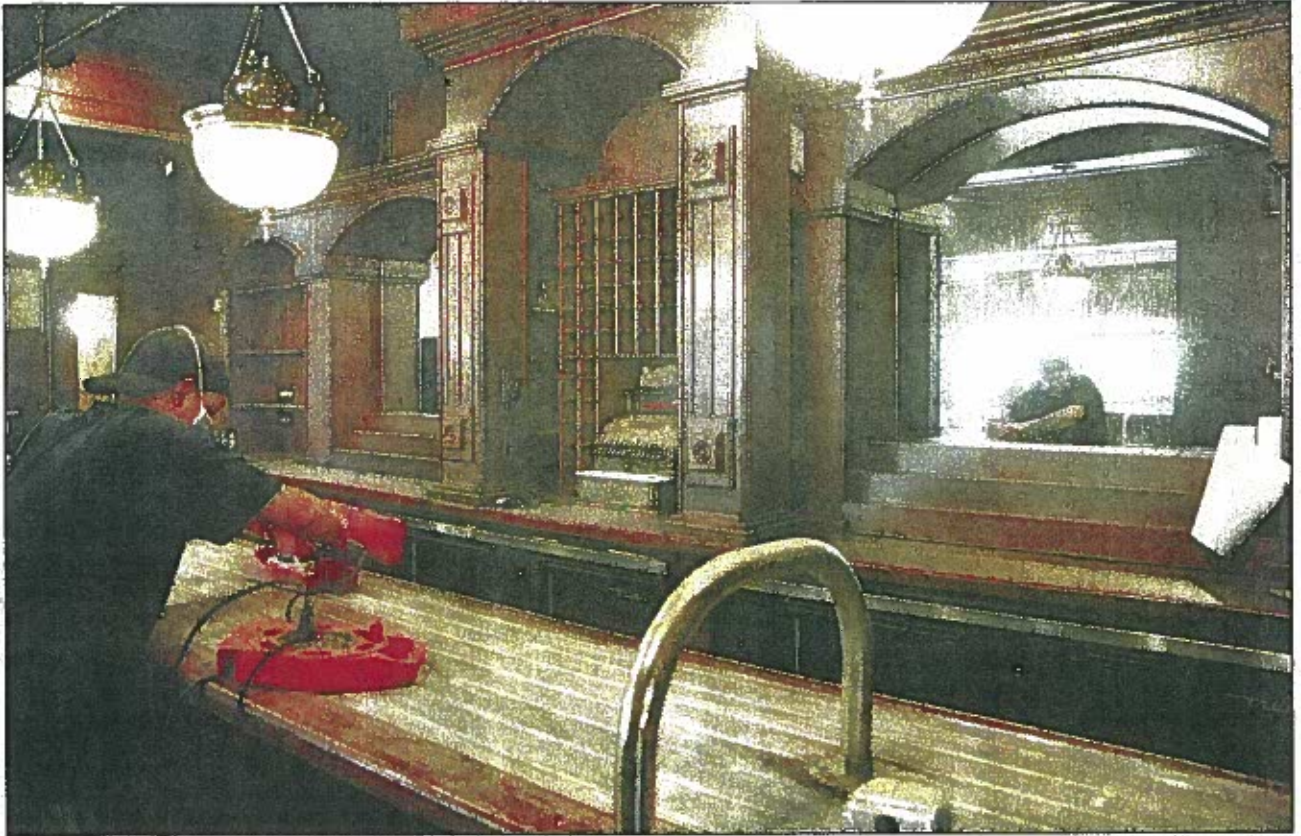


Cleaning up for a new beginning



ASHLEY FOX / GAZETTE

Wesley Morris, 36, of Brunswick, sands a wooden countertop Saturday at the former Medina Steak and Seafood restaurant at 538 W. Liberty St. A recovery center will be moving into the building soon.

Volunteers begin preparing old Medina steakhouse to become drug recovery center and restaurant

Ashley Fox
The Gazette

MEDINA — Wearing a face mask, Wesley Morris smoothed the top of a wooden counter with a hand-held sanding machine Saturday.

The 36-year-old Brunswick resident was one of about 20 people who helped begin a rehabilitation project at the former Medina Steak and Seafood restaurant, 538 W. Liberty St.

Morris said he wanted to donate his time to clean up the building that will soon become a recovery center called

Robby's.

A \$300,000 grant from Ohio's Department of Rehabilitation obtained through the Medina County Common Pleas Court's Probation Department will allow the restaurant, which has been closed since March 2015, to be turned into a recovery center.

