

Private recovery house for women opens in Colwood

Personal experiences used to fill recovery void

Lindsey Horsting
News Gazette staff

Colwood Serenity House is a licensed home that

supports women in their recovery of substance abuse.

Founder Jo McCann is also a registered nurse with 13 years experience working in medicine, cardiology, research and management, and 18 years of property management experience as an investor and landlord.

Having been through her own recovery, McCann saw a market for sustainable and

safe stage three recovery homes for women in the wake of fentanyl overdoses and the masses of people living in tent cities.

McCann explained in stage three recovery homes, residents pay rent and re-learn how to do everyday things. In stage two homes, all meals and living space are provided while residents focus on recovery. *Continued on A8*

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More supports needed for local women in recovery

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"These women are mothers, they are sisters, they are daughters, they are working and they are doing lots for the community, and if we can just give them a little bit of support to transition them so that they can become independent, that is what this is for," McCann said.

Serenity House has space for four residents with two private rooms and one semi-private room.

The B.C. Centre on Substance Abuse released a report on strengthening addiction recovery in the province recently. Under underserved and vulnerable populations, the report calls to "develop and support strategies for increased recovery services for women (including mother and child) in primary, secondary and tertiary care across a spectrum of modalities."

McCann is open about her journey and she shares it in hopes of helping other women through their journey to sobriety and to help reduce stigma.



Jo McCann, founder of Colwood Serenity House, used her experience as a registered nurse, property manager, and recovery patient to fill a void of sustainable and safe living spaces for women in recovery.
(LINDSEY HORSTING/NEWS GAZETTE STAFF)

McCann was raised by an alcoholic mother and a father who spent his life in prison for violence against women, including against Mc-

Cann's mother. McCann said she was in and out of the streets as a youngster and became a teenage mom. Her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer the same year she had her son and she cared for her at home until she died. While she cared for her mother she decided to apply to nursing school at the University of Victoria.

"I figured if I'm doing this, I might as well go to school for this and get paid, I have a young son, I should get a degree," she said.

Her mother and grandmother passed away within three months of each other and she said the demands of nursing school didn't allow her time to grieve.

McCann graduated from UVic with honours with a bachelor's of science degree in nursing. Her first few weeks as an RN in acute nursing were not the "vision of success" she saw herself achieving before she graduated. She said to unwind she started having a glass of wine after her shifts, but over time a glass turned into a bottle and drinking every day until it became

a necessity rather than something recreational.

She got help and has maintained her sobriety. It is her dream to have many recovery houses, including houses for mothers and children, and she wants residents to stay as long as they need to. "A huge part of addiction is isolation... so there needs to be a community kind of environment," she said.

McCann has used her experience in recovery and as an RN to devise a plan to help women stay sober.

She has a list of house rules that include the women coming out of their rooms to socialize, taking turns cooking dinner for the whole house once a week, attending a certain number of meetings per week, working with an employee of the Umbrella Society and McCann herself will check in with the women.

More information on Serenity House can be found on their website colwoodserenityhouse.com and the Colwood Serenity House Facebook page.

lindsey.horsting@goldstreamgazette.com