

**EACH ONE TEACH ONE:
LEARNING LEADERSHIP AT TROSA**

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It's Saturday night in Kemper Hall, an old auditorium in a retired elementary school near downtown Durham, North Carolina. Cigarette smoke lingers in the air as men and women file in and take their seats facing the stage. There is an air of excitement and expectation that electrifies the room. Tomorrow is Family Day, an annual Triangle Residential Options for Substance Abusers (TROSA) event to which program residents have invited their loved ones. For many, the day has been spent preparing food, decorating the picnic grounds at the TROSA West complex, and getting themselves ready for this once a year event. The energy of many lively conversations and jovial greetings makes the whole room buzz with anticipation.

The program is about to begin and a tall, thick-shouldered Black man with gold rim glasses and an intent look is greeted with much attention as he moves to the front of the room. He begins pacing as he addresses the now-silenced crowd of 300. His name is Jesse Battle and he is the Director of the Men's and Women's Program at TROSA. He begins by recognizing the happiness and joy he sees on the faces of the residents and the tremendous growth of the program.

"Look at all these happy faces out here! Good God, all these happy faces! I tell you this house is just growing and growing and growing and loving every minute of it.

Now basically what I want to talk to everyone about tonight is, as you know, on Sunday we're having our Family Day. I know everyone's looking forward to having family come, spending some time with your family. Because the people need to come see you. They need to come see you. They need to come see exactly what it is, is happening to you, the transformation that you are making here.

And a lot of mothers and fathers and significant others, they come here, and man, they are like, overjoyed! Because they are actually watching their son or their daughter come back to life. Because too many of them we were walking dead people out there in that road. We was on that road straight to hell.

Let your family see you standing up, being strong. Let your family see that. Let your family realize that the hope that they have had all these months is actually coming true. And that's what families come here to see. They come here to see the hope. And you need to be very proud in the accomplishments that you're doing.

And the families are not going to know what to expect. They are coming to a drug and alcohol treatment facility. They're not gonna expect *this*. They're not gonna expect us to be doing *this*. They're not gonna expect *that*. They're gonna sit back and say "What!? You're working with the brick masonry crew and you're building this? You're studying to get your CDL [Commercial Driver's License] and you're gonna do this? You painted this house and you refurbished this house and you're doing this? Wait a minute, y'all have done *this*?" Man, they're not gonna expect that.

So you gotta be very proud in what you have accomplished. Be very proud in that. My father's biggest dream was for me to wake up everyday and go to work. That was his biggest damn dream. Just to wake up and go to work. Wake up every damn morning and go to where they work. But that's what they did. So when you see 'em, that's what they have been doing. How many people in here know somebody, a loved one, that get up every morning and go to work?

That's what you're doing. That's what you're doing. Who do you think TROSA is? This ain't nothing but a fertile training ground for that. That's all this is. It ain't no more than that. So that we can practice, getting up every day, going to work, and doing it clean and sober, living with life's frustrations. Living with life's frustrations, clean and sober. That's what this is about. Because I don't know if anybody in here knows it or not, but TROSA's gonna give you some frustration.

That's what this is all about. Handling every frustration in peace and every day that comes this way."¹

As Jesse has so eloquently shared in these excerpts from his speech last summer, TROSA, as a community, as an organization, as an agent of social change, is about transforming people's lives. As he suggests, it is from a walk down the road to hell and self-destruction to one marked by productivity, self-knowledge, accomplishment, peace, and sobriety. While dealing with an individual's substance abuse issues is surely a major component of this equation, it is not its sole focus. TROSA employs a philosophy based both on cultivating self-reliance in the individual and on utilizing the power of community to help its members become whole, well-rounded, capable citizens who face life's challenges with an arsenal of abilities and a cache of coping tools.

Learning about how TROSA approaches and accomplishes this work of changing people's lives, what makes it successful, and how, as a community, TROSA communicates its vision, its philosophy and its ideas about leadership has been the impetus for an ethnographic research project. This effort has been supported by the *Leadership in a Changing World* initiative of the Ford Foundation in partnership with the Advocacy Institute and the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. Because of my training as a folklorist and my experience as an ethnographer, I was hired to conduct fieldwork in collaboration with the TROSA community during the summer and fall of 2002. I came to the

¹ Jesse Battle Address to TROSA community August 23, 2002

TROSA community aware of my status as an outsider, relying on this status to help me avoid assuming that I understood the social rules, the language, the behaviors, and the shared knowledge that provides the day-to-day framework for this community's life. I also knew that my own life experience would prevent me from becoming a community insider. I listened carefully and asked many questions about how and why this community existed, its goals, and its complement of both stated and intrinsic social rules. I was particularly interested in the ways the community and the individuals who constitute the community defined leadership and the work of leadership.

This final report offers a general history of the organization and the philosophical context from which TROSA emerged. It also includes some observations about TROSA as an agent of individual and social change and finally analysis of the ways the TROSA community and its members collectively define and endorse the meaning and the work of leadership. Many of the issues I examined in my fieldwork were most accessible through the collection of personal experience narratives and descriptions of the enactment of leadership qualities shared through interviews but they were also discernible through my participation in staff meetings, resident events, therapeutic sessions, and general conversation. From these experiences, my understanding of the community grew and specific themes and ideas emerged. The report utilizes the narratives that I collected from individual and group interviews, field notes from extensive participant observation, and TROSA residents' writing contest entries. The research approach and this final report rely on the TROSA community members to articulate, authorize, and validate their own notions of leadership, core values, and guiding principles. Finally, the report explores the relationship between the work of leadership and TROSA's efforts to effect social change.

A recent report from the US Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 16.6 million Americans were classified with dependence on, or abuse of, either alcohol or illicit drugs in 2001. This represents 7.3 percent of the population of the United States. Of these, more than 4.6 million people who meet the criteria for needing treatment do not recognize that they have a problem.² These alarming statistics reveal a tremendous need for programs like TROSA that encourage people to face their circumstances, dismantle their denial and seek help to change their lives. Changing even one life affects many other lives because each of our lives intersects with so many others. Substance abuse does not confine itself to the user or the addict; its ramifications reverberate through families, friends, and co-workers to the larger community.

² 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, US Dept. of Health and Human Services, <http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.samhsa.gov>.

TROSA History and Philosophy

The addicts who become part of the TROSA community often confront tremendous challenges, personal loss, and a legacy of physical, emotional, and psychic pain and abuse. Some are from families that have experienced many generations of substance abuse and addiction. Some have been involved in the criminal justice system for many years. But substance abuse is an equal opportunity disease. Many TROSA residents grew up in middle-class families and attended fine educational institutions. Many TROSA residents are parents or grandparents. Most are men, but the number of women has grown dramatically in the last several years, now accounting for approximately 60 of the current 270 residents. TROSA residents share a desire to change their lives. This work happens one person at a time.

Many TROSA residents have tried other programs, such as short-term 28-day rehabilitative programs, outpatient 12-step programs, and even other long-term residential programs. They have not succeeded in these other programs. At TROSA, they commit themselves to a two-year, highly structured residential program that requires them to develop their job and educational skills as a part of their therapeutic program. Paul Nagy, clinical associate at Duke University Medical Center and former TROSA board member, describes the challenges facing TROSA residents:

Many of the people who come here have tremendous skill and resiliency that unfortunately has not necessarily been channeled in ways that have been very helpful to them personally or to society. Then you have people who don't have such skills but are surviving nonetheless. We're not talking about people who are in the process of reaching their bottom, but rather about people who are living on the bottom.

I think we're real clear that unless we deal with the issue [substance abuse] more holistically—that is, support people in response to their full range of needs including social, psychological, family, spiritual and vocational—then we're going to fail. This is a disease that is defined by medical, psychological, social and spiritual issues. People need help in all of these areas in order to succeed in their recovery efforts. TROSA provides individuals with such an opportunity. The other special thing about TROSA is that residents interact with people who have lived where they have lived and see others succeed in ways they never have believed would be possible. That experience offers residents a tremendous amount of hope and inspiration.³

This notion that healing for some is best administered “in community” or in “relation to others” is not a new one but its potency is perhaps yet to be fully exploited. TROSA as a therapeutic community (TC) is a part of a long conceptual continuum. In his book, The Therapeutic Community: Theory, Model and Method, George De Leon suggests that this idea dates to Alexandrian Egypt. Here communities were formed to heal individuals of "diseases of the soul" that manifested themselves in disorders of the whole person that can only be effectively treated in "community." (2000:14) In more modern examples, DeLeon identifies several 19th and

³ Personal Interview with Paul Nagy, September 13, 2002

20th century religious communities and the contemporary Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) network as examples of this application specifically aimed at drug abuse. In the late 1950s a recovering alcoholic, Chuck Dederich, founded one of the first contemporary residential TCs, Synanon, based on his experience in AA. Legend has it that as he started to draw others with significant substance abuse problems to his small community, he was reading Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, "Self-Reliance." Inspired by Emerson's directive that man needs to earn his way in the world and that value is created through personal effort, Dederich hatched the idea that community members would heal themselves with the support of each other. Collectively, they could support themselves through their own business initiatives and hard work. Comparing Synanon to Alcoholics Anonymous, DeLeon outlines a major shift in philosophy:

Although the basic AA concepts of self-examination and mutual self-help were incorporated in Synanon, the AA emphasis on a spiritual 'higher power' was replaced by a secular ideology grounded in existential assumptions about self-determination and individual responsibility. As in AA, the recovering individual was viewed as primarily responsible for self-change through personal commitment and adherence to recovery teachings. For the TC, however, the power of change primarily resides within the individual and is activated through his or her full participation in the peer community. (2000:20)

This approach, based on the ideas of self-help and the values of healing, teaching, support, and guidance as delivered through the members of one's community, raises some very interesting questions about leadership: How do therapeutic communities define the tasks of leadership? How do leaders emerge in therapeutic communities? Do leaders demonstrate the community's notions of leadership? How is leadership shared or concentrated among members of the therapeutic community? What is the relationship between a person's life experience and that person's abilities as a leader in a therapeutic community? How do the values of a therapeutic community compare with some of our traditional notions of leaders as strong, dominant, influential individuals? Who are the leaders and who are the followers in therapeutic communities? Can individuals be both? Does a person need to see himself or herself as a leader in some way in order to make a change in his or her own life? Can a person be a leader to him or herself?

In a therapeutic community, each member of the community is ideally responsible not only for his or her own recovery but also for the recovery of everyone in the TC. Recovery is not limited to abstinence from drugs and alcohol. The TC approach, at its best, embraces the whole person, suggesting that healing means changing a lifestyle, a value system, and relationships to others and to the world. It means changing as an individual but also changing as a community member. Such transformation also means being accountable for your actions and caring for others, whether within the context of the TC or in the community at large. As Kevin McDonald, President and CEO of TROSA suggested in an informal conversation, TROSA builds citizens, not just sober individuals.

