



*“Every long or short journey begins with the First Step”*

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## Dreams Do Come True

While reflecting over the past years of First Step Recovery Homes, Inc., Founder and Executive Director, Keith Giles says the organization is in its current ginning his focus was to operate a 50 seeking safe, structured drug and al-become a reality. In September resing that along with their 330 and 336 men. “Never give up on your dreams, claims Giles.”



position because he never gave up on his dream. In the be-bed facility for men suffering from the disease of addiction cohool free housing. Thirty three years later his vision has dents began moving into 416 Olive Street, a two-story build-Penny Street buildings enables the organization to house 50 keep pushing and follow the vision God has given you, pro-

The Olive Street facility consists of office space, conference and meeting rooms, a café and common areas, laundry areas, a commercial kitchen and resident sleeping areas.

Contributions to assist in making the building a success were provided by: the Blessing Board, Carnegie Mellon University, the Oakland Holiday Inn and Quick Med Claims.



## First Step Earns Foundations Confidence

To survive in today’s nonprofit world, funding support from the foundation community is essential. It’s an earned privilege and commodity. Over the years, First Step’s leadership has gained the approval and trust of several area funders.

Foundation support for 2024 has been awarded from:

The Staunton Farm Foundation - general operating and supportive services for participant-related supplies - 416 Olive Street (\$98,000)

Jefferson Regional Foundation - General operating and program support (\$60,000)

Jefferson Regional Foundation - Operating, capacity building, capital campaign consultant for program expansion (\$60,000)

Pittsburgh Foundation – Small and Mighty Grant - General operating support (\$28,000)

PNC Charitable Trust - Program support - Recovery from Substance Misuse, Reintegration (\$10,000)

Howard E. & Nell E. Miller Charitable Foundation - General operating support for program expansion – 416 Olive (\$10,000)

G. C. Murphy Company Foundation - General operating support for program expansion – 416 Olive Street (\$5,000)

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## First Step Residents Make Strides

As First Step embarks upon its 33<sup>rd</sup> year, former residents continue to make strides. **Kevin Moon, Justin Fetter, Sean Nixon, and Michael Farris** are perfect examples.

**Sean Nixon**, 31 has been clean since 2022. Born in New Castle PA, to drug addicted parents he began using pills from the medicine cabinet at 12 years of age, and eventually used heroin



and alcohol which made it impossible to graduate high school. Eventually progression led to homeless couch suffering until New Castle Drug and Alcohol suggested he detox at Pyramid. He later became a resident of First Step. "First Step has helped me understand addiction, recovery, and living life without illicit drugs," he says. He is particularly appreciative of Jerry Stadford, and Brandon Douglas. He says Jerry was like a counselor to him, and Brandon recommended First Step. Sean moved to Transitional Housing in the area, is employed at McDonalds as Manager and plans to pursue advancement with the company. He credits First Step where he became house manager, the life skills component and support provided one on one and group discussions. **Next steps:** He feels ready to live on his own, actively attends 12-step recovery meetings, helps newcomers. He regularly checks in at First Step considering it to be Family.

**Justin Fetter**, 35 has been clean since 2022 after 22 years of substance misuse. A Brookfield, PA native, he started using drugs at twelve years of age. He enrolled in college for Entertainment Production, and by 2020 he was homeless and bouncing between his mother and different drug houses. He found that without

school, any goals, or structure he developed severe paranoia. What led to him seeking treatment was when he began to internalize and project the messages of music, media, and television, taking the information out of context and internalizing it ending in severe traumatization and behavior patterns that were extremely irrational. After spending 55 days at Pyramid, he received the recommendation for First Step. His key to long term recovery is the sense of community and responsibility that started with learning to live with 14 other men, successful communication, chores, and the skills to live successfully without the use of illicit drugs. **Next Steps:** He is actively involved in the 12-step recovery community, has several home groups, and a sponsor. Working at Walmart and living independently. He says he has found the piece that was missing and there is no part of him that could say that this is not exactly what he needed.

**Kevin Moon**, 52 has been clean since 2023. A Pittsburgh resident, his journey to recovery began at age 9, he says he was a mischievous child, and the youngest of 8 children in the home of his adopted parents. At 14



he was sent to a residential boys treatment home where he graduated high school. His first rehab experience at 26 years old didn't last long. At 35 he went back to rehab and stayed in that area and helped start an Oxford House with five other guys. With almost eight years sober he returned to Pittsburgh and didn't connect with any organizations or go to meetings for help and relapsed.

After another rehab he came to First Step on October 31, 2023 where within the year he became House Manager for six months and is currently Case Manager. His wanting to be in the human service field led him to pursue the CRM Certificate. ( Certified Recovery Specialist) For most people this journey would have taken far longer if not years, but the doors of opportunity opened and he has courageously stepped through. He says First Step is a phenomenal program and his gratitude is immeasurable. Kevin is the father to two daughters and two grandchildren.

**Michael Farris**, 52 came to First Step after having serving 32 years in the penal system. He is a humble and grateful man. Being housed with the men at First Step has



helped him to build relationship skills with recovering men who are also learning to navigate socialization and relationship integration without mind and mood altering substances. The toll that incarceration has had on his mental health had left him in a protective posture that had him closed off to everyday life skills. The information and basic kindness he has received here at first step is enabling him to become more comfortable with being home. He is working and stays in close contact with the staff and residents at First Step, which he considers his touchstone and home.

