

## Mission opens housing for recovering addicts

Scott Jackson stood in the pulpit of a dimly lit Over-the-Rhine sanctuary Thursday and explained in flesh-and-blood terms why a few dozen people had gathered.

The event was the official ribbon-cutting for the opening of two rehabbed houses around the corner on Magnolia Street, where 10 recovering addicts of the City Gospel Mission's Exodus program can have more time to deal with their problems away from the temptations of familiar streets.

Jackson, 42, director of alumni programs for mission, was an alcoholic and cocaine user when he for into the rehab program in 2004. He stayed clean and sober for two consecutive eight-week stays in Exodus, but fragile in his recovery, he started to use and abuse twice when he got back on the streets.

"I didn't understand what it meant to change," Jackson said during the low-key ceremony. "Change is very hard."

The two houses, a \$1.2 million renovation project, will provide more time and space for change to take hold.

There are five beds in each of the houses at 213 and 215 Magnolia, with one room and bed for a staff counselor.

The first three qualified new residents will move into the furnished home on Saturday morning.

Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati provided a \$900,000 grant to the mission.

Clean and sober for two years, Jackson went through Exodus when it was time-oriented, not based in results. Now the average stay for a man in the program is 6-18 months.

The new houses "give Exodus participants the opportunity to experience independent living while still having the resources of the mission in their backyard," said Paul Spence, the agency's vice president of development.

Jackson put it this way: "You can stay connected to the good things and not drawn back to the bad ones."

The mission, with its sanctuary in the 1400 block of Elm Street, was founded in 1924 and is known for its work with homeless and hurting men. It now has 46 beds in its men's program and 46 beds in its women's program, housed in four locations in Mount Auburn.

The mission serves two meals a day and more than 120,000 meals a year.

"It is remarkable what community can do," said Sherman Bradley, mission vice president.