

January 13, 2000

2026 Dellwood Dr.  
Atlanta, Ga. 30309  
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Jim DeVarenes  
Peachford House  
2010 Curtis Dr.  
Apt. I-1  
Atlanta, Ga. 30317

Dear Jim,

The purpose of this letter is to state the importance that I place on Peachford House in helping the homeless men and women with whom I work.

Since December 1996 when I first learned I could refer men who had no income or insurance to Peachford House, I have taken, in my car at my expense, over 1500 men from the various outreach offices where I volunteer.

It was in 1996 after 13 years of helping the homeless that it finally dawned on me that if I were to really make a difference in the lives of homeless men and women, I had to help them with their drug and alcohol addictions. I assembled a directory of free to enter programs since one did not exist. I also have helped United Way and the Council on Alcohol and Drugs expand significantly the information they have regarding free to enter treatment and recovery programs.

Based on my experience since 1996, Peachford House has been and remains the only recovery residence anywhere in the metro Atlanta area that allows "same day" admissions. It is important in every addict's life that he or she get help the same day he or she requests it. No place but Peachford House allows this. All the others have admission requirements ranging from getting on a waiting list, to having to be formally detoxed first, to having ID, to having medical tests done, to not being on medications for a mental illness, to having clean time up to 30 days. Anyone who wants recovery and is able to work can get into Peachford House the same day with or without a referral, with or without an advocate like myself.

If Peachford House did not exist, my efforts to help the homeless find residential recovery programs would be extremely difficult. There are many excellent programs but they make it difficult to be admitted without a delay of a week or longer. Many people get discouraged when it takes this long to get help.

Because recovery programs are so extremely expensive, and it is not likely that more than 5-10% of the indigent men and women will be able to get into the few free programs that exist, I have been advocating for programs like Peachford House that are virtually self-sustaining--the people in the program pay for everything they get. If only we could, perhaps with some tweaking of programs like Peachford House, duplicate them all over, we could help many more people than we will ever be able to help with the current very costly approach we now take toward treatment and recovery programs.

A study I did in 1998 of major homeless service providers showed that 69% of homeless men and 55% of single women in Atlanta are believed by those who serve them to be addicted to drugs or alcohol. Based on the official estimate of 11,000 homeless men and women in Atlanta, there are therefore, about 6000-7000 substance abusers among the homeless. Peachford House is the largest of the 25 or so free-to-enter recovery programs in metro Atlanta. I don't know what I would do if Peachford House did not exist.

Sincerely,

Alan M. Harris