

KANABEC COUNTY  
**TIMES**



The Teen Focus Recovery Center in Mora opened in August.

### **New drug treatment center focuses on teens**

- by Natasha Stenbock NEWS@moraminn.com
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Kanabec County residents battling addiction now have an option for treatment in Mora. Teen Focus Recovery Center opened its doors in August and serves as the new adult and adolescent chemical dependency treatment center in the vicinity of Mora's business district. Rush City is home to Teen Focus' original treatment center, which has been operating since 2008.

"Kanabec County expressed a need for outpatient service after Dellwood, (another outpatient program), closed its doors in Mora," explained Teen Focus Recovery Center Program Director Lynette Kuzel. It also runs three jail programs in Mora, Cambridge and Pine City, where inmates receive treatment from counselors.

The co-ed outpatient program serves adults, teens and preteens as young as 12. It is not uncommon for children as young as 12 years old to seek treatment. Kuzel explained, of those patients getting treatment in Rush City about "5 percent are 12 years old. There are many who may use [drugs or alcohol] at 12, but may not get into treatment until they're 14 or 15."

Kuzel also described the trend she's seeing for those seeking treatment, "Heroin is on the rise for sure and methamphetamine has not gone away and that's mainly adults. There are children

dabbling in methamphetamine and heroin. The adolescents tend to use marijuana, alcohol, pills, opiates.”

Who are these preteens experimenting with drugs and alcohol? According to the Substance Abuse Coalition of Kanabec County, “90 percent of Americans with a substance abuse problem started smoking, drinking or using other drugs before age 18.” Further, 22 percent of Kanabec County’s 15,996 residents are under the age of 18, based on U.S. Census Bureau data. At least one survey conducted through the Minnesota Department of Human Services revealed Minnesota students reported using alcohol for the first time at age 12.5 and tried marijuana at 13.1 years old (2013 Minnesota Student Survey).

The need for treatment in Kanabec County is evident when following the data from [SUMN.org](http://SUMN.org) (Substance Use in Minnesota, a project of the Minnesota State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW)).

“Kanabec County students are more likely than the state average to report past 30 day alcohol use, binge drinking, tobacco use, marijuana use and misuse of prescription drugs. While Kanabec County data on adult use are not available, adults in the East Central region are more likely than the state average to report past month binge drinking and cigarette smoking. The percentage of motor vehicle crashes that are alcohol-related is higher in Kanabec County compared to the state average, as is the lung, bronchus and trachea cancer death rate.” The Minnesota State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup is funded through the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD).

Widely publicized studies have shown that kids who try drugs or alcohol at a young age are more likely to abuse those substances later in life. Research from the Minnesota Department of Human Services’ 2013 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) revealed, “Minnesota youth, on average, start drinking at a younger age than smoking marijuana. Male students, minority students and those from low-income households tend to report having their first drink or first marijuana at a younger age compared to their respective counterparts.”

With so many potentially at-risk youth and adults statewide, there is a need for drug treatment options. Kuzel described the type of treatment provided at Teen Focus Recovery Center, “You work with your counselor, you are treated as an individual and you work on areas of life you need to work on whether it’s through lecture, assignments or group therapy, individual therapy with that counselor. Generally you will start with 96 hours for the program and go three times a week, or can go four times a week, three hour sessions. It’s individualized between client and counselor.”

If you believe your loved one has a problem with drugs or alcohol, you can get help through a one-on-one assessment as Kuzel explained, “If a parent suspects their children are using the first thing to do is get them a chemical-use assessment done. It’s a tool used throughout the state of Minnesota to determine a level of care, whether they need education, outpatient or inpatient treatment. That is something we provide.”

*Natasha Stenbock is a contributing writer for the Kanabec County Times.*