

Open Door's 50th Anniversary 5K to support substance abuse recovery efforts

By: Cameron Tyo

On Saturday, Oct 12, Open Door Health Services, in celebration of its 50th anniversary, held the Decades Dash 5K and 1-mile run. The 5K route took participants – many wearing '70s garb -- through downtown Muncie, then along the White River to the Cardinal Greenway. Winners of each age bracket received many different prizes. Around 50-60 people were in attendance. There were people wearing attire from the 1970s as it is the year Open Door Services came into operation, up until now.

Proceeds from the run event will support Open Door's Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program, which provides care for people seeking treatment for substance use disorders.

Open Door is a nonprofit that provides free-to low-cost health care for behavioral health, urgent care, dental and vision and other aspects of comprehensive health care.

Open Door's MAT program started in 2021 to integrate behavioral health, medical management and social support for people recovering from drugs and alcohol. It offers treatment for people 18 and older at the Downtown Muncie location. An appointment must be requested in advance. It is available for residential and outpatient treatment. It costs about \$95 for each a monthly session for both type of patients, and most people get better after three according to their website.

Open Door's CEO Bryan Ayers said the program is vital to the community, given that 65% of people in Muncie are currently homeless and have or continue to struggle with drug and alcohol addiction.

"Roughly one in 13 Muncie residents will struggle with substance abuse in their lifetime and many assume they are not willing to get help but often times finances are the issue," Ayers said. "Our ideas are misunderstood, and these people have been stigmatized," Ayers revealed.

Ayers said the MAT program is helping neighbors transition from living addicted to drugs or alcohol to those being supported by others. The jobs they are able to keep as they are given therapy that stresses the negative effects of drugs and alcohol and encourages patients to do other things to identify other ways to cope with stress, etc. help them on their recovery journey and with finances.

As of 2024, about 300 people in Muncie are homeless on any given night, and roughly 65% of them are addicted to substances.

[Grovetreatment](#) said substance abuse and homelessness contribute to Muncie's unemployment rate of 5.2%, which is among the highest in the state. Grovetreatment estimates that 9% of residents who abuse drugs or alcohol are not homeless. Meth and alcohol are the most abused substances, according to the site.

According to [grovetreatment](#), Muncie has 1,000 people who abuse drugs or alcohol, which is the fourth highest rate among Indiana's 1,571 cities. And this comes down to not just the percentage of people who abuse drugs but also the number of drug-related crimes. Two out of those 1,000 residents commit drug crimes like fights related to drug smuggling, etc which likely go hand-in-hand with substance abuse.

Ayers said that the help of Open Door's MAT program paired with the efforts of other Muncie nonprofits and government programs could help the rate of people who abuse substances decrease. Also with that the decrease of drug-related crimes, whether violent or not, and the increase in employment and even possibly the decrease of poverty could be seen.

The People Behind Open Doors

John Searfoss, a behavioral health specialist at Open Door, said outside the MAT program, the facility holds free, weekly individual sessions for patients. The site, located at downtown Muncie also holds workshops or sessions for families where specialist give advice on staying away from drugs and alcohol and run simulated events in groups amongst different types of therapy procedures.

These sessions sort of act like counseling sessions. At these sessions, a specialist works with a person specifically through each client's emotional, behavioral, and social concerns that arise from their substance abuse. They work to help them break the cycles that lead them to cope with substances, and then they help them find alternative coping strategies.

"Coping skills and behavioral techniques are one of the best ways to stop and prevent further substance abuse," Searfoss said. "Many abusers don't realize this or don't have the money to get the help they need."

Kiersten Patterson, another behavioral health specialist at Open Door said most people who receive MAT services are more likely to recover from substance abuse than people who try to do recover so alone. Patients take an assessment that helps specialists understand each person's needs and strengths. Those assessments help Patterson and her team create individualized plans for recovery.

"People might be hesitant to take measures to recover from substance abuse as many find it a way to cope with life's problems, and they think the treatment could be expensive

despite the fact the services take most life insurance. These people might not have even that,” Patterson said revealing why many people don’t get the help that they deserve.

The comprehensive treatment center is located at 3640 N. Briarwood Lane, and 24/7 appointment scheduling can be found at opendoor.com. It’s centers are located throughout East Central Indiana, and it operates several mobile health units that visit schools, nursing homes and prisons. Same-day admission to the program is available. If just a few people joined the program, the rates of homelessness and unemployment rates could decrease just a little bit.

To schedule an appointment or to learn more about the MAT program, go to [Open Door’s MAT program website](#).