on the account. Limited time offer, rates are subject to change without notice. See fee disclosure and account agreement available at Orion Bank offices for details.

## Get FRESH with your Mother!

This Mother's Day treat Mom to our hand-cut fresh donuts, fresh roasted coffee, teas, lunches, desserts and more!

239.332.0077

2011 BAYSIDE PARKWAY • DOWNTOWN FORT MYERS

www.BennettsFreshRoast.com

MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY: 6 A.M. – 9 P.M. • SUNDAY FROM 7 A.M. – 3 P.M.