

Duo has helped hopeless at Harbor Light 37 years

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Each day and night, alcoholics stagger through the door or are carried in.

The poor line up daily in the noon soup line.

Homeless couples with children and men and women without futures go there for shelter.

To all of them, their beacon of hope is the Salvation Army's Harbor Light Complex, managed by Edward V. Diamond, and his wife, Dorothy.

The Diamonds, both majors in the Salvation Army, welcome all who stop at the eight-story, fortress-like building at 1710 Prospect Ave. The two have devoted 37 years here to helping the homeless, the hungry, alcoholics and others in need.

They do their difficult work day after day with a quiet dignity and sense of humor. Together they fight the drinking problems that plague hundreds of men and women who come there yearly.

There are few victories and many defeats, but the two never give up trying to make a difference.

Joy, they say, is when an alcoholic breaks the habit and becomes a useful citizen. Many of their clients, unfortunately, return to drinking.

"We get those persons who have been rejected by society and have nowhere else to go," said Diamond. "When they come here, it is because they are destitute, and we do not charge them. They all have big problems in common."

On the Harbor Light computer are the names of 15,000 people who have been helped there in the past four years. Each year, 1,600 men and women who are unable to control their drinking go through the detoxification process at the complex. Some do it only once and abstain from drinking, but one man has been through the center 30 times in the last 10 years.

The rehabilitation program for alcoholics there has been approved by Ohio Department of Health's Division of Alcoholism.

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Social and personal problems among the residents are so frustrating to social workers that Diamond has trouble keeping a staff. Staff members get so discouraged they quit, usually to find less stressful positions, Diamond said.

His wife also manages the kitchen help, who feed 200 persons three-meals daily. She is in charge of religious activities and programs for the elderly, and she does other tasks, including producing mimeographed information bulletins for clients and staff.

She and her husband supervise 89 employees, 60 of whom work full time on Harbor Light programs.

There is no question in the Diamonds' minds why they spend their lives helping some of those with the toughest social problems in Cleveland.

"The Lord sent us here," said Diamond. "Here is where we're meant to be."

The two have the reputation of never giving up on anyone trying to break away from alcoholism and begin a sober life, but it sometimes seems the process never ends. There are still some men who came to them



PD/JIM GAYLE

Major Edward V. and Dorothy Diamond, Harbor Light managers.

with drinking problems more than 30 years ago who return infrequently to dry out.

Bill Hubbard, 58, a recovering alcoholic and veteran security officer at the complex, recently wrote his thoughts for Harbor Light's "Drum Beat" bulletin.

"While sitting in our Harbor Light chapel service recently, I looked around at the congregation. I couldn't help but notice how many were old-timers like myself.

"Men who over the years had sort of become known as the major's (Diamond's) old boys. Men who had kept getting knocked down by life, and found the major helping them up, dusting them off, and trying to get them on their feet again.

"Seeing all these men on that Sunday morning, clean, well dressed, made me realize again what Harbor Light means to us. Most of us are working, and find time to help others like the major and Mrs. Diamond helped us.

"I couldn't help but think, what if they had given up on us years ago? If they had, there is no doubt most of us would have wound up in an insane asylum or the cemetery, as have so many others."

Dorothy Diamond said it was the rare thank-you or expression of gratitude by men like Hubbard that kept them going.

Like the times, alcoholics also have changed.

"Many of the young alcoholics and those in their early 30s just don't seem to care about working and think society should just take care of them," she said.

"It is a problem, I know, of welfare people that because they have lower paying jobs, there is not that incentive to go to work because there is not that much more money in your pocket. The old-timers, when they were young, pitched in and helped. They had a work ethic. In the old days, when an alcoholic sobered up, he was up shaving, dressing and trying to find work."

Harbor Light, with its dirty sandstone exterior, is a kind of hard-times dormitory for the 200 men, women and children — its daily population

average — who stay there for short or prolonged periods.

The complex contains an emergency shelter with 50 beds for men and five special family rooms with space for children.

Last year, 2,073 people, 67 of them children, sought emergency shelter there. So far this year through September, 1,668 people, including 73 children, have sought shelter. The average stay this year has been 8.7 days. Last year it was 10.8 days.

Harbor Light also operates a halfway house for former convicts. Fifteen ex-convicts are now in the program and live at the complex while they seek work and a normal life outside.

Another 40 rooms are maintained for low-income elderly retirees, mostly men, who receive room and board for \$10 daily. That includes three meals and two coffee breaks.

It costs \$2.1 million yearly to operate the complex and its programs, the Diamonds said. State and federal funds, help from United Way Services, payments by clients who can afford them and other contributions pay the tab.

The 225-room building, built in 1907, was a former YWCA residence for many women from small towns who came here looking for work and opportunity. The Salvation Army took it over in 1950.

Diamond began his work with alcoholics here in 1949 after graduating from the Salvation Army's Officers Training School. He served an internship in New York's Bowery and in Wilmington, Del.

He managed the Salvation Army's Citadel Hotel, a workingman's residence, then at E. 9th St. and Eagle Ave., and maintained a 10-bed alcoholic program.

His wife also is a graduate of the officers training school. She was commissioned in 1951.

They met in Worcester, Mass., where Diamond's father was in charge of the Salvation Army. Dorothy Diamond's parents also were members of the Salvation Army there.

The Diamonds were married in 1952 and have two grown children.