

The Daily Courier

Trusted local news leader for Prescott, Arizona communities since 1882

Reporter rates WYGC one of the top places to recover

By T.M. Shultz
The Daily Courier

Thursday, July 23, 2009



Courtesy photo
Sandy Kenyon, left, speaks with Town of Dewey-Humboldt Mayor Len Marinaccio at a recent luncheon for the West Yavapai Guidance Clinic at the Hassayampa Inn.

Most Prescott residents don't realize it, but West Yavapai Guidance Clinic has one of the best drug and alcohol rehabilitation clinics in the nation, says former CNN entertainment reporter Sandy Kenyon.

Kenyon, who now works for a New York television station, ranks West Yavapai's program and the Hazelden recovery center in Minnesota as the top two most successful places to recover in the nation.

"Some of the most famous people in the world got sober in this town," Kenyon told an audience gathered to hear his story during an invitation-only luncheon at the Hassayampa Inn.

Kenyon took time out from his hectic schedule to fly in from New York that morning so he could witness what he called West Yavapai's powerful, no-nonsense, no-frills recovery program.

Kenyon was CNN's Senior Entertainment Correspondent based in Hollywood for a decade where he was best known as the voice of "The Hollywood Minute."

During his career, he's interviewed hundreds of big-name stars.

But he was a drunk, and his bosses knew it. They gave him chance after chance but finally told him if he came to work drunk one more time, they'd fire him.

And they did.

"I drank my job away," Kenyon said simply.

He ended up in Prescott after spending \$100,000 on recovery programs elsewhere that didn't work, including a stint at a well-known rehab clinic in

Tucson that sent him to their half-way house in Prescott where he started drinking again.

He was broke, living in a Prescott hotel and drinking a quart of vodka a day. That went on for three months, he said.



Then one day, after almost getting run over by a passing car, he knew he'd die if he didn't stop drinking.

So the 1978 graduate of Princeton University walked through the unprepossessing doors of West Yavapai's clinic.

Employees there almost didn't accept him because he hadn't been sober the required 48 hours.

"If you send me out now, I'll die," Kenyon pleaded.

They relented.

That was Jan. 10, 1992 and he hasn't had a drink since, he said.

"It's not the facility, it's the people," he said of why West Yavapai is so successful. "It's something about the vibe of the place."

Now, with the state's budget problems, West Yavapai - which helps people with all kinds of behavioral health problems - is facing a financial threat that could hinder its ability to help as many people as it otherwise could.

Several state programs used by some of its clients may fall under the budgetary axe, said Laura Norman, West Yavapai's director of development and communication.

That's why West Yavapai has begun actively promoting donations to its West Yavapai Guidance Clinic Foundation. Donations are tax-deductible and donors can designate how they want their money used.

For more information, visit the foundation's website at www.wygc.org/wygc_foundation.html or call Norman at 445-5211.

"It's very important that we keep our clinic doors open no matter what budget circumstances are," said Larry Green, West Yavapai's chief executive officer.

Green said West Yavapai has about 4,000 people under its care on any given day and that by the end of 2009, it will have helped more than 7,000 people from western Yavapai County alone.

And this past year, West Yavapai provided about \$1.5 million in uncompensated care, Norman said.

"There are some services we never get paid for yet we do as part of our mission, or there are services we get paid for but that payment doesn't cover the real cost of doing business," Norman added.

Related Links