Individual leadership and vision for the early substance abuse therapeutic communities has historically been drawn from former addicts, those whose experience gave them insight into the experience and needs of others like themselves. Chuck Dederich of Synanon and John Maher, a Synanon graduate who later started the seminal Delancey Street Foundation TC, established the initial framework and founding pillars of the modern therapeutic community. These cornerstones—length of residency, level of structure, entrepreneurialism, and a value-

system based on honesty, accountability, and concern for others—continue to define many therapeutic communities. Synanon and Delancey Street demonstrated the efficacy of this approach by successfully enabling addicts and criminal offenders to live productive lives and by building longer term, self-sustaining communities. Both of these early therapeutic communities reflected the inspired, charismatic leadership qualities of their founders as well as their founders' determination to build communities that reflected their personal philosophy of social change. Synanon embraced some of Dederich's utopian ideals of a tightly focused community that could survive outside the mainstream and explore "free love," community commitment, and sobriety. Delancey Street embraced Maher's political vision, an agenda that engaged residents in the struggle for workers' rights in the fields and factories of California. These progressive strategies sometimes seemed incompatible with these organizations' very hierarchical structures and the core values many residents were encouraged to embrace. Some of these core values have historically been associated with a more conservative American culture.

In TCs, emphasis is on vertical mobility within the social organization and aggressive pursuit of the tangible social rewards of status and privilege. These elements reflect qualities of the American national character—entrepreneurial, pragmatic, and acquisitive. Paradoxically, though the first generation of the TC was separated from the establishment as a distinctly self-help phenomenon of the disaffiliated, the TC concept of health and personal success embraced mainstream conformity and the conservative, traditional values of family, social responsibility, self-reliance, and the work ethic. (DeLeon 2000:23)

Dederich's work at Synanon laid the groundwork for an entire garden of therapeutic communities, each with its own color and shape but all sharing the same roots. He developed the primary strategies for community life, the highly structured, rule-laden residential lifestyle, the confrontational therapeutic encounters he called "games" and the notion that people must be deconstructed emotionally before they can be reconstructed into healthy citizens. The Synanon community he created centered on itself; its members were expected to forsake all personal gain for the good of the community and to commit themselves to membership for life.

John Maher lost his heroin addiction at Synanon and gained a vision that extended beyond that community's utopian seclusion from the greater society. In the early 1970s, he developed the Delancey Street Foundation as a TC that embraced many of the goals of Synanon but diverged in some important ways. Instead of looking for a secluded location away from people, he situated his TC in the heart of an upper middle-class neighborhood in San Francisco. He believed that a successful TC needed to be better integrated into society, that individuals could not be expected to live out their days solely within the TC. Rather, he suggests that an important goal of the TC should be the re-integration of former addicts into society. In Grover Sales' book, John Maher of Delancey Street, A Guide to Peaceful Revolution in America, Maher describes his mission this way,

We are the Harvard of drug programs, not the City College. We are grooming tough and intelligent leaders to go into unions, city politics, businesses, and religions, to change those institutions. We're not interested in curing addict kids so they can go back to the slums, swallow methadone, drink wine and go on welfare (1976:117) . . . There is no point to our work unless the world changes.

Otherwise, we'll just sit here forever and merely cure the next crop of dope-fiends.
(1976:160)

John Maher's clearly articulated vision was based primarily on social change, with the rehabilitation of addicts and convicts as a primary strategy on the road to a larger, societal revolution. Delancey Street residents became bodyguards for labor activist Cesar Chavez and marched in workers' parades in San Francisco. Maher got involved in city politics and held sway with the political elite. After many years as a successful leader, Maher unfortunately relapsed. His life partner and current Delancey Street Foundation President Mimi Silbert helped make the decision to eject him from the program and he later died of heart disease.

TROSA's history and philosophy has roots in North Carolina and in San Francisco's Delancey Street Foundation where President and CEO, Kevin McDonald, spent twelve years and worked with John Maher and Mimi Silbert. The lessons Kevin learned at Delancey Street are unmistakable. When given the opportunity to lead a new therapeutic community, Kevin replicated much of what he had experienced but invested it with his own vision and assessment of residents' needs. Like Delancey Street and Synanon, TROSA is a highly structured community run by former addicts that embraces the whole person, utilizing the community of peers to help individuals change their lives. Unlike these predecessors, TROSA has a paid staff. In addition to services provided residents during their two years at TROSA, the program also provides comprehensive after-care services, helping to reintegrate residents into the community after they graduate. In another innovative move, Kevin has expanded the pool of individuals eligible for participation in TROSA by offering mental and physical health care. TROSA can now accommodate people with conditions such as depression and bi-polar disorders or some physical limitations that might have previously exempted them from acceptance into programs that are so reliant on the ability of each resident to work.

The TROSA organization actually began as a response to a need identified by a community-based coalition of people who worked with criminal offenders, substance abusers, and those who required mental health services in the Triangle area (Raleigh, Chapel Hill and Durham, North Carolina).⁴ In the 1980s Riley Butler, Executive Director of the Durham Community Penalties Program, and others in the Triangle recognized heroin addiction and the criminal behaviors that support it as a serious problem. The coalition also recognized the inadequacy of the available programs to deal with these individuals in a positive, habilitative way:

⁴ Some of the original members of this group and early TROSA Board members included Louise Davis (ReEntry Incorporated in Wake County) and Joyce Kuhn (Orange County Sentencing Services), Jo Carole Willson (Koala CHAPS Treatment Center, no longer in business), Julie Kemper (Research Associate for the NC Center on Crime and Punishment), Michael Page (Director of the Coalition on Chemical Dependency), Tom Langston (Director of Freedom House in Chapel Hill), Craig Brown (attorney, now judge in Durham), Evester Bailey (Director of Substance Abuse, Durham County) John Kernodle (consultant and attorney from Greensboro now deceased, instrumental in getting Delancey Street program to Greensboro), Tal Lassiter (retired Durham city police officer), Mary Watson Nooe (Raleigh city council person), Rebecca Pew (Staff at Court Sanctioned Community Service in Durham), and Laura Williams (Alcohol and Drug Council of North Carolina).

Once you incarcerate people [with substance abuse problems] their needs aren't met in prison. They come out to the same community they left in worse shape than when they went in. And it's back on the community [the offender] being better educated for criminal activity. It's just a revolving door.⁵

Many in this group of concerned professional social service and law enforcement providers believed in community sentencing and alternatives to incarceration as a solution to this revolving door. With funding primarily from private foundations, they developed agencies to provide these options in North Carolina beginning in the early 1980s. New laws created structured sentencing and community programs that gave judges more options for people who fell into the intermediate active sentencing ranges as determined by their previous criminal activities and the severity of their crimes. This enabled judges to sentence some offenders to prison and others to probation. But these progressive movements did not necessarily create community-based programs that addressed many of these offenders' serious substance abuse problems, not to mention giving them the skills to work and live successfully in their communities after they served their sentence or their probation expired.

The Durham coalition sought new ideas and new program models to address the needs of these offenders. They became aware of the therapeutic community model through the national press attention in Parade Magazine and on CBS's "60 Minutes" news programs about peer-run therapeutic communities such as the Delancey Street Foundation in California. This model appeared closer to home when a group of citizens, not unlike themselves, convinced Delancey Street President Mimi Silbert to open a satellite facility in Greensboro, NC, the first in the Southeastern US. Although a small facility currently capable of serving no more than twenty-five residents, it nevertheless added a distinctly new option to the region's community-based alternative sentencing menu.

Responding to the promising potential of this new option, the coalition began to explore the idea of a therapeutic community in the Triangle region. They were both overwhelmed and excited about this prospect. A driving force in this coalition, Riley Butler describes this effort as one that required tremendous work and commitment:

TROSA took a lot of blood, sweat and tears to get started off the ground and it's still a lot of blood, sweat, and tears on a different level right now with clients changing their lives within. I think getting the program here, getting it started was an important step in our community. I think it shows that it can happen in any community if the community has the need of this magnitude and if the people are really wanting to impact change in their community, that they can do it. They can start programs of this nature. It just takes the willpower to do it.⁶

Riley and others in his group met Kevin McDonald when he was dispatched by Mimi Silbert at Delancey Street to open the Greensboro facility in the late 1980s. Even after Kevin cycled back to California and other Delancey Street staff replaced him in Greensboro, the Durham group recognized Kevin's dynamic personality and proven track record. They were very impressed with his leadership abilities, his talent for working with the larger community, his knowledge of

⁵ Personal Interview with Riley Butler, July 1, 2002

⁶ Personal Interview with Riley Butler, July 1, 2002

the therapeutic community model and his business acumen. Armed with a small grant from the Greater Triangle Foundation (now the Triangle Community Foundation), the coalition began working to implement a therapeutic community similar to Delancey Street in Durham and they began trying to lure Kevin back to North Carolina. Riley remembers calling him once a week for two years, updating him about the progress they were making.

One of the challenges faced by this small group was the lack of consensus about the “therapeutic community” model. Some in the group wanted to reshape the Delancey Street model by blending it with a 12-step model. Some were uneasy about a treatment model that placed control of a facility in the hands of ex-addicts and former prison inmates. These disagreements were not resolved before the interviewing process for TROSA’s first director began. Indeed, these debates continue to be a part of the philosophical and methodological landscape of substance abuse treatment today in Durham and across the country. Yet the group persevered and worked for two years to keep the idea of TROSA active and alive before convincing Kevin McDonald to come back to fill the director’s position.

