



NEWS SPORTS FORUMS BLOGS CITIES ENTERTAINMENT TRAVEL LIFE & HOME JOBS AUTOS REAL ESTATE CLASSIFIEDS

al.com - News - The Birmingham News

SEARCH: Enter Keyword(s) GO! →

The Birmingham News

• Subscribe
• Today's Paper & More

Sponsored By:



The new Magnolia Creek Residential Treatment Center in Chelsea helps people with eating disorders

Magnolia Creek treats women with bulimia, anorexia

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

ANNA VELASCO
News staff writer

Karen Wright has given a decade of her life to "Ed."

For "Ed," she sacrificed her job, time with her children, her health.

"Ed," as people with the illness refer to it like a man's name, is the eating disorder that has controlled her existence since her late 20s.

Advertisement

CONTINUE STORY →

TOP STORIES

- Residents, business owners raise cheers, objections to Birmingham Mayor Larry Langford's tax increase plan at public hearings
- Senator Jeff Sessions seeks to close loophole that could cut injured soldiers' enlistment bonuses
- Daily blasting along I-65 to begin Monday
- More Headlines

PHOTO GALLERIES

- 23 Day Community Cleanup
- Christmas Decor
- War Eagle Roll Tide pets
- See More Photos

LATEST COLUMNS

Driver's Side

- Road builders list transportation-related threats in U.S., call for reform

John Archibald

- History says city fails at name game
- More Columnists

FORUMS

Birmingham

- For you Corporal Nayists: by d1rty 11/28/2007 7:50 a.m. CT
- 9% Sales Tax for Schools? by ironbowl 11/28/2007 7:32 a.m. CT
- More

Hoover

- New Pastor at Metro? by bandoband 11/27/2007 7:11 p.m. CT
- Neighbor problems? by acooper31 11/27/2007 6:40 p.m. CT
- More
- All Forums

BLOGS

Scott Stantis

- Langford-nomics 1:05 a.m. CT
- Hoover football and a new coach? 1:24 a.m. CT
- More

Scene

- "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" dirty, rotten and too long
- Organist Bradley Welch draws radiance and luster from IPC instrument



The Birmingham resident suffers from anorexia and awoke thinking about her weight. She weighed herself after drinking a glass of water and brought a scale to work. At the worst, the 5 foot, 8½-inch woman's weight slipped to 105 pounds. She spent many weekend visits with her children in bed, too weak to get up.

"This thing has completely taken my life away from me," said Wright, now 39. "The more it controlled me, the more I thought I was in control."

After as many as 50 hospitalizations because of malnutrition over the past five years, Wright checked herself into Magnolia Creek Residential Treatment Center on July 31 and spent almost six weeks there.

Residential program:

Magnolia Creek in Chelsea, the state's only residential program for eating disorders, has treated 17 women since it opened in April, in addition to the six currently enrolled. It can treat 10 at a time.

Dr. Kenneth Olson, medical director of Magnolia Creek, said having such a place in the state helps with continuity of care and allowing families to participate.

"The need is extensive," said Olson, also a private practice internist who specializes in clinical nutrition.

CONTINUED 1 | 2 | 3 Next

© 2007 The Birmingham News. All rights reserved.
This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.



SHARE THIS STORY

- Reddit
- Digg
- del.icio.us
- Google
- Yahoo
- How Does It Work?

SITE TOOLS

- E-mail This
- Print This
- Newsletters

SPONSORED LINKS

- Win a Trip to the Big Easy
- #1 Honda Dealer in Alabama
- Come Experience the Forgotten Coast.
- Improve tomorrow with a better education today!



The new Magnolia Creek Residential Treatment Center in Chelsea helps people with eating disorders

Page 2 of 3

Because of the need, Eating Disorder Center of Alabama, a division of Alabama Psychiatric Services, also opened this year in Birmingham. That program offers "partial hospitalization," with treatment Monday through Friday during the day.

The National Eating Disorders Association estimates 10 million women and a million men suffer from serious cases of anorexia and bulimia in the United States. Anorexia has the highest death rate of any mental illness.

Magnolia Creek treats women 18 and older who have anorexia nervosa, bulimia or other eating disorders.

[CONTINUE STORY](#)

[Advertisement](#)

TOP STORIES

- Residents, business owners raise cheers, objections to Birmingham Mayor Larry Langford's tax increase plan at public hearings
- Senator Jeff Sessions seeks to close loophole that could cut injured soldiers' enlistment bonuses
- Daily blasting along I-65 to begin Monday
 - [More Headlines](#)

PHOTO GALLERIES

- 23 Day Community Cleanup
- Christmas Decor
- War Eagle Roll Tide pets
 - [See More Photos](#)

LATEST COLUMNS

Driver's Side

- Road builders list transportation-related threats in U.S., call for reform

John Archibald

- History says city fails at name game
 - [More Columnists](#)

FORUMS

Birmingham

- Employment Rate Question by *HearMeOut* 11/28/2007 11:20 a.m. CT
- Wiki & Six and... by *HearMeOut* 11/28/2007 11:23 a.m. CT
 - [More](#)

Hoover

- Congrats to Adam Snyder by *phreethot* 11/28/2007 9:00 a.m. CT
- I agree.... by *hellohoova* 11/28/2007 9:43 a.m. CT
 - [More](#)
 - [All Forums](#)

BLOGS

Scott Stantis

- Langford-nomics 1:05 a.m. CT
- Hoover football and a new coach? 1:24 a.m. CT
 - [More](#)

Scene

- 'Dirty Rotten Scoundrels' dirty, rotten and too long
- Organist Bradley Welch draws radiance and luster from IPC instrument
 - [More](#)



Wright, who graduated from the program in early September, said the staff at Magnolia Creek believed in her when she didn't.

