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Contact: Demetrius Fassas at 406-640-8069

### **NEW BUTTE SPIRIT CENTER OPEN AND ACCEPTING RESIDENTS**

BUTTE, MT—The new Butte SPIRIT Center home, a transitional living environment for men overcoming addictions, is up and running in Uptown Butte. According to Sean Wisner, SPIRIT president and co-founder, several residents have joined the house and two are completing Phase 1 of their recovery process, holding steady jobs as they continue their transition to sober, independent living.

The SPIRIT Center's goal is to provide stability and community through a peer-support program. Residents must work, volunteer, or progress in their education within their first month. They also must enter the program with at least 30 consecutive days of continuous sobriety, and residents must attend a minimum of 6 hours of recovery related programming per week.

The typical program runs three to six months, though can last as long as nine months, depending on the individual. Co-founders Sean Wisner and Demetrius Fassas, executive director, hope to serve as many as seven men at a time from Butte and Silver Bow County, though they welcome applicants from other regions as well.

The need for sober men's living is great in Butte, according to Wisner. In 2017, the Butte Silver-Bow Health Department, in partnership with St. James Healthcare, surveyed area residents, health care providers, and community leaders through a Community Health Needs Assessment. Substance abuse ranked as a serious issue, with 47 percent of respondents saying their lives had been negatively affected by substance abuse. In the 2020 assessment, 71 percent of survey respondents cited substance abuse as a major problem in the community, with 94 percent saying it was a major or moderate problem.

According to Fassas, "People struggle to understand what recovery looks like. You expect to go through a 28-day program and be healed. But treatment isn't a 'one and done' thing; it means changing your whole life, developing coping skills. Transitional housing helps lengthen the supportive environment in which you can succeed with your recovery."

Financial support from grant-funding agencies—including the Gianforte Family Foundation, Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, Wisner Family Foundation, Montana Healthcare Foundation, Montana Mental Health Trust, and Anaconda Community Foundation—enabled SPIRIT to acquire and renovate a suitable home to start the program. Improvements included a new roof, paint, and brick retaining wall as well as interior renovations.

The nonprofit has partnered with state agencies, including the Montana Chemical Dependency Center which provides referrals, and Community, Counseling, and Correctional Services Inc., which operates the Southwest Montana Addiction, Recovery & Treatment (SMART) program, along with a dozen other facilities across three states.

In addition to accepting new residents, the SPIRIT Center is looking for prospective members to expand its board. For more information, contact Fassas at 406-640-8069.