

First Baptist Deer Park Exercises Faith to Share Hope

By Roni Archer

Deer Park First Baptist launches a partnership with a local non-profit organization allowing the church to think outside their building.

Pastor Dale Smith realizes that the local church does not have the resources to provide all things for all people. As Senior Pastor at Deer Park First Baptist Church since 2001, he affirms that collaboration is the key to success.

While Deer Park First Baptist Church (DPFBC) was not equipped to house and manage an effective in-patient treatment for individuals with addictions, Cenikor can and does do this type of work everyday. The people of DPFBC agreed that there was no reason to recreate the wheel. They chose, instead, to become a spoke in the wheel of transformation and renewal.

Pamela McLean, current Operations Manager for Cenikor's Deer Park Facility and a graduate of Cenikor's program herself says, "I did not know what unconditional, nonjudgmental love was all about until I met my Mentor, Sherrie Johnson, [from] Deer Park First Baptist Church."

Pamela agreed to become part of a mentoring relationship with Johnson, a long-time member of the church who serves as a Mentor for several of the female residents of Cenikor. Pamela and Sherrie began their mentoring relationship in October 2004 and have watched it grow and develop into a life-long friendship. Pamela continued, "Sherrie's compassion for me took my breath away. I truly could not understand the depth of her love and concern for me. I did not understand this level of love, but knew I wanted to find out how to give it and apply it in my life. With time, I began to understand that Sherrie was simply reflecting the love taught by Jesus. I have three wonderful sons that I was forced to leave behind when I admitted myself into Cenikor's program. I knew, however, that I must deal with my addiction. Leaving my children was almost more than I could take, but loving them required that I concentrate on taking care of my addiction so that I could take care of them. When I allowed Jesus into my life, I finally discovered the 'me' I was meant to be based on God's purpose and God's plan. With Sherrie's loving guidance, I begin to experience abundant life at age 38. I returned home to my sons and was able to truly love them because I had learned how to truly love myself."

When asked about her experience as a Cenikor Mentor, Sherrie Johnson replied, "Being a Mentor through Cenikor provided a way for me to serve as the hands and feet of Christ. Watching her [Pam] succeed has been a tremendous blessing. I witnessed her struggles, but I also saw her faith develop. I watched this young woman, God's own creation, become the person God wanted her to become. Her past experiences allow her to help others realize that God loves **everyone** unconditionally and God uses our experiences, good and bad, to bring honor and glory to Him."

Cenikor – Deer Park

The Cenikor Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that is dedicated to assisting people with the development of their social, behavioral, vocational, educational and recreational skills, to live a lifestyle free of substance abuse.

The Cenikor Foundation's Deer Park facility services South Texas and has a 180-bed capacity.

Cenikor's program within the therapeutic community lasts approximately 18 – 24 months.

The professionals at Cenikor realize that addiction is a chronic disease – one that hits families hard and has a powerful, negative impact on our communities.

Roni Archer, Community Resource Manager for the Cenikor Foundation in Deer Park, shares, "Those struggling with addiction need prayer, but their needs go much deeper than prayer alone. If your church is willing to help, we are inviting you to step out of your church building and roll up your sleeves. Fighting addiction is hard work and we need all hands on deck."

Cenikor invites UBA churches to participate in this life-changing ministry. Opportunities exist and workers are needed. Visit Cenikor's website today: <http://www.cenikor.org> or contact Roni Archer, Community Resource Manager, at 281-476-0088.

Sherrie fervently believes the time she spends with Cenikor residents is God's work in progress and must be done "until God calls me home."

Burtis Morris, a member of Deer Park First Baptist's Silver Set Department (Senior Adults), retired from the workforce. He found serving as a Mentor for one of Cenikor's male residents something that he had to be willing to learn how to do and he developed the art of patience while doing it. Burtis has witnessed many Cenikor graduations and found "the residents' gratitude to others and pride in themselves amazing and real."

In addition to providing mentors, DPFBC members go onsite to lead Bible studies and spiritual growth groups. Harrell Batte, a new volunteer for Deer Park First Baptist, co-leads a men's group onsite at Cenikor's Deer Park Facility. He and co-leader, Danny Hardy, are teaching from the book, One Month to Live: Thirty Days to a No-Regrets Life, by local Pastor Kerry Shook and his wife, Chris. Batte voiced humility and excitement in working onsite with Cenikor male residents when sharing, "The first night Danny and I met with the residents, some of them shared why they were there <Cenikor> and how they were seeking to turn their lives around. They were truly grateful that a men's Bible study was offered saying that, to their knowledge, nothing had been offered for men. It took this group less than five minutes to open up, and we spent two hours sharing, studying, and learning from one another. When we were leaving, a young man grabbed my hand in a strong grip and thanked me over and over again for taking my time to lead a Bible study for men." Harrell went on to share that one resident asked for personal prayer voicing he needed Jesus to take control of his life. Batte and Hardy are in agreement that they, as volunteers, receive the greater blessing in serving at Cenikor.

Cenikor is not a faith-based organization. However, spirituality and faith are very much a part of their program and the recovery process needed to conquer one's addictive cycle. In a recent interview, Doug Richards the Facility Director at Cenikor Deer Park said, "While Cenikor is not faith-based, you can bet that just about every graduate that crosses the stage upon completion of our program gives the glory to a Higher Power." Involvement with Cenikor allows the faith community the opportunity to show struggling addicts the way to true healing and lasting life change is to establish a relationship with their Higher Power.

Due to the success of the partnership launched and carried out by Deer Park First Baptist Church, Cenikor's Deer Park Facility is improving and expanding the reach of its spiritual realm by creating what they call their "**Faith/Hope Initiative**."

Two Houston-area churches have joined forces with Cenikor's Vocational Services Department by willingly employing Cenikor residents to work in paid positions inside the churches' maintenance department and as part of their janitorial staff. Wages paid go directly into Cenikor's budget to allow the Foundation to continue to house, feed, and care for these residents.

Do you realize how vicious the cycle of addiction is on someone's soul? Are you interested in hearing about a program that can truthfully claim an 85-90% recovery rate? Are you willing to think outside the box and step outside your church building in order to reach out to those seeking life change and spiritual transformation? If so, Cenikor's "**Faith/Hope Initiative**" provides a great outlet for ministry.