Kevin had spent twelve years in Delancey Street honing his therapeutic, organizational, and entrepreneurial skills while taking control of his own life by facing his addiction to heroin, his criminal activities, and the life experience that had propelled him to this point. After seven or eight years, Kevin had risen to assume one of four top positions in the therapeutic ranks or “people business” at Delancey Street. His belief in the Delancey Street method was unshakable, a faith that would serve him well when he arrived in Durham:

We were all true believers. And we all believed in the process and believed in what we were doing. And I might have been very intense but the others were probably just intense in their own ways. To me it was just a mission. Once I could reverse what I was doing, it took years, to believe in something. And once I’m in, I’m in man. It’s just like until the wheels fall off. And that’s how I was. And I lived it, I breathed it. I worked 16 hours a day—7 days a week. That’s what jumping in is, that’s what doing the job is, whatever it takes. And that’s how I changed and grew up.⁷

But the task of developing a new therapeutic community from scratch was extremely daunting. Kevin saw a bit of his own belief and determination in the Durham coalition. He assessed the situation this way:

And to me, you know they had \$18,000 and they wanted me to start something up by myself with no support. Where Delancey Street had all of Delancey Street, you don’t have to worry about money, I mean it wasn’t that money was the issue but they had a whole system. And they [the Durham group] didn’t seem to know what they wanted. They didn’t have the right perspective, a lot of the people, or a certain amount of them. And they’d been, quite honestly, they wanted something and they had no concept of what they wanted. They just wanted an alternative, and I think they were just good people wanting an alternative.⁸

⁷ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, July 2, 2002

⁸ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, July 2, 2002

Kevin didn't leave Delancey Street and come directly to Durham. After returning to San Francisco from his Greensboro assignment, Kevin began thinking about graduating, about life after Delancey Street. He had begun dating the woman who would later become his wife and he had developed some confidence from his success opening the Greensboro facility. With his wife's help, he put together a resume and began looking for a job. The rejection letters piled up until he finally landed a job in Los Angeles working with ex-offenders in a residential program. It was a place he thought he could put his best skills and experience into practice. Despite his best efforts, his time there was not the rewarding, real-life career he had imagined:

It was a homeless parole leave program, basically a gang program. Gang members coming out of prison. Three months of residential care. Twenty "straight" people [not ex-addicts], two parole officers, three caseworkers, etc. etc. About a three million-dollar budget. And so it was a very educational two years in a non-profit. When you are coming from where I came from, where we just believed, and you know that was the main deal, to the real world. It's another world. And so that was my wake up call for a couple of years there. This was skid row LA. This was hard core shit and then you had a bunch of people who didn't give a shit. And they just had a job. Why are you working down there? You got to have a belief or you're at the end of your road. And the staff was already hired when I got there.

And probably if Riley hadn't kept calling, I wouldn't have come. And it just hit me on the right day at the right time. The urine smell was coming up through the windows at this place, you know four stories up. The usefulness of what I was doing of helping people was zero. It was just a fucking game. Just the right time and the right thing and just totally disgusted with the whole place and so I said "yes."⁹

When Kevin arrived in Durham, the TROSA group was hanging on by a shoestring. They had minimal funding and a portion of that was designated for Kevin's first year salary. He took the job with the understanding that he was responsible for both raising the remainder of his salary and additional programming monies from other funding sources. TROSA board members had negotiated with Durham County for a dilapidated elementary school and they had their faith in the idea that a therapeutic community would be a good thing for the Triangle. They also believed in Kevin and his abilities to make their dreams into a reality. Louise Davis, TROSA's current board president, remembers those early days and the coalition's impressions of Kevin this way:

Kevin is a charismatic, visionary person who is passionate and capable of implementing what his vision is. I was here when he went into that school with the broken windows and the dead pigeons and nothing in place and never saw it as impossible to fix. When I saw it, I thought 'this is so much work, how can any group of people clean it up and make it happen?' And then each week you'd come, more would be done. And more residents would be there. And people would be dropping out left and right because the residents in the early days were

⁹ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, July 2, 2002

really less eligible than now. And in spite of that they were able to get it done. So the physical tasks of rebuilding the structures, he sees that as an interesting puzzle instead of an impossible challenge. I mean I don't think he sees anything as something he can't do.¹⁰

What Louise saw as an overwhelming challenge, Kevin remembers a bit differently. In 1994 Kevin convinced two former Delancey Street residents to come to Durham to help him. They set about working on the school, picking up residents as they went along:

When you're just starting from scratch it's not like you can dream, but you've got to make reality. So the first thing was to get the basics together. And the basics there was just to try to fix the school. I had this big school with broken windows, water in the basement, all the pipes busted because they froze when they left the water in them. All these types of things. No heat. No kitchen. Six inch slabs for 150 feet covering the tile in the kitchen. Bathrooms were so black from dirt and lack of use that you couldn't even imagine they worked. It didn't even faze me. And I was fueled, too, by what I had just been through for two years. Of what I didn't want. And it really was a good perspective, because I didn't realize that there's a lot of traps out there in different ways for people who believe in something and try and do the right thing. And there's other people, they just want to take people down. They don't give a shit about nobody but themselves.¹¹

Kevin was buoyed by his own skills, drive, and energy but he also received tremendous support from his new wife who accompanied him to North Carolina and from his board of directors. They were unwavering in their belief in their work and their confidence in Kevin. He found that they shared some of his drive and determination:

But they never quit. And I think that's what I look at. People who have dreams. And they get very little credit for this. Because you know, instead of Kevin McDonald's idea, it was their idea. What they'd seen is what Greensboro was and they just wanted something like it. But they're the people who stuck with it, were dreaming about it, and I was just able to implement it. And that wasn't their forté at all. It was just the best thing that ever could have happened to me.¹²

The only model the coalition in the Triangle had personally experienced was Delancey Street in Greensboro and so naturally they thought that the facility in Durham might be similar, in size, scope, and levels of service. But Kevin had bigger dreams. He had come from a therapeutic community in San Francisco that included scores of people. The school building he was working to renovate in Durham could accommodate hundreds of people if he could finesse the zoning laws and build an organization capable of supporting that many residents. This challenge drove him even harder but it also helped to keep his feet on the ground because he knew about some of the pitfalls he might be facing.

¹⁰ Personal Interview with Louise Davis, July 9, 2002

¹¹ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, July 2, 2002

¹² Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, July 2, 2002

The way I look at it, I was just lucky to do it. Not lucky to get the job—a lot of people get jobs, but to be able to implement it. And once I started doing it, because I had that big old school, then I thought ‘well fuck it’ they don’t have a little tiny house. And that’s when I started thinking.

And then what I wanted to do was do the right thing for the people. And one of the things that you have to think about when you get in this business about helping people is there’s a danger of forgetting where you came from. And there’s a danger of getting too big that you lose your perspective. And so you might not make the best decisions because you might make it from being overwhelmed or whatever.¹³

Given the opportunity to start a new facility, not directly affiliated with Delancey Street, Kevin was also able to rethink the scope and breadth of services he wanted to offer. Using his own experience as a guide, he made some important changes that continue to characterize the innovation and leadership inherent in TROSA’s approach and successful service to its residents.

So there’s certain things I knew I wanted to do from experiences I’d gone through. One, just that period of working out and not being able to get a job was really interesting for me. Because I was in one way, one of the best [most successful at Delancey Street] and had the hardest time. And so what were other people going to do? Second, transportation. If my Dad didn’t lend me that \$800 [to buy a car], I only had \$200 saved from the program. I didn’t have a work out period.

You know, and I tried a lot of different things. Instead of keeping with one type of business, I really made a wide variety. And I broke a lot of the rules where you only set up businesses, where nobody is too important because you lose one person and you’re screwed. I’ve shut down a lot of businesses, but I had to live by my wits. And when you don’t have nothing to start and you’ve got to survive . . . it was an interesting ride. There was a million times you could have said we can’t do this. We didn’t have any heat at first so I just used oil, kerosene. And I thought ‘Oh god, how’s this going to work, will it burn up, will it kill them,’ all these different things . . . but you know what, I look at the other end too. When I came in [to Delancey Street] I lived under a pool table at first because it was so crowded. If they had cut off the interview and not let me in that program because they didn’t have a bed. . .

So that’s the way I look at things, you know, to a point—that it was better than nothing. And it wasn’t that bad. And all those people back then, we were smaller and closer. As hard as it was in some ways there’s a thrill of getting some guys and trying to make them believe. And it takes awhile because you got no past and

¹³ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, July 2, 2002

you got no success stories. So it's just starting from basic scratch. It was just a dream, and it made it.¹⁴

In October 1994, the dream became a reality when the former North Durham School became home to TROSA residents and their early business enterprise, processing and peeling potatoes, and growing herbs for the gourmet food market. By 1996, the TROSA community included almost 100 residents, and three staff members. Their business portfolio had expanded to include residential and commercial moving, construction, painting, brick masonry, and tree services in addition to a mail-order construction tool business. As the program grew, the number of residents began to increase and the businesses followed suit.

As an organization, TROSA expends tremendous effort and energy to support itself through its businesses. TROSA is an innovative, entrepreneurial organization that generates approximately 90% of its operating budget through its own enterprise. Tim Carroll, a former TROSA staff member with an MBA from Duke University, describes the business outlook at TROSA this way:

TROSA as an organization is more focused on doing something for yourself rather than having somebody else do it for you. So Kevin doesn't run around saying we're a good place and you ought to fund us. He says don't give me handouts, just give me your work. Give me a job. We'll do a job and we'll blow you away, and you'll want us to come back because we'll just impress you with our work ethic.¹⁵

Along with providing the funds to support a 300-member community, TROSA businesses¹⁶ provide residents with opportunities to learn skills and develop good work habits. The work also fosters personal pride and a sense of accomplishment among the residents. TROSA integrates the tasks of work and the work of treatment, they "just run hand in hand" according to Mike Keene, manager of the moving company. "You can't separate one from the other. It's just like in your life, you've got to work to make money. And things happen in your life that you have to deal with. It's all a part of your life. And that's what we're dealing with. Of course we make money and of course we help people. It's just all in a 24-hour period, what's going on."¹⁷

Fast forward to 2002; the community of residents and staff now numbers more than 300 and the annual budget has grown from the initial balance of \$18,000 to an annual operating budget of more than \$6 million. The measures of success at TROSA are difficult and complex. As a business enterprise TROSA has grown from an energetic start-up to a more stable, maturing organization as evidenced by its growing revenues and client lists. Tracking individuals who are working hard to re-chart their lives and TROSA's ability to facilitate this process is not as easy to measure. Current efforts to build a database that evaluates residents' activities after graduation from TROSA may be capable of providing some of this data in a quantitative form. But what is meant by success, actual benchmarks and definitions are less clear. Is an individual successful if they remain drug free for 6 months, one year, five years after graduation? What about their

¹⁴ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, July 2, 2002

¹⁵ Personal Interview with Tim Carroll, June 19, 2002

¹⁶ TROSA businesses currently include commercial and residential moving, catering, home repair and painting, landscaping, brick masonry, picture framing, Christmas tree sales, and many types of contract labor jobs ranging from providing cleaning services to the North Carolina State Fair to assembling gift baskets for a local gourmet merchant.

¹⁷ Personal Interview with Mike Keene, July, 25, 2002

abilities to form healthy relationships or maintain employment? How are these issues factored into a measure of success? Some longitudinal studies have shown that therapeutic communities are making an impact on the substance abuse problem, though. As Paul Nagy, clinical associate with Duke's Addictions Program reports:

In comparing outcomes in TCs to other modalities of treatment, it seems clear graduates of therapeutic communities do very favorably in comparison to people who have completed shorter or lesser intensive levels of care. If you measure success by evaluation of changes in substance using behaviors, reduction of criminal activity, employability, level of social functioning and those kinds of things, graduates of TCs stack up higher than most other populations that have been studied.¹⁸

But the success of TROSA as a treatment modality is also associated with a deeper and more universal social change agenda: to expand and change attitudes on the part of government, law enforcement, mental health professionals, and the general public toward efforts aimed at eliminating substance abuse and criminality and toward the human beings that exhibit these behaviors. Strategies to achieve these goals can be much more difficult to assess. These strategies are based on the notion that attitudes can change when individuals are confronted with experience that contradicts their biases, actions that seek to dispel their ignorance, and truths that offer new options and ideas.

