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TREATMENT

MAGAZINE

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Gender Gap

Women's Treatment Has Come a Long Way

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June Quisenberry
Director, The Orchid
Boynton Beach, Florida



Julie Queler, Director and Founder of The Orchid, a new women's treatment center in Florida

Orchid Blooming

Entrepreneurs are applying the Clinicians Mantra...Gender Specific Treatment Works!!

By McBride Garcon

When Julie Queler first thought about opening a new treatment center in Florida, she didn't have any trouble figuring out what type of facility it would be. "I had owned a women's halfway house and was very familiar with the widespread clinical consensus that gender specific treatment was the way to go," said Queler, who is herself in recovery and a former literary agent. Queler began approaching investors with her idea of opening a small intensive outpatient center for woman called *The Orchid* using a business model particular to many centers in South Florida, one in which intensive outpatient clients live off site in supervised housing provided by a third party. "Our approach is holistic, with elements like yoga and acupuncture as vital elements of our approach to wellness and recovery," Queler said.

Apparently Queler wasn't the only one who thought the women's treatment center was a good idea, because it didn't take long for her to raise more than enough capital to get the business going. "We have an enormous amount of confidence in Julie,"

said Dick Miller, a former Caron Foundation executive who invested early on in the *Orchid* venture. Miller knew first hand from the success of Caron Foundation's women's program that the demand for gender specific treatment was strong: "our program at Caron never had any problem filling beds," Miller said. It's difficult to get data on just how fast the gender specific sector of the treatment market is growing, but there seems to be a general consensus that it's pretty fast. "There is indeed strong growth in the number of women's programs and increasingly in new stand-alone facilities dedicated to treating women," said Ron Hunsicker, president of the National Association of Treatment Providers, NAATP.

For some it's about time: "Clinicians have been saying for a long time that you get better results if you separate out the genders," said Chuck Marschinke, a referral specialist for Bradford Health Services, a leading multi-facility treatment provider based in Birmingham, Alabama. "But it's only fairly recently that the idea seems to be catching on in a big way," he said.

Certainly, The Orchid does not appear to be going through much of the usual stress and strain that is characteristic of the early days of most startup businesses. After just five months in operation, the center is bustling with new clients.

"We've found a tremendous amount of support in the treatment center community for what we are doing," said Queler, who did not wish to divulge the source of her referrals, saying only that "they come from some of the best known names in the addiction field."

Indeed, The Orchid's approach seems to have struck a chord, filling a need in the marketplace. "Our view, which is backed by the clinical literature, is that women respond differently than men to certain approaches to therapy and treatment," said Queler.

The Orchid's program is based on the female oriented treatment modalities of Dr. Karen Dodge, a scion of the venerable automotive family of Detroit. While still a counselor, Dr. Dodge saw an urgent need for modalities geared exclusively for women, later on developing her ideas while completing a doctorate in social work at Florida International University in the late 1990s.

Dr. Dodge's findings led her to stress the importance of "relational growth" among women in treatment, a process whereby personal growth is fostered through the encouragement of a high degree of emotional interdependence and trust among females during the treatment process.

"We agree with this type of approach and believe that the strong interrelations between women that we promote at The Orchid have formed a nucleus around which recovery can more effectively be sought," said Queler.

Far from just talking about the need for women's treatment, Queler is putting her money where her mouth is. And entrepreneurs like Queler aren't the only ones stepping up to the gender specific treatment plate. Big multi-facility treatment center operations are also making investments.

United Medical Corporation, which owns four facilities under the Ten Broeck name in Kentucky and Florida, recently opened a 50-bed women's treatment center near Jacksonville, Florida. Called Wekiva Springs Wellness Center, the facility has two therapeutic tracks, ones that often overlap with women: eating disorders and chemical dependency.

"UMC felt that there was a need for this type of facility," said Mark Davis, director of marketing at Wekiva Springs. "And we have been very well received in the local community."

That may be so, but Wekiva Springs isn't having nearly the success that The Orchid is in filling its beds, even though Wekiva Springs has a far more comprehensive ability to treat clients.

"Except in the most serious instances of psychiatric disorder, there is no need to refer clients out at Wekiva Springs," said Davis.

According to Davis, the problem at Wekiva Springs is "it's a new name and people aren't really making the connection" with the name and the center's capabilities. "We are trying the right moves to get the name out nationally," Davis said. And while Wekiva Springs looks to fill its beds, Queler is looking for ways to solidify her success. "We've just been open a few months, and we working hard to establish long-term referral relationships," she said. **M.G.**

