

Local News

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Building A Ministry

Couple Work To Establish Structured Temporary Home For Men With Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

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Journal Reporter

Schaumburg businessman Walt Teichen is hoping to enlist support in the broader community to establish a ministry for a structured temporary home for men with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAE) like his adopted son, Kevin.

The Teichens were the subject of a Journal article a year ago when they were seeking someone to devote a year of their life to mentor their son at a Christian residential home in New Hampshire called His Mansion.

Kevin, who suffers from permanent damage to the decision-making part of his brain, was accepted at His Mansion but lasted only five weeks in their program. His father said it was because the staff there wasn't trained in the effects of FAE that, in Kevin's case, severely damaged his frontal brain lobe and causes lifelong behavioral problems.

Teichen said he and his wife Kathy have learned through experience and research that people with FAE can live without major problems on their own if they are immersed in a highly structured living environment.

But, he says, there is only one such group home devoted to FAE in the United States. Located in Minnesota, it charges about \$250 a day and is not a Christian ministry, he said.

Teichen has approached the Elk Grove Rotary Club and other organizations and churches to get help for building and staffing an FAE ministry in Illinois.

He said people like his son, adopted when he was three days old, often get into trouble with the legal system because of their poor decision-making.

Kevin has spent time in jail and didn't mind it, says his father. "That's because it's very structured. You get up at a certain time, eat at a certain time, have recreation at a certain time...He functioned there better than at home."

The ministry Teichen envisions would offer vocational training, Bible studies, and animal husbandry in a highly structured environment.

In Kevin's case, Teichen believes five or six years is needed in such an environment before he could live independently without getting into trouble. While living alone for a short time, Kevin ran up a large debt in just a matter of weeks, said Teichen.

So far, by word of mouth, the proposed FAE ministry has attracted the attention of a donor. Teichen says a woman has offered the ministry 10 to 20 acres of land in Hopkins Park, 20 miles southeast of Kankakee. Teichen says he is grateful, but still hopes for a location more suited to the type of facility he envisions.

Teichen said that Cavalry Church in Orland Park, a Dutch Reform Church, has been looking for a project in this area, and has indicated they would help with construction manpower if Teichen can find a construction manager to coordinate the

job.

"There are about 10 positions to fill," he said. People willing to commit to staffing the home are also needed, he said. For even FAE adults, a staff of 15 may be needed, he said.

Ironically, there is a chance that Teichens own son may not benefit from the ministry.

"Kevin would go only if the Courts make him go," says Teichen.

"He's doing badly, but hasn't been arrested since coming home," he said. "He's driving a cab, but doesn't get the whole concept. He works 70 to 80 days a week, but at the end of the day, he comes home with no money."

Teichen said there are many areas of help needed in setting up the ministry, from developing brochures, to finding someone to co-ordinate the construction work that will have to be done, to coordinating a possible fundraiser and awareness of the ministry.

"Please talk to friends about the ministry," he said. "It's kind of unusual and it's one of a kind."

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