¹⁸ Personal Interview with Paul Nagy, September 13, 2002 [See Hubbard et al. 1989. Drug Abuse Treatment: A National Study of Effectiveness, The University of North Carolina Press]

TROSA as an Agent of Individual and Social Change

If one aim of social change efforts is to promote transformed attitudes, actions, and policy, coming as a result of new, enhanced, or contradictory information being infused into community conversation and individual experience, how then is TROSA involved in this work? How is the TROSA community structured and how does the TROSA experience impact its residents? How does TROSA communicate its vision, the experience of its residents, and the guiding assumptions and principles that shape its approach to the everyday work of personal change? How does TROSA shape individuals who can communicate these messages both inside and outside the TROSA community? In what way is this the work of leadership? Is it possible to teach others how to replicate the TROSA model, thereby extending the impact of TROSA's thinking to other communities?

I have gained insights that address these questions through my three-month fieldwork process of participant observation, individual and group interviews, and soliciting the direct input of TROSA residents through their writing. The research has expanded my knowledge and understanding of the shape, scope, and structure of the TROSA community. I have learned that TROSA community members share a set of core values that structure their relationships with each other and with the larger community. In the first TROSA staff meeting I attended, an issue was raised that demonstrated these core values in action. The discussion centered on a group of TROSA movers who had agreed to dispose of several boxes for an elderly gentleman. The elderly fellow was a retired chemistry professor and the boxes contained toxic chemicals he was discarding, chemicals he thought were inert due to their age. The movers took the boxes to the city dump along with other materials. At the dump, a small fire erupted when they tossed the box of old chemicals. While this was a costly mistake for TROSA, the movers were praised for going to the dump manager and informing him of their mistake. The discussion in the staff meeting clearly demonstrated that what was most important was that they accepted responsibility for their mistake and alerted the authorities. Unfortunately the dump had to be closed and a special team of toxic waste disposal specialists had to be called in to remove the chemicals, at TROSA's expense but this was considered far less important than the movers' honesty and strong sense of responsibility.

Honesty, accountability, empathy, compassion, self-discipline, a strong work ethic, and most importantly, a true concern for others, guide residents and staff through the process of changing their lives. Adopting these guiding principles becomes the bedrock for a brighter, more productive, and hopeful future for TROSA residents. Performing these values through everyday actions, "walking the walk" also helps TROSA build bridges with the larger community and defuse the NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) sentiments they initially encountered in many of the Durham neighborhoods that surrounded their facilities.

Within the TROSA community, walking the walk is a highly regarded quality, especially when it is linked to "talking the talk." Being able to communicate the ideals of doing a good program—taking advantage of all of the life changing opportunities available through TROSA—has proven essential to residents in their efforts to recover and build new lives. These conversations often include sharing personal experience and life stories as examples of both the advantages of positive change and the adverse effects of self-destructive decision-making. Grappling with your personal narrative, the story you tell to yourself and others as a way of personal representation, is key to the TROSA and more generally, the therapeutic community experience. These stories, often fraught with histories of self-destruction and illuminated by

transformative experiences, are central to TROSA's efforts to communicate its vision and success to others.

From their first encounters with TROSA, each resident engages with their story. During the application process prospective residents are asked to submit an autobiography as part of their request to be admitted. During the application and subsequent interview, each prospective resident is treated as an individual with an individual set of circumstances and needs. The interviews are conducted by small groups of residents and staff interested in determining the sincerity of the applicant's aim to change his or her life and hearing an honest account of the events that led to the decision to seek help. During the interview process, life at TROSA is described succinctly by a member of the TROSA interview team. The potential resident learns that the two-year program is completely voluntary, that he or she can leave at any time but that while in TROSA, he or she will be provided with a place to live, three meals a day, clothing, medical care, transportation, and peer-based therapy for their substance abuse problem. David Michaelson, the current department head for intake describes some of the aspects of the program to the interviewees in this way:

There are three main rules at TROSA. No actual violence, no threats of violence, no drugs and alcohol. If you break one of those rules, then you have to leave the program, and it will be that cut and dry. Your first thirty days in the program, you'll be on internship. Internship is our weeding-out process. It tells us who wants to be here and who really doesn't. I say that because it's not easy. At 6:30 in the morning, they begin to work and they get off work at around 11 o'clock that evening. Now that's for a minimum of thirty days. How long you do that for will depend on you and your attitude. If you come in and do what's asked of you, you'll probably get off in thirty days, if you don't and you become difficult, they you'll probably be on intern a lot longer than that.

Now after you get off internship . . . well at thirty days, rather, you'll be able to write and receive mail. All the mail will be monitored. Incoming and outgoing. In 90 days you'll receive your first phone call. That call will be fifteen minutes long and you'll get one every two weeks after your 90 day period. At six months, it marks your first milestone. A milestone at TROSA is when you're called up, you're recognized in front of the house for being in the program for a certain length of time. Six months is your first one—you get a walkman and a watch. Those will be your first electronic devices that you have in your possession.

At one year in the program, you get what's called an in-house visit. That means your family, your loved ones will be able to come to TROSA and spend the day with you. Now that visit at one year is the first physical contact that you would have with your family and also your mail and your phone calls will stop being monitored and you'll begin to get phone calls once a week.

Fourteen months in the program marks your first home visit. This is a time when you can go home and spend the day with your family. You'll be accompanied by an escort that you would choose. You get to go home again at sixteen months and once again at eighteen months. Eighteen months in the program is once again

another milestone. From the day you come into TROSA until eighteen months, you'll have no money in your possession. Also at eighteen months, you can re-grow your facial hair and you can begin to start taking home visits once a month.

Twenty-one months begins the workout phase. This is when you can go out into the community and find yourself a job. The money that you make, as far as your paychecks, will be brought back to TROSA. TROSA will hold that money for you in a non-interest bearing bank account and give the money to you in one lump sum at the completion of twenty-four months. This will serve as a nest egg for you to leave out on.

We also have a car program here and once you complete the two years, you will be given the opportunity to purchase a car at what it costs us to fix it. Graduates purchase cars from anywhere from twenty to 500 dollars, depending on the car.

We also have what's called games. It's a group setting. It takes place three times a week. And it's basically just involves very extreme verbal confrontation between the residents and that's something that you would have to experience to understand.

Our methods of discipline here consists of hours and contracts. It's extra work duty. If you make a simple mistake, you'll be given hours. You'll work your hours after your regular job in your free time until they are done. If you were to break a major rule in this house you would receive a contract. Contracts consist of days, working hours, it's like internship and all your privileges would be stripped. And that's the program.¹⁹

Potential residents also learn during the intake interview about the various businesses and some of the educational and vocational opportunities that will be available to them through the TROSA program. All residents are expected to work toward improving their literacy skills and obtaining a GED if they do not already have one. They also receive support to attend Durham Technical College. Residents are required to participate in computer literacy classes. Community volunteers work as tutors and teachers, assisting residents to improve the reading, writing, comprehension, and computer skills they will need to compete effectively in the job market. Many residents benefit from on-the-job training and skills-building through their work assignments and great efforts are made—despite their sometimes negative impact on TROSA businesses—to rotate people through several jobs during their two year stint. This allows residents to develop more than one skill and to perhaps obtain specialized licenses and other certifications along the way, providing them with several future job options.

Residents and staff employ an “each one teach one” motto toward both learning in the workplace and learning in the substance abuse treatment arena. Bringing this motto to life, residents create a community of engagement, a community in which everyone is responsible and accountable to everyone else in all crucial arenas—work, personal relationships, community relations, and individual healing and growth. For example, very rarely are residents alone during

¹⁹ Personal Interview with David Michaelson and Anthony Forbes, October 2, 2002.

their two years at TROSA. Under the watchful and concerned eyes of others, residents are strongly encouraged to confront their behaviors, attitudes, and self-concepts. Through feedback from others, residents and staff, each person is motivated to learn and practice healthier, more productive behaviors and to develop high personal standards for honesty and accountability. The community therefore becomes a critical but caring environment where even the slightest misstep receives serious attention. In his introduction to the TROSA program format, David Michaelson alluded to “games,” one of the primary building blocks of TROSA’s approach to personal change. The games, which he describes as “extreme verbal confrontations”, are one of the mechanisms that allow the entire community to participate in each person’s journey of transformation.

Games are group sessions that can include up to twenty-five residents. Three times each week, the resident population is divided into groups for these two-hour sessions. Residents are seated in a circle facing one another. Staff members or long-time residents serves as “strengths” in the games, enforcing the game rules, determining when a single individual has received enough feedback, and managing the group. Jesse Battle, director of the Men’s and Women’s program at TROSA, explains the games, their purpose and their value this way:

And basically what games are in a sense, they’re how individuals let individuals know about themselves. And that’s one of the most powerful things about it because you have a group of individuals who let a person know about their behavior.

The games are set along words, deeds, and actions. They’re governed by the same rules as the program. No threats of violence, acts of violence, not things of that nature there. They’re highly verbal. That’s why I say it’s a very good tool, because a lot of people get pent-up emotion, and they’re being able to unleash that pent-up emotion. Because a lot of time you may have a crew boss out there who you just want to say something to, and they let them know that. You have a person who’s not working when everybody else is working, and so you may have twenty people in there letting him know that, ‘You were being very lazy out there or you wasn’t doing your job or whatever.’

When a person comes up and he has a very nasty demeanor or nasty attitude, you’re going to have the people in there letting him know that, ‘Man, your attitude was totally out of whack,’ and things of that nature there. And they’re not going to be saying it in the way that I’m saying it, in the school marm kind of way. There’s no ‘Johnny, you know you should have been working out there when we were working too.’ They are not going to do it that way. They’re going to let Johnny hear it, and Johnny’s going to have to sit there and hear it. And which to me, it’s like something that’s got to be because we’ve all heard too many people say, ‘You need to change this, you need to do that,’ and it go in one ear right out the other.

