
Social, recreation center now open

Krystle Wagner
Apr 12, 2017

The Momentum Center for Social Engagement, 714 Columbus Ave. in Grand Haven, is now open. Residents ages 18 and older who live with mental illness, addiction or other disabilities can become members.

Community members have a new place to meet up and build lasting relationships in downtown Grand Haven.

The Momentum Center for Social Engagement is one of four recreational and social programs in Ottawa County for adults who live with disabilities that receives funding from the countywide mental health millage approved by voters last year.
Residents ages 18 and older with a mental illness, addiction or some other disability can become a member of the center for $1 a year. Residents can be self-diagnosed, said Extended Grace Executive Director Barbara Lee Van Horssen.

The goal is to have the center open seven days a week.

The center was developed as a result of needs expressed by the community in January 2016 during a first Town Hall Meeting in Grand Haven on mental health issues, organized by the Extended Grace program. While other services were being offered, the social and recreational piece was missing.

Van Horssen said mental illness is a community issue, and it needs to be a community solution.

“This is a vehicle for that,” she said of the center.

The 3,360-square-foot building houses the center and Just Goods Gifts and Café, which is open to the public.

Just Goods sells fair trade and socially conscious handmade merchandise, which will be made by Grand Haven Community-Based Instruction students and Humanity for Prisoners participants. Pending approval from the Ottawa County Department of Public Health, the café will sell Aldea Coffee, teas from Lucky Tea Café, cookies from Grande Finale and doughnuts from Leppinks.

Just Goods and Café is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. After April 15, it will also be open on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Just Goods Gifts and Café Manager Cali Caluza said purchasing from them has a local and global impact on lives.

In the center, members can use a pool table, Wii and board games, air hockey table, and a computer bay. Transportation is also available for monthly outings and attending town hall meetings.

Classes such as art, cooking, self-development and more will be offered for the public and center.
Information about resources offered by organizations throughout the community is available inside the entrance.

The facility also has a shower and on-site laundry services if someone has a hygiene need, Van Horssen said.

Van Horssen said they are collecting data for outcome-based information about the center’s effectiveness, such as the members’ interests in programming, struggles they encounter and feedback.

Van Horssen said “effectiveness” would be considered by seeing a reduction in people who report they feel lonely, a decrease in mental health-related emergency room visits, a positive impact on reducing suicide rates, and reducing accidental overdoses and additions.

Ultimately, Van Horssen said she hopes Grand Haven’s Momentum Center will one day become a model for other communities to use.

Van Horssen said they’re looking into starting a fundraising campaign. Funding would allow for the center to add two commercial kitchens — one for the café so they can have reusable plates and cups, and one for classes to make items to sell. She would also like to use funding for youth programming.

The center is looking for a videographer to share their story for a crowd-funding effort. The center is also looking for volunteers to teach classes, and items such as cleaning and art supplies.

For more information about the Momentum Center, volunteering or donations, visit www.extendedgrace.org/momentum-center-1/ or call 616-414-9111.