

Housing Iowa Awards Nomination: Narrative

Founded in 2004, Unity House of Davenport has provided a safe housing space for individuals seeking a safe, supportive, and semi-structured environment to live as they recover from their substance, alcohol, or behavioral addiction(s). The mission statement of Unity House of Davenport reads as follows: "Unity House of Davenport will provide education and support to individuals with substance and behavioral addictions in a safe, semi-structured environment with access to additional resources for living abstinent from problem behaviors." As of 2017, there are seven Unity Houses throughout Davenport, IA that serve this mission. Although Unity House of Davenport is not the only institution in the Quad Cities that offers assistance to individuals in recovery from addiction, it has made innovative changes to be a unique and successful recovery haven. Unlike similar institutions in the Quad Cities, Unity House of Davenport does not limit the amount of time that residents can stay in the houses. On average, residents stay 3-6 months before choosing to move out on their own. Beyond offering a limitless stay, Unity House of Davenport is not Faith based. They accept individuals of any creed, and even those who do not have any connection to religion. A few features that founder/CEO Dennis Haut is especially proud of are their weekly house meetings and their onsite UA's and BAC's. The weekly house meetings are led by each house manager (a resident of Unity House that is solid with the program, has people skills, and is working with other recovery programs) in their respective houses. Each meeting focuses on positive interactions that have happened throughout the week to support members within the house who may be struggling with their recovery. Onsite UA's and BAC's occur randomly within each house throughout the month. These drug tests are not to be used as a punishment, but are a way that residents can be held accountable for their actions if they relapse. Each house manager is certified in testing for UA's and BAC's, and report the results to the Unity House of Davenport central office each time testing occurs. Each manager also remains accessible at all hours of the day to every member of the Unity House community should they need to talk with someone else who is also in recovery.

Unity House of Davenport does not only offer housing for individuals who are seeking a safe, sober, and supportive recovery environment, they also reach out to homeless individuals struggling with addiction. Approximately 40%-60% of the individuals accepted to Unity House of Davenport are recently homeless individuals struggling with either a substance, alcohol, or behavioral addiction. Unity House of Davenport understands that resources for homeless addicts are limited, so they open their doors to individuals of every housing background. Homeless addicts need a safe, supportive, and permanent shelter to help them recover and gain control of their lives. As of July 1st, 2016, the Quad Cities held an overall population of 382,268 people. It is estimated that for every 100,000 people in Iowa, there are 98 homeless people. By this estimate, it means that there are over 320 homeless individuals in the Quad Cities alone. Unity House of Davenport believes that homeless individuals with addictions should be eligible for the same treatment as other addicts who have housing.

As a program that is rooted in recovery, Unity House of Davenport has their own ways of measuring success. Residents being reunited with family, friends, and significant others after weeks, months, or even years apart is one way that Unity House of Davenport measures

success. Other ways include helping residents regain their driver's license, obtain employment (and hold on to their job), and positively associate with others in recovery and have real friends. But, the overall measure of success is the sobriety of each individual person. Every single resident who makes it 24 hours sober each day is a success. Unity House of Davenport does not believe that individuals in recovery should measure their sobriety against one another. An individual who has been sober three days is just as important as an individual who has been sober three months. If at least one person stays sober each day, then Unity House of Davenport has been successful in their mission.

Beyond providing a safe, sober, and supportive living environment for individuals who are recovering from addiction, Unity House of Davenport also offers numerous resources for these individuals to become integrated with functioning society. Unity House staff members provide transportation to individuals who cannot drive so that residents are able to attend 12-step program meetings, and other events important to their recovery. They also provide cooking supplies so that residents can make their own meals, furniture in every house to provide comfort, and driveways for residents who own a car to safely park their vehicle. Each Unity House is located within walking distance to a Quad Cities bus stop to assist individuals who do not own a car or a driver's license.