In games, you're going to hear it because you've got twenty people telling you the same thing. You need to sit back and you need to look at it and you need to listen to it.²⁰

Games also help to defuse verbal threats that residents may encounter once they leave the program. Being screamed at in games and having to sit and listen without responding violently gives residents a sense of control over themselves, a prized quality in the world outside the TROSA gates. As Jesse explains:

You are going to have people coming at you verbally and you got to learn how to be able to handle it, learn how to think that it's just a word. It's not, a lot of people 'ain't nobody going to call me that,' and it's just a word. It's not anything to ruin you life, it's just a word. So when a person leaves here and somebody calls him a b-i-t-c-h or something like that, he doesn't just fly off the handle and lose it.²¹

Residents are allowed to request placement in a game with a particular person, someone they want to "put the game on." Sometimes this is because they are angry with the other person, sometimes they just want the opportunity to offer a little advice, and sometimes they notice a person exhibiting behaviors they once saw in themselves. Sometimes people want to be put into a game that includes their closest TROSA friends. Jesse finds these some of the best games:

Those are the best games that you can get, the person who's your buddy in the program. Because you don't want to be anybody's crime partner. You know we've all had the crime partners. I'm in cell-block A, my crime partner's in cell-block C. We've all had those, and you don't want to be anybody's crime partner here. So your best friend is the one who should give you the biggest game, because he don't want to see you make the same mistakes that he just made.²²

This idea that the people closest to you can also be the ones that are the hardest on you is a defining characteristic of the TROSA community. TROSA is a residents' community, where the residents do everything including providing expert therapy. Occasionally, outsiders are permitted to observe games and to many, games can be overwhelming. The volume, the veracity, the anger, the profanity can all be quite alarming. At first glance they may even feel violent but as time goes on and the words begin to lose their initial shock value, an observer begins to feel the personal concern that also defines the games' experience. While these two impressions may seem contradictory, the relationship among game players is actually more symbiotic than antagonistic. Life review and personal confrontations are not confined just to games but happen in the workplace as well. When asked to identify the signs that other people cared about her in the program, former resident Crystal Gilmore answered this way:

Honestly, they called me on my stuff. The ones that just let you go on and do what you want to do, those are the ones that just, honestly for me, those are the ones that really don't care. But the ones that will call you on your stuff, not let up

²⁰ Personal Interview with Jesse Battle, May 29, 2002

²¹ Personal Interview with Jesse Battle, May 29, 2002

²² Personal Interview with Jesse Battle, May 29, 2002

on you . . . Geneva, God, she rode me like a horse. I'm serious, I couldn't stand her. Judith, oh my God, I hated her so much. I put so much time and energy into hating that woman. I used to go into Jesse's office and just vent about her and cry about her. But I love her so much today because she helped me. What better way than an addict who's been there where you're going, to let you know exactly what's going on, what you're doing wrong? You won't accept it at first, but, it just takes a little while for it to seep in.²³

In all of these confrontations, residents receive feedback from others and then choose how to utilize that information in relation to the way they view themselves. Residents demonstrate their leadership to others through their own behavior and through their strict adherence to the rules and social conventions of the community. After being at TROSA for more than a year, residents also have to participate in what is referred to as a "twenty-four hour game," a more intense group experience during which self-examination is the primary focus. The group usually numbers fifteen and they are a peer group—they have been residents for approximately the same length of time. Staff members serve as "whips" in the twenty-four hour game and their job is to keep the stories flowing, to help the residents when they get stuck recounting difficult moments of their past, and to offer some alternative viewpoints to the resident's analysis of his or her life. Sometimes this means they take on the role of a resident's family member or friend or someone that has hurt the resident or been hurt by the resident. No one sleeps until the game is concluded, sometimes thirty or more hours after it begins. The twenty-four hour game is usually a watershed point for residents, a time when they are strong enough to deal with their history and hopeful enough to believe they can be redeemed and change their lives. It is a time to engage in deep life review. Jesse Battle, the staff member who is responsible for setting up and running the twenty-four hour games remembers his own experience this way:

To me, honestly, and I can use myself here, I've always thought about things that I've done, I've always thought about that, but I think about one thing on Monday, and I may think about another thing I've done on Tuesday, I may think about something else that I've totally done on Thursday, things of that nature there. But when I actually sat down and lumped it all together at one time for a span of two hours to see just how the structure of my life had truly been, it was really an eye-opening experience.

And to hear individuals actually give me some feedback about it, because I may have never thought about how that person felt. I never really thought about that. I never thought about how that person's family may have felt. I never thought about those type of things there. It gives you a whole different viewpoint on a lot of different things. And a lot of times it makes you come to grips with stuff that you really, the pitches [the things life is throws at you], so to speak. Cause, see, certain pitches people been running from their whole entire life.

I've actually had people in games say things that they've never said to anybody in their entire life, or say things to people that they've always wanted to say. To the

²³ Personal Interview with Crystal Gilmore, October 8, 2002

uncle who molested them. Just to be able to scream it out about that is just so good. To me it's just so good, because a lot of times they keep it buried down within them and they think everybody will look at them so different if they know that. And once they say it and they come out, it's just a totally different experience.

Even with mine, I talked about something that I hadn't talked about, that had always been one of my biggest nightmares. Major nightmares. But I came to grips with it. A lot of times when they come out of the game you look at them they're like totally different. Features are just like totally so relaxed.

And then you have individuals who don't utilize it. I've never seen anybody, anybody actually make it, in a sense, once they didn't utilize the game. Everybody that I've seen who sat in there who didn't utilize and played around with it or something of that nature, they have always relapsed.

Yeah some people don't utilize it. They want to talk about stuff that really don't matter. Say I went in there and what I talked about was how much dope I sold. But never really touching on the fact that I've never seen my daughter. Never really touching on that fact that I have a son who doesn't even know who his father is. I'm talking more about my drug deals and this stuff here, because that [other] stuff bothers me. That's the stuff that just eats me up, and I need to talk about that stuff, or when my father died, things of that nature there. I need to talk about that kind of stuff.²⁴

The twenty-four hour game allows residents to begin to release themselves from their shame and from the secrets that have sometimes controlled their lives. It serves as a turning point from which a new life can be built. The experience of the twenty-four hour game allows residents to begin reshaping and adding new dimensions to their personal narratives, perhaps a starting point for a new story, one that includes more hope and a more positive self image. The game can allow a resident to begin purging their internal demons. Resident Amber Permann shared her experience through this poem written soon after her twenty-four hour game:

I Let It Go

I have done some very destructive and cold-hearted things in my life, and the same have been done to me

Although I knew this, nobody else did, for a long time.

I let it go, all of it, held nothing back, and now I feel free.

I dug deep, with them, and found everything I could find.

I felt ashamed, at first, that they were going to know who I really am.

I didn't stray away though, I just kept pouring unto them, my past.

I let it go, the good times, the bad times, every ounce, every gram.

All the shame I felt, the reminiscing about those times I hated.

²⁴ Personal Interview with Jesse Battle, May 29, 2002

Why couldn't I just be normal, live a normal life, do the right thing?
I let it go, with every breath in me, now we've created a bond.
Those people, they know me, inside and out, I know them too.
We shared our story amongst one another, stories that were fond.
I let it go, meditated and received another perspective that's new.
I felt like I felt when it was happening; only this time I let myself feel.
The pain, the hurt and anxiety of the stress it bestowed upon me.
Now that it's over, the past is just that, and it's time for me to heal.
I let it go, the sought out dreams that turned into the misery I now see.
The demons have left me alone, only because I left them alone.
The resentment that was buried deep has arose from within.
The thoughts of yesterday, torment and anguish, is now known.
I let it go, the afflicted despair that drove me to commit that awful sin.
The sin of forgetting my life, not caring, becoming a heartless addict.
It finally happened, unlike anything else, I had that sight.
I let it go, all my thoughts of the delinquent knowledge that I was sick.
Now that I'm past that stage in my life, it's time to do it right.

Amber's poem eloquently relates a release from the past, the demons and shame associated with her addiction and her sin of "forgetting my life." She now sees the future as a time to make better choices, develop high regard for herself, and move beyond the constraints of the story she had created to explain her life and predicament. The personal changes that result from this community-based group process begin to be revealed not only through personal narratives but also through posture and self-presentation. Jesse referred to his experience seeing people come out of twenty-four hour games looking "totally different" and "totally so relaxed." This new posture is also a part of the public face of TROSA. Guests to the TROSA offices are often treated to a tour, not so much to highlight the facilities, but to introduce TROSA's most important asset, its people. A tour I was given at the onset of this research made a big impact on me. As we entered each office, work ceased and everyone stood, giving us or whoever might be speaking their complete attention. One by one, each resident or staff member in each department introduced his- or herself to us. Anthony, Amber, Noel, Crystal, Kym, Jerald, Geneva and many others spoke their names, their home towns, and their stories of addiction with their heads held high and a posture imbued with unflinching frankness. I found my own attitudes and biases about drug addicts quietly challenged by this experience. I have come to understand this upright, direct, forthright communication as a powerful strategy to speak the essence of TROSA's efforts. Harnessing this strategy to advance TROSA's goals is woven into many public relations and business relationships with the larger community. TROSA residents confront the stereotypes that many people have about substance abusers and criminal offenders by removing the veil of anonymity, by telling their stories honestly and standing up to take responsibility for their actions and behaviors. This is evident in every public speaking engagement and in the organization's efforts to present itself to the public.

TROSA is all about personal effort, the energy and drive that is required to change your life, and the community support and structure that creates the environment in which change can happen. The support provided by the community is multi-layered. It is emotional, it is structural, it is financial, it is physical. The community operates both as a family and as a business.

TROSA And The Meaning Of Leadership

TROSA's success, the constant balance between mutual and essential dual bottom lines—changing lives and making money—is one of the locations in which leadership is cultivated. TROSA has become a nationally recognized model of successful social entrepreneurship. While its business acumen has been greatly admired, at the end of the day the numbers don't drive the decisions, the therapy does. This approach also makes TROSA a leader in the fields of substance abuse treatment, vocational training, and community organizing. The organization's holistic approach to the complex issue of substance abuse engages people from all segments of the community and recognizes the important leadership roles that many people play. The business culture at TROSA is about a can-do attitude, about seizing an opportunity and running with it, about throwing lots of energy, person power, and effort in promising directions. The therapeutic culture at TROSA is also about a can-do attitude, about never letting down, about never taking that first step down a path that will inevitably lead back to a life of substance abuse and criminal behavior. At TROSA this is called being "rigid" or being a "hard ass" and having high expectations. It's about walking the walk all the time. Residents and staff are encouraged to embrace this attitude and to exhibit it through their actions and thoughts. Keeping the goals and mission of TROSA in mind, residents are rewarded for their strict adherence to this approach to work and to life.