The county will cover funding for two years.

Plans call for a restaurant to be part of the operation, and a Medina-based nonprofit abuse awareness program

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ACCEPTING DONATIONS

Donations are being accepted for the creation of a substance abuse recovery center that will be located in the former Medina Steak and Seafood restaurant at 538 W. Liberty St., Medina.

People may contact the nonprofit abuse awareness program Robby's Voice on Facebook, said the program's co-founder, Rob Brandt. Donations also may be sent to 1114 N. Court St., P.O. Box 123, Medina, OH 44256.

ROBBY'S

From A1

called Robby's Voice will have a managerial role.

Morris, a residential and commercial painter for a local company, said he told his probation officer he wouldn't mind offering his expertise to help spruce up the building.

Morris was a heroin addict for about 16 years, he said. In recovery for the last two years, he said he "dabbled" with other drugs before using heroin.

"I want to be here for my family," he said, referring to his two sons, ages 9 and 12.

"The drugs were taking more time than I spent than with my family," he said.

Now that he's sober, "they're definitely happy."

Morris said that he thinks the county has needed a recovery center for some time.

"Over the years I've seen the (drug) problem getting worse and worse. It's killing a lot of people," he said.

According to the Medina County auditor's website, the building is 2,722 square feet and was built in 1858.

The Ohio grant was secured by Medina County Chief Probation Officer Veronica Perry.

"(Recovering addicts) can come here and get any information they want, any help they want," Morris said. "I think that will be a good thing for Medina."

Morris said he looks forward to having the recovery center as somewhere to go for support.

"People think, 'I can handle this myself.' No, you have to accept the help," he said, noting he was an example.

Eliminating alcohol references

On Saturday, the work crew



ASHLEY FOX / GAZETTE

Jaclyn Brandt, of Medina, cleans a table Saturday afternoon at the former Medina Steak and Seafood Restaurant, where a recovery center will be taking over the building in the coming weeks.

was joined by Perry and Rob Brandt, a founder of Robby's Voice. Brandt's son, Robby, died of a heroin overdose in October 2011.

Brandt said forming a recovery center was a dream come true, envisioned as a community need by his son years ago.

"It'll be more real when the sign's up," he said.

One task that was tackled by workers in rising temperatures Saturday was erasing words in the facility such as "beer," "spirits" and "wine."

"This is a clean community center," said Brandt, adding he wants it to be "the best possible space" for those in need.

Remembering family member

Brandt's daughter, Jaclyn, was on the Saturday crew, scrubbing tables in what was once a dining room area.

Explaining that the recovery center is therapeutic for her and her family, she said it is a "legacy" of her late brother.

Jaclyn, 23, is a recent graduate of Ursuline College in Pepper Pike, and works as a nurse

at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital in Cleveland.

Offering work experience

Perry and Brandt said the facility will have the ability to host conference meetings, or people can visit to have coffee and crepes, which will be on the menu.

"It's just going to be a continuum of creativity," Perry said.

In time, Brandt said, he hopes to look for parcels of land to purchase so that food could be grown locally and added to the menu.

The court system is renting the building for \$66,000 per year, plus a share of property taxes. A lease began June 1 and will continue through May 31, 2019. County commissioners in May approved a two-year lease agreement for the building with owner Ken Collins, whose company is CKF Partners.

In April, Robby's Voice was named a recipient of the FBI Director's Community Leadership Award, one of 58 organizations honored nationwide.

Robby's Voice has between 16 and 20 members, although not all will be involved in the recovery center.

Fund sends help

Perry and Brandt said that Fighting for Alyssa, another Medina nonprofit, donated \$1,000 worth of cleaning supplies. They said the donation was "completely unsolicited."

Perry said the center is being designed to offer support and resources in addition to whatever people coming through the court system receive from family and friends.

Probation officers, she said, don't always know first-hand why an individual may relapse. There are concerns that family and friends who know the circumstances might fear the addict is going to jail.

While there is a stigma for people in recovery, Perry said there is also a stigma about the work done by probation officers that all users will be taken into custody.

"The court will not have access to records" at the center, she said.

Brandt noted that Saturday's work crew was made up of people accustomed to stereotypes.

"The people sanding the bar, the people cutting the grass, the people washing the windows, these are all the people everybody is afraid of," Brandt said.

But, he continued, "The people taking pride and ownership of this facility right now, these are the people in recovery. This is what people in recovery do. They help more than any other people. They give more than any other people."

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