Magnolia Creek is on 36 acres of wooded land in Shelby County, with a private lake and a once-private residence converted into the center's hub. Residents, admitted of their own volition, have round-the-clock nursing care to check their vital signs and do lab work.

"These are really sick individuals," Olson said. "The medical part is very challenging."

At Magnolia Creek, new residents have close observation to make sure they don't purge. As they progress to the last stage of recovery, they're allowed to assist in cooking and exercise without supervision. The minimum stay is 30 days, and six to eight weeks is average.

Professional staff:

In addition to the medical director and nurses, the staff includes a psychiatrist, psychologist, several therapists, mental health technicians and a dietitian. Residents' days are filled with individual and group therapy, health classes, art therapy, yoga and other activities, many outside.

"Sometimes with an eating disorder, you lose touch with your identity," said Nicole Siegfried, Magnolia Creek's clinical director and a psychologist. "An environment like this, where you're encouraged to recognize your place in the world, it can help people feel a different purpose in life."

[Previous](#) | [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [Next](#)

© 2007 The Birmingham News. All rights reserved.
This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.





TOP STORIES

- Residents, business owners raise cheers, objections to Birmingham Mayor Larry Langford's tax increase plan at public hearings
- Senator Jeff Sessions seeks to close loophole that could cut injured soldiers' enlistment bonuses
- Daily blasting along I-65 to begin Monday
 - [More Headlines](#)

PHOTO GALLERIES

- 23 Day Community Cleanup
- Christmas Decor
- War Eagle Roll Tide pets
 - [See More Photos](#)

LATEST COLUMNS

Driver's Side

- Road builders list transportation-related threats in U.S., call for reform

John Archibald

- History says city fails at name game
 - [More Columnists](#)

FORUMS

Birmingham

- Employment Rate Question by *HearMeOut* 11/28/2007 11:20 a.m. CT
- Wiki & Six and... by *HearMeOut* 11/28/2007 11:23 a.m. CT
 - [More](#)

Hoover

- Congrats to Adam Snyder by *phreethot* 11/28/2007 9:00 a.m. CT
- I agree.... by *hellohoova* 11/28/2007 9:43 a.m. CT
 - [More](#)
- [All Forums](#)

BLOGS

Scott Stantis

- Langford-nomics 1:05 a.m. CT
- Hoover football and a new coach? 1:24 a.m. CT
 - [More](#)

Scene

- "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" dirty, rotten and too long
- Organist Bradley Welch draws radiance and luster from IPC instrument
 - [More](#)

The new Magnolia Creek Residential Treatment Center in Chelsea helps people with eating disorders

Page 3 of 3

Words above the residents' beds, such as "Hope," "Play," "Laugh" and "Dream" are meant to counteract the negative things residents think about themselves.

The staff and residents dine together family style. Outings to restaurants get residents used to eating in public.

"Our philosophy is to make it as much like real life as possible so they can transition back to their lives," Siegfried said.

Advertisement

[CONTINUE STORY](#)



The dietitian works closely with Olson to provide fortification for the malnourished. He said proper nutrition is fundamental for people to be successful in psychotherapy, where they uncover and examine the roots of their problem. Malnutrition causes bizarre thinking and worsens the disorder, Olson said.

Wright said her eating disorder started when she was about 29, during a very stressful period. She had two young children, a business she was trying to run out of the house and then a divorce. The disorder took over. She quit eating and exercised compulsively.

Gained some weight:

At her graduation ceremony at Magnolia Creek, Wright "beat the living daylights" out of some scales and burned a pair of jeans she had outgrown. She weighed about 126 pounds, a more than eight-pound improvement. She has continued to see a therapist and goes to a weekly support group in Cahaba Heights with other Magnolia Creek graduates in an after-care program established by the center.

But, in the two months since she left, Wright has slipped. Her weight is back down to 118 pounds. She bought herself a new scale and resumed restricting food and using laxatives.

"You can't just undo something in 38 days that's been going on for 10 years," she said recently.

Wright wanted to stay longer, but she couldn't afford it. Many insurers will pay for the program, but not Wright's disability coverage. Private pay is \$1,150 per day.

Still, Wright has made progress. She hasn't been hospitalized since her stay at Magnolia Creek. She has maintained her own apartment and has not returned to live with her mother. She has a job. She goes to events for her sons, now 13 and 15.

Olson said Magnolia Creek has seen great results in residents, but the program alone can't be expected to "cure" a person. The individuals need to be ready for success, and the responsibility that goes with it. Because eating disorders are so complicated to treat, it's not uncommon for patients to attend several residential programs, he said.

Magnolia Creek was Wright's third residential program, and the best, she said. She thinks a transitional house after leaving the center would help her and other program graduates integrate more slowly back into normal life. She would like to return to college in January and perhaps earn counselor credentials so she could help others who have suffered like she has.

"I have to take one day at a time and concentrate on what is healthy for me," Wright said. "It's hard fighting the Ed voice in my head and most times I don't win. But I haven't given up."

E-mail: avelasco@bhamnews.com

[Previous](#) | [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#)

© 2007 The Birmingham News. All rights reserved.
This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Forums](#) | [Blogs](#) | [Multimedia](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Classifieds](#)
[Complete Forecast](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [RSS Terms and Conditions](#) | [Site Index](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Help/Feedback](#)



[The Birmingham News](#) | [The Huntsville Times](#) | [Press-Register](#)

© 2007 Alabama Live LLC. All Rights Reserved. Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#), [Privacy Policy](#) and [Advertising Agreement](#).