## Primary Care Health Services Expanding

The future is bright for Primary Care Health Care Services. Recently ground was broken for a three-story 26-million-dollar building that will house two other vital community organizations; Healthy Start and Homewood Children's Village. The expansion will also enhance the 31 year partnership with First Step Recovery Homes, Inc. The state-of-the-art building is expected to be completed by the spring of 2026.

PCHS provides comprehensive primary and preventative health care services to medically underserved and indigent populations, and will provide women's health, behavioral, homeless, and addiction services.



## Inside First Step

The mission of **Judith Wilson, LSW, MDiv** is to ameliorate the effects of abuse and poverty in the lives of the people she serves. As Case Manager at First Step, Wilson, utilizing her wide range of professional and personal experience, provides therapy, housing, legal, support services, and other resources to a caseload of over ten residents.



A Pittsburgh native, she holds Masters degrees in Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh, and a Masters in Divinity from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. She has worked with many different populations of people and has been working in the Drug and Alcohol field for the last 5 years. Her work began providing service at Davis Archway Treatment Center in Butler PA, a men’s facility, leading to working as a Therapist with Tadisio, Inc, an Opioid Treatment Facility in Pittsburgh. providing therapy to both men and women.

Toting a 20-year career as a family therapist at Wesley Spectrum Service, **Garl Germany III** is looking forward to helping First Step residents



Formerly of Bentley Drive in the Hill District, he obtained a Master’s Degree in Social Work, from the University of Pittsburgh. he’s been Constable for the past twelve years, owner of S&T Chocolates which provides teens with work experience and business training, -founding member of Blessing of the Lord Church. While employed at Wesley Spectrum Service, he made a significant impact guiding children and families out of the court system, and helping them overcome barriers and achieve healthy, successful lives. Since the summer he has been impacting lives of the First Step residents as case manager..

achieve their recovery and sobriety goals.

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## Delightful Activities

Light-hearted comedy, Spirit Week, and a Friendsgiving celebration are activities the staff of First Step Recovery Homes are utilizing to assist in boosting the morale of their residents. “We want this to be a family-type environment, which is something some of the men here have not experienced,” says Executive Director Keith Giles. Comedian Tyrone “Ty Mac” and the Remanise Band were the first two shows.

Spirit Week provides the staff and residents a chance to dress for success, to wear their favorite hat and socks, or tote their favorite sports team attire and to wear neon colored clothing.

“The holiday season is a traumatic and depressing time in this environment. Our goal is to offer a way for the residents to confront life's challenges without resorting to drugs and alcohol as a solution.”

To become involved or to showcase your talent contact Nichelle Rose at (412) 673-2113.

### Board & Staff Box Board of Directors

#### Frank Francis - Chairman

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| James Brown     | Keith Giles      |
| Richard Giles   | Yvette Giles     |
| George Jones    | Gretchen Lowery  |
| Dennis Robinson | Barbara Williams |

#### Staff

#### Keith Giles – Chief Executive Officer Keenon Mikell Chief Operating Officer

- |                          |                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Garl Gernamy             | Keith Rosser    |
| Nichelle Rose            | Jerry Stradford |
| Judith Wilson. LSW, MDiv |                 |

#### Consultants

- |                  |                 |               |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Diane I. Daniels | Robert DeOrio   | Annetta Tyler |
| Delbert Tyler    | Kimberly Rosser |               |





## Climbing The Stairs To Recovery...

## Director's Message



*Keith Giles –Executive Director*



*Keenon Mikell Adevole MBA, MSW*

*Chief Operating Officer*

Relapse among individuals recovering from addiction often follows seasonal patterns, influenced by emotional triggers, social pressures, and environmental factors. At First Step Recovery Homes in McKeesport, the holiday season brings both joy and danger. Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's are particularly challenging as participants navigate increased social gatherings, alcohol availability, and family dynamics. For many, these factors, combined with loneliness or nostalgia for past behaviors, heighten the risk of relapse.

Spring presents another critical period, marked by emotional highs and lows tied to the season's theme of renewal and change. Social events like weddings and outdoor gatherings can increase exposure to substances, while the lighter, more energetic atmosphere may lead to overconfidence in recovery. This mix of emotional and environmental challenges can make individuals more vulnerable to relapse during this time.

Summer holidays, particularly the Fourth of July, pose additional risks due to their association with outdoor celebrations and substance use. Long weekends and a break from routine can strain coping mechanisms, while cultural norms around alcohol at these events further complicate recovery efforts. Staying vigilant and maintaining access to supportive environments are essential to navigating these seasonal challenges.

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**The Recovery Report**  
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First Step Recovery Homes Inc. provides supervised, temporary, safe drug and alcohol free structured housing for persons recovering from the disease of addiction and trying to stay out of the criminal justice system.



Jerry Stradford



Nichelle Rose

Full Time Staff



Keith Rosser

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## HIV/AIDS Not Forgotten

First Step Recovery Homes, Inc. along with numerous McKeesport organizations banded together to celebrate World Aids Day 2024. "Rock the Ribbon is an event we take very seriously," says Keenon Mikell, First Step's chief operating officer. "This year we had a bike giveaway for the youth of the area and a host of vendors were on hand providing a wealth of information."

Held at the Noah's Ark Community Center, a project of Bethlehem Baptist Church, other collaborating organizations included the Latterman Family Health Center, Macadoina Face, Mon Yough, Mayor Mike Cherepko and the City of McKeesport, Zion Baptist Church, Build N Block and Another Shoulder.