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**NEW ADULT AND TEEN CHALLENGE MEN'S PROGRAM OPENS IN BILLINGS;
CHRISTMAS TREE FUNDRAISING SALES UNDERWAY**

BILLINGS, MT—Randall Wilber understands the struggles of addiction. Executive director of the new Adult and Teen Challenge program for recovering addicts in Billings, he was once an addict himself.

Wilber's parents split when he was 3. He dabbled with pot at age 13, dropped out of school at 16, became homeless, and by 18 was, in his own words, "a full-blown meth addict, in and out of trouble with the law." In 2004, he enrolled in a Teen Challenge in Oklahoma, "broken, rebellious, and bitter."

"I did the program. I hated it," Wilber says. Over time, he had conversations with God and decided, "All I wanted to do was to help people." He completed a 13-month program, worked as an intern and staff member, and was campus pastor for Teen Challenge in southwest Oklahoma before moving to Montana this year to start the new center. He explains, "Montana was one of just four states without a men's program; this was 16 years in the making for me. I now have a beautiful wife, boys, and my life is full."

Teen Challenge runs 240 faith-based, residential recovery programs across the U.S. Its 12-month program is free of charge to "students." The new Billings men's program, funded in part by the Gianforte Family Foundation, will eventually house 14 men, according to Wilber. It joins a successful campus for women in Missoula. Both programs plan to expand services next year to include licensed substance abuse counselors for on-campus group therapy and outpatient therapy for community clients.

The two programs have also kicked off a Christmas tree fundraising sale, running through Christmas Eve. Locations are the Christian Life Center on S. Russell Street in Missoula and the Power for Abundant Recovery on Lewis Avenue in Billings.

Cheryl Lauridson has run the Missoula campus the past two years, overseeing the women's program and a thrift shop. She, too, understands trauma, herself a rape victim who started helping others by volunteering for an abortion recovery program. "Our women come from all over the U.S.; all have experienced significant trauma in their lives," Lauridson says. "Our tagline is, 'Putting hope within reach of every addict.'"

Both Lauridson and Wilber believe in the faith-based approach, and results, of Teen Challenge. "We interview participants 8-20 months post-graduation and find that 78 percent of Teen Challenge students attain complete sobriety," says Wilber, compared with a secular success rate of less than 10 percent.

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