This attitude is praised and cultivated especially when it is combined with a capacity for compassion. Kevin McDonald exhibits these qualities in the eyes of many including Tim Carroll who describes him this way:

I just like the fact that as hard as he is on everybody, staff members, residents, and his expectations are very high, he's very sympathetic to human frailties and what people need at the end of the day. And he never faults people for giving a good effort and coming up short. It's all about effort, it's all about intention, it's not just results. So you can get away with screwing up if you try hard. You can get away with screwing up pretty big as long as you take accountability for it and say yeah, I screwed up. And that's about 80 percent of it. Because it's accountability and honesty, and he is extremely into accountability, honesty, and loyalty.²⁵

The attitude and understanding reflected in this comment, that exhibiting particular values held in high esteem by the community, in this case accountability, personal effort, honesty, and loyalty, is one of the ways in which leadership is defined and cultivated at TROSA. Many people, residents, staff, board members, and larger community members believe that Kevin McDonald exemplifies this definition of leadership. Howard Gardner in his book, Leading Minds, defines leaders as "people who by word and/or personal example, markedly influence the behaviors, thoughts, and/or feelings of a significant number of their fellow human beings." (1995:8-9) He goes on to explain "leaders achieve their effectiveness chiefly through the stories they relate" and "in addition to communicating stories, leaders embody those stories." (1995:9) The entire TROSA treatment modality is based on an ability to relate your "story" and to then examine and change that essentializing self narrative from one of self-destruction to one of self-redemption. Kevin effectively uses his own story of family dysfunction, substance abuse,

²⁵ Personal Interview with Tim Carroll, June 19, 2002

criminality, incarceration, self-loathing, and personal change to both inspire and motivate everyone who comes into contact with TROSA. You are just as likely to hear Kevin's story at the local Rotarian luncheon as you are to witness his narrative in an encounter with TROSA residents. As Gardner suggests, both personal story and personal example are powerful leadership tools and the ability to help others work through their own stories, their own identities is one of the ways these tools are put into action.

From the beginning, Kevin's story has been intimately related to the TROSA story. Kevin did not found TROSA; it was created by a community-based coalition. He did not develop the therapeutic community treatment modality, and while it has grown under his leadership, it was initiated and evolved from a number of other community-based models. But in North Carolina, TROSA has become synonymous with Kevin McDonald and his story. He is the soul of TROSA and his energy, drive, and vision are central to the organization's identity and mission. Louise Davis, a founding coalition member and current board chair recalls Kevin's impact on the organization this way:

Delancey Street did not come to North Carolina, North Carolina went to Delancey Street and said, 'Won't you please come?' So there was never a goal on Mimi [Silbert]'s part to make a big deal in North Carolina. And as a result it [the facility in Greensboro] stayed just the same size. When we thought about how to do TROSA and it was here, there's always been the thought that Kevin's just a really unique individual and that TROSA is Kevin, and Kevin is TROSA. We don't know what would happen if Kevin wasn't there. It would be a different TROSA. We would probably have a functioning organization that's nuts and bolts working, but it wouldn't have the same flavor.

I think some of the successes that happen for individuals happen because of Kevin's presence. I think the organization can function with another manager. The means to the end can function. The public relationships, the businesses, the process of people being admitted and working through steps and graduating. All of that will be there. Successfully. But the vision and the growth and the excitement that Kevin brings is sort of why TROSA is so popular. Because without him at the helm of it all, I don't know that it would have the same electricity in the community.²⁶

Kevin is TROSA and TROSA is Kevin: a powerful concept that was instrumental to the initial development and growth of the organization. From the beginning, Kevin led by example, using his own experience as a guide. He is the hub of the wheel, ensuring that each spoke, that is each business, each department, each community volunteering project, each partnership is solid and strong. He uses his experience as an addict to recognize the behaviors and misbehaviors of other addicts and his experience overcoming his addiction and transforming his life serves as an inspiration to others trying to accomplish the same feat. While Kevin has found the hub and spoke strategy central to building TROSA into the organization it is today, he also recognizes the inherent liabilities of an organization so dependent on a single individual. His experience at Delancey Street where he witnessed the downfall of John Maher provided a powerful lesson

²⁶ Personal Interview with Louise Davis, July 9, 2002

about leadership. He has, from the beginning of his tenure at TROSA, acknowledged his responsibility to train others to take the lead and to explore new leadership models that will ensure the organization's existence as his role lessens.

Kevin is a moving speaker and a working powerhouse. Kevin has given his heart to this dream and vision that has become TROSA. He devotes countless hours and all of his creative thinking and determination to TROSA. Mike Keene, department head for the moving company describes the scope of Kevin's tasks and abilities this way:

He definitely leads by example, doesn't he? Everything he does. It's amazing to me. I feel like I do so much a lot of time, I'm responsible for a lot of stuff, and how could I handle anymore? He's got my spoke plus 50 more, okay. And he knows about everything. How can he ever do it? How does he do that? Can you imagine the stress that's on that man? Just to keep this rolling? I'm full trying to crank out 3 million dollars worth of business, I'm full. I'm just one small spoke. Here he's got all that, plus the pressures of whether or not we're gonna make budgets and that kind of thing, it's hard.

Then you got to look at the people aspect, the psychological aspect, psychiatry, medical, education. Man, it's awesome when you just get right down to it. Then he's got these boards, the different guys that are part of the boards, that's way above me. Finance, how to keep it rolling, directly responsible for it if anything goes wrong, he's got to know about it, he runs the stuff, he runs the show. How's he do it all? How's one man do that? Don't know.

And he's always such a giver to people. How come he doesn't get in a bad mood? You know what I mean? Why doesn't he get ill? Why doesn't he get too stressed out? How does he always see positive in everything?²⁷

TROSA is a highly structured hierarchy with Kevin as the decision-maker at the top of the pyramid. He oversees all of the department heads who in turn oversee the various crew chiefs, assistants, team leaders, intern leaders and others who create the leadership frame of the organization. As Kevin has often reminded me during the course of this research, TROSA is not a democracy, he is in charge. This is clearly recognized by both staff and residents, the vast majority of whom have nothing but respect for Kevin and what he has accomplished by leading TROSA to its present size and status. In a recent writing contest focused on leadership at TROSA, one of the prize-winning essays written by TROSA graduate Rafiq Zaidi equated Kevin with a military commander. The essay opens with a quote from George Patton, "Success is how high you can bounce when you hit bottom." In the body of his essay, Rafiq goes on to say:

Kevin taught me the in-depth meaning of the term reciprocity, to bounce back after a fall. Kevin's past downfall in life and his guidance have in some respects enabled many men and women to reclaim self. His innate character is the bedrock in which the whole foundation of TROSA's leadership rests. With his character and integrity, the full worth of the program can be realized. Character, like

²⁷ Personal Interview with Mike Keene, July 25, 2002

leadership, is created through the daily choice of right and wrong. It is moral quality, which grows gradually to maturity.²⁸

Residents recognize the choices Kevin has made to share his experience with others, sometimes at great personal sacrifice. They also recognize that what Kevin has created in collaboration with the TROSA community is about new hope and a chance for a good life. Ralph George, a resident who had been at TROSA for two months when he wrote about Kevin's compassion in his essay:

Kevin McDonald knows we can't change overnight so this idea took careful planning. He saw how he could make a difference in our lives just by sharing a concept that was freely given to him. This businessman could very easily move on and "fatten his wallet" without any of us involved. Instead he chose to show us that starting with our own lives, we too can make a difference by following some simple suggestions. By leaving the front door open, he also let us know we can throw in the towel at any time and walk away from the chance of a lifetime.

I would like to express my gratitude to a man who is showing me that using an honest approach to life and all the situations we encounter, we can be successful too. After only 2 months, he showed me if I stick around and pay attention, THE BEST IS YET TO COME !!!²⁹

Kevin McDonald has many traditional leadership qualities. He is intelligent, determined, hard working, charismatic, and visionary. He has a powerful personality and incredible intuition. He relies on his gut and reads people well. He can adapt to many situations and has no trouble making decisions when he needs to. While he often plays to his strengths, he can also recognize his weaknesses and has sought assistance dealing with his attention deficit and anxiety disorders. His twelve years at Delancey Street as a resident and then in leadership roles and his experience leading TROSA have allowed Kevin a lot of time to examine and re-examine himself, to develop his confidence and gain self-knowledge. Like many others, he has worked in therapeutic communities to both help others and to help himself. Gardner sees this task of self-discovery as an important component to effective leadership, "It is the particular burden of the leader to help other individuals determine their personal, social, and moral identities; more often than not, leaders inspire in part because of how they have resolved their own identity issues." (1995:25)

The TROSA community recognizes Kevin's current approach to leadership as effective and elemental to their success but they also recognize several other important definitions and ways of practicing leadership. The "each one teach one" motto embodied by Kevin and other staff members who lead by example is also well employed by people who have been at TROSA for a few as five days. New residents are assigned a "shadow," a person who teaches them all about TROSA, its rules, its schedule, its daily life. A shadow has an important responsibility to help new residents feel like they belong and can participate effectively in the TROSA community. This role as a new resident's first guide is an important one and from the beginning residents are given opportunities, education, guidance, and support to take on more and more responsibility. They can become intern leaders, crew chiefs, team leaders, task masters, senior

²⁸ Rafiq Zaidi, "Kevin Robert McDonald: A Commander out in Front" July, 2002

²⁹ Ralph George, "The Greatest Display of Leadership I've Seen !!!" July 14, 2002

residents and potential staff members. Most of TROSA's current staff members are former residents whose leadership capacity has been developed as they came up through these ranks. Sometimes residents are chosen for these roles because they exhibit some leadership qualities like compassion, selflessness, honesty, loyalty, and a strict adherence to the rules and vision of TROSA. While much of the training offered to residents who become leaders is done through observation and emulation of others, staff member Gary Young recently gathered newly assigned team leaders, task masters, and intern leaders for a short seminar. As he explains to them:

You're helping save his life and by saving his life, you're saving your own. That's the way you got to look at it at all times. Don't think you're doing your buddy dirty or doing this guy or being a cop or something like that. All that crap needs to go out the window. You're saving each others' lives. We feel like you guys are doing one notch better than the average resident so you can help a little more with the programmatic sides of the program. That's what being a leader is all about. It also teaches you so when you get out there you might get a job. Instead of the average Joe, you might be assistant manager or manager or foreman, crew boss.³⁰

To excel at these new responsibilities, Gary encourages the new leaders to build upon their past actions and continue to do the right thing. He also acknowledges the power of the "each one teach one" approach:

If you want to be recovering and sober, then you've got to show somebody else how to do it. If you want to be a good leader, you've got to act like one, you've got to carry yourself, you've got to set an example. In order to be a good leader, you've got to be a good follower. Obviously, you guys have been. You've pretty much followed the program to the best of your ability. We've all had our ups and downs. Ain't none of y'all here perfect. I just want you guys to hold each other and the rest of the residents accountable to the best of your ability and to the same point you held yourself accountable up until this point. You need to step it up a notch from where you were yesterday to now, and that's pretty much it.³¹

In other cases, residents are chosen not because they have already exhibited leadership qualities but because they need help developing these qualities and others feel that giving them these kinds of responsibilities will push them to find these qualities inside and bring them to the surface. Twice a month on Monday nights, program graduates who live in TROSA housing gather for a discussion, workshop, or other educational program. At one of these meetings I was able to conduct a discussion about the meaning of leadership. One graduate in particular, Delores Thompson, talked about her experience being made a team leader despite her reluctance to take on this role. While others may have seen leadership capacity in her, she was not interested in either the responsibility or the obligations being a leader required:

³⁰ Gary Young addressing new leaders, August, 2002

³¹ Gary Young addressing new leaders, August, 2002

When I was made a team leader, I didn't want to do it. I just didn't want to do it. But the months that I've been a team leader, it's helped me. It wasn't so much for me to lead someone else, but to learn how to be a leader, you know what I mean? I needed to learn some things about myself, and I needed to come to terms with some things about myself that I didn't like. I just wanted to be, take care of myself and do for myself. There are times when I have just been so bogged down with my own personal problems, but at the end of the night when I get ready to lay down, I say "God, you know, I helped somebody" and at the beginning of the day I was like "I hope nobody comes to me, I really am not feeling it today, I don't want to be bothered, I'm tired", but I did it.

