

Unity House celebrates 10 years of helping

Organization now operates 7 houses, has 65 beds

Thomas Geyer
tgeyer@qctimes.com

In 2000, after years of battling alcohol and drug abuse, Dennis Haut hit rock bottom — physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Speaking to an audience of about 100 people Friday to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of Unity House of Davenport, Haut said he reached out to the community for help in 2000, and the community took him in.

Two years later, he was fixing up a former drug house that he was going to use as rental property when he volunteered to deploy as a Department of Defense civilian to Camp Anaconda in Balad, Iraq.

What he saw of the Iraqi people and how they lived, he said, made him realize, “just how much I had to be thankful for.”

YOU CAN HELP

Donations to Unity House of Davenport may be sent to its business office at 2625 Crestview Drive, Bettendorf, IA, 52722, or unityhouseofdavenport.org or the web.

When he returned, the house he was preparing for rental turned into Unity House, he told the gathering at St. Ambrose University in Davenport.

Today, Unity House operates seven houses in Davenport, with a total of 65 beds for men.

Much of what Haut does works, he said, because he has walked in the shoes of those he is helping.

“My father was an alcoholic, but no one forced me to drink,” Haut told the crowd in an emotional history of his drinking

— UNITY | B2

UNITY

From B1

and drug use that ranged from methamphetamine to crack cocaine. “It was still my choice to drink.”

Staying sober and helping others, he said, has changed his life and the lives of his children and wife.

“I’ve had the honor of seeing people change right before my eyes,” Haut said. “Oftentimes they come in after being released from jail with just the clothes on their backs, wondering what life has in store. I’ve seen them blossom like flowers. Many are reunited with their families, their children and with loved ones they haven’t seen since before their addiction.”

Jamie McWade, a former counselor with the Center for Alcohol and

Drug Services, or CADS, who joined Unity House as office administrator a few years ago, said the organization has helped more than 2,000 people since it opened.

“That is 2,000 people who are not on the streets, or in prison or in jail,” McWade said. “We get to see these miracles every day. We get to see these people change and move on to productive lives.”

What McWade said is desperately needed is the same type of program for women, which Haut is trying to achieve. “There is a severe lack of programs for women who are in this situation.”

In gratitude for Haut’s hard work, Kent Ferris, the director of social action and Catholic charities for the Diocese of Davenport, presented him with the diocese’s Good

Neighbor Award.

“I’m up at drug court every Friday morning and I see what it takes for people to succeed in the 12-step program,” Ferris said.

The support that the people in Unity House get, he said, “is critical to their success.”

“He is living the mission of his faith,” Ferris said of Haut.

Ferris said Unity House has been and will continue to be of “tremendous value to the community,” and to the men it has helped over the years.

Haut said he fully believes he is “my brother’s keeper. I believe we all are call upon to take care of our brothers and sisters here on Earth.”

Of course, Haut said, “Not all of us make it. We slip, we trip, we fall. But we’re not failures as long as we keep trying.”