

# RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITY



Photo caption: RTF includes 10 staff members including (l to r): Gabriel Brown, Stacie Holton, Shawn Morin, Rebecca Fournier, Sarah Baker and Henry Ward.

Located between a wood grove and large rolling fields in beautiful Northern Maine is AMHC's Residential Treatment Facility (RTF). In tribute to its heritage, RTF is affectionately known as "The Farm." Opened in 1975, it is the only 28-day treatment facility in the State of Maine that serves both men and women ages 18 and older. RTF is ADA accessible and serves up to 150 individuals per year. In 2020, it will celebrate 45 years of service.

"The RTF is special for many reasons," said Rebecca Fournier, RTF Site Coordinator. "The staff is a tightly woven group that goes above and beyond their defined roles." For example, when a client arrives at the bus station on a cold January night they will most likely be greeted by Sylvio Dubois in his Buffalo Bill fur coat and Russian hat. By the time they arrive at RTF, Sylvio's charming personality and warm vehicle have put a nervous individual at ease. Henry Ward, who integrates his Native American cultural traditions from the MICMAC Tribe, has introduced the RTF to Wellbriety, a movement which seeks to break the cycle of hurt caused by substance use, with an emphasis on Native Spiritual traditions. When clients are celebrating holidays away from their loved ones the staff ensure that special touches are provided. Christmas stockings are stuffed, Easter eggs are hidden, Thanksgiving brings everyone together to prepare a large meal, and sometimes Darth Vader makes an appearance spreading the message that 'the force is strong in them.'

This intensely structured program includes seven hours of group treatment daily, covering a variety of topics on substance use disorder, recovery enhancement and relapse prevention as well as weekly Family Group sessions. Local recovery communities including Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous have on-site weekly and monthly meetings, allowing clients to learn about these supportive resources.

RTF clients are removed from the daily distractions of television and all electronics. Their days are filled with therapeutic group services, biblio-therapy (the art of using books to aid people in solving the issues they are facing), and therapeutic journaling. Residents are assigned chores to help them understand the importance of attending to the responsibilities of daily living. In addition, clients are encouraged to go on 20 minute walks daily. Many have reported having calming spiritual experiences while walking, snowshoeing or cross country skiing through the peaceful fields.

Clients read and watch assigned educational, inspirational and thought provoking material concerning substance use recovery. They write reports on this material and then share those reports with the group, helping one another retain the information and share different perspectives. As important, maintaining a daily journal is a key aspect of the program. During their individual sessions with staff, residents share what they have written. The goal is that they will develop journaling as a helpful tool that will continue after leaving treatment.

Integrated services are brought in to provide support, information and education to the residents including Pines Health Services; AMHC Sexual Assault Services; Hope and Justice, a program that provides domestic abuse support; as well as Roads to Recovery Community Center in Caribou and Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope in Houlton.

RTF supports the surrounding communities by partnering with the social work programs offered at the University of Maine at Presque Isle and University of Maine at Fort Kent to provide internships for social work students. RTF also offers in-house sessions with local law enforcement regarding substance use disorder treatment. A highlight of the year is the Annual Alumni and Recovery Community Picnic held on the second Sunday in September. For anyone who benefits from RTF, they appreciate the staff and the treatment they receive and fondly remember their time at "The Farm."