I learned that in order for a good team to be in effect, it takes a good strong leader. And I had to get there, because I was not what I am now, I was very weak, I cried a lot, I was very quiet and I didn't speak up for myself, I didn't stand up for myself. But being a leader here helped me tremendously to just be the way that I'm supposed to be, the way that I was designed to be, and that was to help somebody. And the best thing that you can do, being a leader, is to do something for somebody—anybody, anytime, anywhere—for nothing. That's what I've learned—for nothing.

And the rewards come—they'll come and you'll know it. But just go in to say "hey I'm gonna do this the best I can and whatever happens, it happens," but you'll see the fruit of your labor. The days that you don't want to do, the days that you don't feel like it, the days that you're tired, the days that you just want to cuss everybody out, those are the days that you just extend yourself, extend yourself until you can't do it anymore. And the rewards will come. I know what I'm talking about because they're coming for me now.³²

Building leadership capacity is essential to the success of TROSA as both a therapeutic community and as a socially conscious entrepreneurial organization. This means helping people gain confidence, learn how to care about others, develop decision making skills, become aware of their own behaviors as examples to others, and accomplish specific work or tasks efficiently and on time. TROSA residents are dependent on their own accomplishments both in the realm of generating needed operating funds through business enterprises and in the task of reforming their self-destructive behaviors. The leadership provided by residents to each other in both titled and untitled roles along with the efforts of staff members is what makes the TROSA operations work. Everyone is engaged in a complicated process that requires a clear articulation of the rules and structure, the processes and procedures, and the paperwork and scheduling required to keep up with the needs, actions, and work activities of more than 300 people. To try to do that fairly and equitably, staff and leadership continue to evolve and refine these processes, a task that can only be successfully accomplished through teamwork and excellent communication skills.

Keeping this community healthy and operating takes a tremendous amount of effort on everyone's part. Resident leaders assist staff members who carry a major part of this organizational burden and provide a lion's share of this effort. Much of this required energy is

³² Graduate Group Discussion, August 19, 2002

driven by hope and a passion for healing and fueled by a vision that change is possible for everyone if you want it badly enough. For some residents, this is a fundamental element of leadership. Geneva Hayes, a recent graduate explained it this way:

A leader is really someone that is unselfish. I was a team leader for about 14 months. Before I came to TROSA, I really didn't care about anything or anyone—not even myself. But you can't help but care about other people in TROSA because they give themselves unconditionally to you so you try to do the same for the next person.

You don't have to have a title to be a leader. All you need to do is show that you are really sincere about changing your life and other people will grab hold. People still come to me, you know. I tell them 'keep coming', if they got enough time they can call me on the phone or whatever, I'll get up out of my bed, if it's pressing or anything because I don't want to see nobody, especially no women, to go back to what we went through before we came to TROSA. You just got to want it and really leadership comes from within.³³

Several of the essays and poems submitted by residents to the leadership writing contest focused on Geneva, her generosity of spirit, and the inspiring example she sets for others. It is this inner strength, a quality highly admired in Geneva, that Geneva herself emphasizes in her own comments. She says that you have to learn to care for yourself and do the right thing before you find that leadership from within. Other staff and residents at TROSA sometimes refer to this as being a "leader to yourself."

Many residents shared a similar sentiment in their essays. Regina Spurgeon said that "Since I've been at T.R.O.S.A. I've found that true leadership comes only from within, knowing there are no followers or leaders, only yourself to fight your battles within and then only your strength and choosing your own road may shed light to others to give them inspiration to grow."³⁴ Christina Fields opens her essay with "You have to be a leader within yourself. You have to be rigid and honest with self,"³⁵ and Rafiq Zaidi quotes Kevin McDonald in his essay saying, "The real enemy we have to challenge is the enemy within self. The hardest fight you will ever have is when you got to war with yourself to accept the challenge to change."³⁶ Kym Horne's essay articulates her desire as a "woman who is inspired to be a leader," and that in order to face the challenging aspects of leadership, it is essential to know self.³⁷ Randall Horton concludes his essay with this self-evaluation:

I've come a long way from that man who was behind the razor wire fence of medium security Roxbury Correctional Prison wondering would I ever get a chance to turn my life around and be the person that my parents always wanted me to be; would I ever get the chance to be respected as a leader of men? With over 19 months in the program, I have learned that leadership does not come

³³ Graduate Group Discussion, August 19, 2002

³⁴ Regina Spurgeon, "True Leadership, What it means to me!" July, 2002

³⁵ Christina Fields, "What a leader means to me in TROSA?" July, 2002

³⁶ Rafiq Zaidi, "Kevin Robert McDonald: A Commander out in Front" July, 2002

³⁷ Kym Horne, "Leadership," July 5, 2002

automatically, it is not something that you can just put a label on or deem someone as. No! Leadership is an earned commodity that manifests itself in those that incorporate everything that is positive and direct that positivity into their daily life. Yes, I've learned that leadership is the most powerful component that one can possess when re-entering a society that is already going to view them with contempt.³⁸

In all of these essays, this notion of self-reliance, of taking charge of your own life through your own efforts constitutes a definition of leadership, one that has both personal and community-wide ramifications. As Ralph George suggests, the emergent new self, empowered by individual effort and fueled by a desire for change and a positive outlook, does not come about overnight. This kind of life change requires daily practice and constant vigilance. This process, this transformation is at the heart of the TROSA vision. Leadership as defined by the TROSA community and practiced through the experience of its residents is its soul. The community understands and articulates the key importance of leadership, from the resident with a few months of seniority to the President/CEO Kevin McDonald who believes:

You can be a leader of one, and just by doing the right thing you can affect so many, and they don't get their name in the newspaper, and they don't get any special recognition, and those are the real leaders of the world, those are the people who go to work every day and take care of their families and struggle and survive but don't ever quit. That's the leadership that nobody ever says, and sees, and those are the role models that make the difference for their kids to do the right thing. There has to be more of that type of leadership, I think, and it just starts, instead of looking for people to affect millions, just look for people to affect one other person.³⁹

Discussion of the process, the nuts and bolts of change, is part of the daily life of TROSA, integral to both the business operations and the therapeutic arena. The negotiation of the meaning of leadership and its practice is therefore an integral part of the social fabric of this community, a mainstay of its daily discourse, and an essential element of its success. The recitation of personal narratives by TROSA staff and residents carries this discourse into the community when they accept public speaking engagements or do outreach. The drama of dysfunction, the despair of self-destruction, and the epiphany of redemption make these stories of personal leadership compelling and impassioned. They engage others, both inside and outside the TROSA community, in powerful ways, drawing them into the realm of hope and the belief in the positive potential of each human life. One's story, while often quite personal, has also been captured metaphorically by some staff members deeply involved in the "people business" at TROSA. Jesse Battle, one of the most powerful and eloquent speakers at TROSA, has developed a narrative that he often uses to illustrate personal transformation, and leadership process, one that he calls listening to your "role model." Just as Randall Horton has suggested in his essay, leadership can be used as a tool to protect one's self from "a society that is going to view you [ex-addicts and offenders] with contempt." Jesse refers to this as "building a suit of armor."

³⁸ Randall Horton, "Leading By Example," July, 2002

³⁹ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, May 7, 2002.

When I say role model, I don't mean me or a Michael Jordan or one of those guys you see on posters,
I'm talking about that man or woman that they know they are always supposed to be,
that man or woman that they know they're capable of being,
that little thing inside you that, even when you're doing something wrong it says
"Man that's wrong. Don't! What are you doing?"

That person inside that has always said that, that's the role model. . . .
And that's the biggest thing, just to learn how to listen to your role model.
And you do that by this person's help.
You do that by that person's help.
You do that by that lady's help over there.
Watching her batting stance.

Because in a sense it's like fighting a war.
And you can't ever win a war with a shield.
You can't ever fight and win the war like that, because all you do is hide behind
your shield and hope that a person stops throwing or that a person stops
swinging.
You can't win that way.
So you've got to have a sword too.
And you get the sword from that lady over there.
And that lady over there's got a helmet.
That man over there's got some chest-plate for you.
So everybody's going to give you a little armor to fight this war with.
And it may be a thousand words that she says,
but one thing that she [says] clicks in [your] mind [and] gives you those
shin-guards.
One thing that you watch that person over there do gives you the helmet that you
need.

And it's all about doing that, so that when it is time to wage war,
you got yourself a full battle armor.
And that's what you get from each and every body.
And everybody gives that to each other.

And to me, that's what I say . . . should be happening.
It's like so amazing to me, and that's one of the things that just really just draws
me all about it.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Personal Interview with Jesse Battle, May 29, 2002. This quote is presented ethnopoetically in an attempt to capture the rhythm and tempo of the speech. In poetic form, Jesse's words begin to reflect the eloquence, energy and power of his presentation.

Leadership at TROSA is based on a relationship with self, a confidence born of self-knowledge, and a practice dependent upon participation in a community. This is a powerful concept whose ramifications could easily extend beyond the confines of any particular group and potentially impact change in the society at large. If as William Drath suggests in his challenging book, The Deep Blue Sea, Rethinking the Source of Leadership, the tasks of leadership are setting direction, creating and maintaining commitment, and facing adaptive challenges, (2001:18-21) then leadership at TROSA happens on all levels, from the individual, to the team, to the larger organization, all based on community participation, personal effort, and vigilant practice. What impact could TROSA's ideas about leadership have on the larger community, how could this impact be effectively communicated and evaluated and what are the challenges or barriers to this goal? The larger society's attitudes toward substance abusers is one arena in which TROSA's leadership stories can and do have an impact. In response to the question, "What do you think is important about the work TROSA does in the world?" former resident Crystal Gilmore answered this way:

Everybody has, when you think of a drug addict, everybody has their perception. They think of this sneaky, ugly, dirty-looking, grubby person or somebody where you have to avert your eyes or they're going to steal something from you or whatever. But with TROSA, we try to make them understand it doesn't have to be that way. We go over and beyond to point out that yes, you can change your life, so that's why the moving company is so courteous. That's why whenever we have jobs out in community we put that little special oomph to every job that we have.

