

By AMBER ROESSNER
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Since its inception in 1980, one thing has remained constant at Project ADAM—its commitment to increase services to meet the evolving needs of the community.

Through the years, Project ADAM has grown exponentially in an attempt to do just that, transforming from a basic alcohol and drug abuse treatment referral center to a comprehensive alcohol and drug treatment and education center.

Consistently known as one of the top chemical dependency treatment facilities in the state, Project ADAM's community services include inpatient and outpatient treatment, workplace drug and alcohol testing to more than 125 companies in the area, a 20-hour risk reduction course for DUI offenders, clinical evaluations and referrals, distribution of food donated by Publix, employment counseling and placement, as well as drug and alcohol counseling, explained Project ADAM executive director Gina McDonald.

“In the last couple of years, we have expanded our treatment services in new and exciting ways,” McDonald said. “The nation’s detrimental love affair with alcohol and drugs hasn’t waned in recent years, and we continue to see ways to better assist the community in combating the epidemic. For instance, in 2006, we began offering Level I outpatient treatment services to better serve the female population, along with employer and probation referrals. We also began offering outpatient treatment to adolescents in conjunction with the Barrow County School System and the Department of Juvenile Justice.”

In addition to the adolescent program, Project ADAM began offering comprehensive counseling services to the Barrow County Work Release and Detention Center, as well as anger management, life skills classes and a defensive driving course to the general public in the last two years.

During that time period, Project ADAM staff has seen an explosion of interest in treatment in the Barrow County Work Release and Detention Center. In fact, Project ADAM served more than 1,700 individuals through the program in 2007 alone.

“Project ADAM has been an integral component in our attempts to provide inmates in the Barrow County Detention Center and Work Release Program with the services that they need to break the chain of addiction,” explains Barrow County Chief Deputy Murray Kogod.

“It allows us to prevent the detention center from becoming a revolving door for repeat offenders. Once the inmates realize that they have an alcohol and drug addiction and determine that they want help, the services must be available to assist them in recovering from that addiction. We’ve been blessed to have our relationship and partnership with Project ADAM. It allows the inmates to get the help that they need while they are incarcerated as well as inpatient and outpatient treatment once they have been release so that they can sustain their recovery.”

Over the last year, Project ADAM has seen a marked increase in the number of women with significant chemical dependency issues that require intensive in-patient treatment.

“It’s created a huge dilemma for us,” said Mike McDonald, a case manager at Project ADAM. “After we evaluate a female and determine that residential treatment is necessary, we are forced to refer that woman to costly programs *outside* of the community because of the lack of resources *within* the community. This places a heavy burden on the families within our home community.”

But, if all goes according to plan, women in need of residential treatment may not have to suffer this fate forever, said Gina McDonald.

“We will be expanding our services to include a residential treatment facility for women in the near future,” Gina McDonald said. “Having a local residential treatment facility would allow a woman to receive the treatment that she needs within the community, in addition to obtaining life and job skills that would allow her to better care for her family.”

According to McDonald, the residential treatment facility, closely modeled after the existing males-only facility, would include group, individual and family counseling, self-help groups and life skills training. Women would be required to maintain full-time employment and commit to a minimum of six months of low-cost in-patient treatment.

Project ADAM will continue to work in conjunction with the public defender’s office, felony probation, the Barrow County Sheriff’s Department, the district attorney’s office, the Barrow County School System, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Family and Children’s Services as well as other organizations in the community to ensure that individuals with a chemical dependency gain the assistance they need.