

'Outcasts' explores cost of high rates of recidivism

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Walsh said Hay House chooses whom it accepts into its program. He looks at the crime — taking mostly alcohol and drug offenses — and for offenders who are unlikely to return to prison.

"Our first goal is to protect the community, so we're very selective on who we take," he said.

There are some treatment programs in prison, Walsh said. The problems start when the offender is released from prison.

"The problem is when they walk out that door ... when they come out they're worse than when they came," he said. "They learn better ways to con, to commit crimes. They learn new ways to survive. There are people who come through this program who have so many skills, if they're just worked with."

Walsh said Hay House clients are treated with respect.

"When they come in that door, we treat them like real people," Walsh said. "You have to be willing to become involved with them to get them to change. Changing lives is about relationships."

Hay House staff evaluates their health needs, their mental health needs, and their chances of recidivism.

"Then we talk to them, something that doesn't always happen with other agencies. We treat them with respect," Walsh said. "If they start straying off the track, we're there to put them back on. They can adjust with time to be moved back into the community."

In the past five years, more than 1,700 individuals have entered the Hay House program. Of these, more than 500 earned GEDs, 899 completed alcohol and



Photo by David Wood

Chuck Walsh, director of Hay House, supported the documentary "Outcasts." "We've been wanting to get the word out for a long time," he said.

drug education and aftercare programs, and 579 completed Moral Reconciliation Therapy, which is behavioral modification and education. Additionally, participants earned \$1,333,457; paid \$516,175 in child support, criminal injury fees, restitution, fines and court costs; and worked more than 124,000 community service hours worth an estimated \$638,000.

"Hay House is doing 90 percent-plus success rate, so why don't we have a Hay House in every community? It's a complex issue ... and people don't really understand the issue," Newton said.

"People do not want to admit this is an issue," Walsh said. "Out of sight, out of mind. They want to think everything is sweet and pretty and it isn't."

Ryan Elliott spends every Thursday night at Hay House,

talking one-on-one with the men who want to talk to him.

"It's a real privilege, to be in as bad a shape as I was, to come back and help anybody," he said. "I wouldn't get to do that anywhere. I want them to know that, number one, I know that I wouldn't be where I am now if I wouldn't have got saved, and I know that Hay House is a place that is very helpful," Elliott said. "It does help people, and it is a good place and people just don't realize it, the breaks they could get."

Elliott said the Hay House clients listen to his story.

"I listened, but it took a long time. I was 37 years old before I listened," he said. "It's an honor and a privilege to be able to do that for them. I thank them for it."

Working with Newton and Hillhouse on "Outcasts: Surviving

the Culture of Rejection" are composer Paul Vanderbeck and motion graphics designer Sergei Prokhnevskiy.

After its PBS premiere, the station will distribute the film to other PBS stations nationwide. The film will also be shown to local middle school students to increase awareness about the consequences of drug use.

For more information about "Outcasts" and to view an excerpt from the film, visit www.culture-ofrejection.org.

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