When I go out on a speaking engagement, I tell the truth about myself. Because the majority of people think that I employed through TROSA. Because when I'm introduced, they say that I work in the President's office until I explain to them that I smoked crack cocaine and my life was unmanageable and I needed stability and structure in my life. And it's just to show people that it doesn't have to be stereotypical, there is a difference.

You can make a difference in your life. And I think that's what TROSA does. Showing people that we can help each other. You can change that mentality of, "a drug addict will always be a drug addict." No, you can change your life.⁴¹

TROSA shows the larger community that these changed lives can be productive lives, that the TROSA experience can result in individuals who are good citizens, people who can be trusted and who will contribute to the greater good. The more effectively the TROSA message is disseminated, the more potential there is to change attitudes and to then change policy. This is true in relation to the general public as well as the community of treatment providers. A therapeutic community model based on the TROSA experience can be threatening to treatment professionals who don't know much about it and have attitudes based on their experience with other substance abuse treatment modalities. Paul Nagy refers to this as "psycho-sclerosis, a hardening of the attitudes," when "people just don't have a degree of openness about what they

⁴¹ Personal Interview with Crystal Gilmore, October 8, 2002

don't know."⁴² So one of the challenges facing TROSA as it assesses its ability to have a larger impact in the field and on society is how to more effectively communicate its vision, its practice, and its success to more people and how to encourage an open minded environment in which these ideas could be heard.

Research and replication are two of the ways TROSA is working toward sharing its successful model with the larger community. Kevin McDonald and Paul Nagy have been developing strategies to better track residents and offer accurate data about success rates and treatment methods. As Kevin suggests, "we've got to start really trying to figure out what works and what doesn't, and if we put enough money into it, into the research aspect, maybe we could save a lot of people from a lot of hurt. I don't think there's any quick fix, I don't think there's just one thing, but anything we could do will really help."⁴³

This is one of the reasons TROSA has initiated so many discussions with professors, practitioners, and researchers at several of the surrounding institutions of higher learning including Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). Kevin has welcomed physicians, clinicians, business school students, law students, and social workers to TROSA to work in partnership to develop new projects and evaluate the TROSA model. The work published by these researchers and students in professional publications will spread the word about TROSA and its ideas. There is also the impact of personal contact with TROSA by outsiders. The TROSA community is an exciting environment and each student, volunteer, and professional who visits or works with TROSA residents and staff is affected by the experience. As they move on in their careers and in their lives, they will take this experience with them and share it with others, extending TROSA's reach in larger and larger circles.

There are many good reasons for TROSA to work toward a replication model and many challenges to that task. The power of the experience of transformation propels people at TROSA to want to pass it on to others, thus the "Each one teach one" motto. But what are the implications of this notion in a larger context? "I'd never thought I could be a teacher," says Kevin McDonald, "but I really want to make opportunity for other people not to have to bang their head against the wall." He continues:

With substance abuse and drugs, it's a damnable problem that affects people around the world. And it's not just the addicts that are affected, it's everybody around them. It's not a healthy thing for society or for the addicts, it causes a lot of fear, and a lot of sadness, and ultimately the people who don't use the drugs become prisoners of that fear. So we have to really work at this to figure out how we can help people and change their behavior and their addiction.⁴⁴

Inspired by this vision Kevin has started the planning process for replication. It actually began years ago when he decided that TROSA would have paid staff members and that the staff would include both former residents and straight people from the outside. He worked hard to keep himself and his staff from becoming stuck in one way of thinking about how TROSA should operate. He opened his doors to psychiatrists and other clinicians, to social workers and counselors. He opened his mind to the information they might share and their perspectives. He asked for criticism and comment so that he could try to refine and improve his operations—not

⁴² Personal Interview with Paul Nagy, September 13, 2002.

⁴³ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, May 7, 2002.

⁴⁴ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, May 7, 2002.

that he has implemented all of their suggestions or adopted all of their perspectives. But as Kevin confirms,

I'm trying to interact with the Duke University and UNC, bringing in different people that a lot of places wouldn't interact with and trying to build those partnerships. It means opening up a therapeutic community in a way that most aren't open, and trying different things, and being able to trust people you know. And at the same time you have to look for you, that you never forget your mission which is about your people, and you want to do the best for the people that are here, to change their lives.

At the same time to always search for a better way and not get so stuck and so secure and comfortable in the way it was done, and stick with that because that's the way, well that's bullshit. And the only way you change certain things is by opening yourself up to criticism, to other people, to find another method that might add to what you're doing and make it better.

And it makes you uncomfortable, it can, you can get insecure about it, but that's what a leader has to do.⁴⁵

While TROSA has been opening itself up to these new ideas and implementing some of them, the organization has also held fast to its grounding pillars: length of residence, level of structure, entrepreneurialism, and a value-system based on honesty, accountability, and concern for others. Maintaining the community and holding fast to these basic tenets has been challenging as the TROSA community has grown and its businesses have expanded. The complex task of keeping the community members bound together in a web of personal, work, and therapeutic relationships becomes more and more difficult as the program has expanded to more than 300 people. New strategies have been developed to ensure that individuals cannot just "do their time" and slip through the program without others taking an active interest in their experience and their efforts to change. Policies have to become flexible and rules have to change in reaction to the changing character of the TROSA community. There is an interesting relationship between this openness to change and the tried and true rigidity that has helped other therapeutic communities be successful, a relationship that sometimes is characterized by tension. But it is in the management of this tension, the decisions made about when to be rigid and when to be open, which have and will have tremendous impact on TROSA's organizational future. TROSA has been flexible enough as a treatment model to effectively respond to the real needs of its residents. In the beginning Kevin trusted his gut and his own experience to make these decisions,

Things that I thought we needed, I did. And that's why the aftercare, and all the different awards, the cars for graduates, to help them make a better life for themselves, not just through the program, but afterwards. The psychiatric help because, as much as I've worked and done this stuff, I knew nothing about psychiatry or about mental illness. I thought you just toughed shit out. And I

⁴⁵ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, May 16, 2002.

learned so much just in the first few years with those Duke psychiatrists like Dr. Handelsman. So instead of being apart from the community, I really wanted to integrate TROSA with the community. We're not really like a lot of other therapeutic communities, because most of them are a little more cloistered.⁴⁶

In order to be open however, TROSA has had to work hard looking inward to shore up its own operation, to develop systems, procedures, paperwork, and an organizational culture that will ensure their future existence. This has included moving from an oral culture, one in which how things are done is passed on from person to person to procedures that are written, thus the development by Tim Carroll of the "playbook." It has also included efforts to provide staff development opportunities and the hiring of outside, straight people in some key positions. This integration and formalization effort has been important but it has not been a process without a few bumps. There is an essential balance to maintain between knowledge gained through experience and knowledge gained through formal training and education. It takes careful leadership to determine when to rely on which kind of knowledge. TROSA managers face this challenge every day and are working to bring more systems and reliability to their departments. The landscape at TROSA is always changing; residents who provide the backbone, the labor required by its businesses, are coming and going every day. The staff and the organizational procedures and systems bring an important stability and structure to the TROSA community.

Over time, though, there will also be changes in the ranks of staff and leadership. Kevin realizes that in order to lead the development of a replication effort, he will have to detach himself from the day-to-day operations of TROSA. One of TROSA's greatest strengths has been its identification with Kevin McDonald, his experience, his leadership, and his story but that close relationship can also be a liability. Jeff Clark, a venture capitalist and TROSA board member evaluated the situation this way:

But long term what happens if you're not careful then the organization and the person become synonymous. And the instant that person leaves, the organization dies. And so what we're doing is trying, we're not trying to lessen Kevin, what we're trying to do is empower Kevin so that the vision can be bigger and last beyond his direct tenure with the organization. Because as it stands now, or until a couple of years ago, they were totally synonymous.⁴⁷

Jeff and other Board members are working with Kevin to develop a strategic plan for the organization and to explore the options around replication. Jeff believes that TROSA provides a new model for not-for-profit organizations, an entrepreneurial model that is less subject to the whims of philanthropy and more effective at leveraging the philanthropic gifts it does receive. He believes the TROSA model could become a national model, that many other communities would benefit from having a TROSA-like program to combat substance abuse.⁴⁸

The challenges to this goal are many. TROSA began in 1994 and is still a relatively young organization. It has experienced exponential growth over the last nine years and it continues to see an increase in the number of people who seek its services. It is an evolving organization that is developing and refining its approach, its operational culture, and its vision.

⁴⁶ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, May 7, 2002.

⁴⁷ Personal Interview with Jeff Clark, July 24, 2002.

⁴⁸ Personal Interview with Jeff Clark, July 24, 2002.

As TROSA heads down the road to organizational maturity, it has succeeded in staying on the profitable side of the balance sheet, being able to finance its own growth, and think about a capital expansion that would consolidate its housing into a campus and provide space for teaching others its methods. The organization struggles now to decentralize the decision-making structure, to allow for on-the-job learning that represent the growing pains of this process, to guard against burn-out among key staff members, and to trust that leadership can be passed on to the next generation. Facing these adaptive challenges is central to TROSA's ability to chart its future. How the TROSA community approaches this task will impact the ways in which leaders are defined and leadership as a shared concept is constructed. Driving the process are the stories, the personal narratives that bind the community together and inspire its members to keep moving forward, to continue to work hard to do the right thing over and over and over. Kevin McDonald articulates this vision and the energy that fuels it so well:

I mean I'll never forget so many stories that I've heard about people that don't have insurance, they didn't have a place to go, they don't have this and nobody would take them, and you can't take everybody, but damn, man. As long as we can keep doing this—and we could close tomorrow—I mean we're on such a fine line here as far as survival goes in reality. It's always a fight to survive, but some people I guess would have problems with that, but that's all I've ever done.

You know one other thing about a leader is that you gotta get used to being knocked to the deck and getting back up again. And I think that things just don't go smooth. A lot of people in life, shit comes up and they lay down and they don't want to get back up. With a leader, yeah, you can't quit. And you have to make decisions no matter how badly you're beat up. Because that's when you win. When they think that you don't have nothing left, and you've tired them out, they're so tired of hitting you they ain't got no more energy left, then it's your turn.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Personal Interview with Kevin McDonald, May 7, 2002.

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