

# Comments about Amity

“Your proposal {to develop California’s first intensive drug treatment program} was selected partially due to Amity’s proven record of success and vast experience in correctional substance abuse treatment. The complex scope and size of this project demands an agency with an extensive background in institutional as well as community treatment.”

**James Rowland**, Director, California Department of Corrections. June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1990. Letter to Rod Mullen awarding contract to provide California’s first intensive drug abuse treatment program at R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility.

“ I had an opportunity to tour the Amity program at the R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility last Thursday. Over the years I have visited a number of substance abuse programs but have never been more impressed with the staff or the treatment approach than I was at Donovan.”

**Shannon Reffett, Ph.D.** Executive Director, Robert Presley Institute of Corrections Research and Training. May 1, 1991. Letter to James Gomez, Director, California Department of Corrections.

“On Monday, September 16, 1996, the entire Amity Substance Abuse Program was given a surprise urinalysis. There were 226 tests given with full cooperation from all residents. There were no positive tests....{Amity} makes the Facility 3 yard a safer place for inmates to live and a safer place for staff to work.”

**J.M. Ratelle**, Warden, R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility, San Diego

“The actual experiences at Amity have provided a leaping-off point for California to become more involved in substance abuse treatment for inmates both in and out of prison. Your leadership in the area of substance abuse treatment has made a real difference not only to the individuals who have received that treatment, but also on a broader scale to the inmate population in general. The substance abuse treatment center at Corcoran, which will be the largest in the nation, would not have occurred if you and your staff had not made Amity such a success.”

**James Gomez**, Director, California Department of Corrections. January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1997. Letter to Rod Mullen

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“I am pleased to state that Amity has developed one of the finest overall programs for resocializing criminal –addicts that I have researched in the United States and Europe over the past 35 years. The Amity project at the R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility is a model in California and around the United States and should be replicated in prisons throughout the country. It stands as a historical breakthrough in the field of corrections.”

**Lewis Yablonsky, Ph.D.**, Emeritus Professor, California State University, Northridge; founder of the California School of Psychodrama, internationally known criminologist and author of 15 books, including: *The Violent Gang*; *Synanon, the Tunnel Back*; *The Therapeutic Community*; and *Gangsters*. October 21, 1996. Letter to the California Department of Corrections

“Since 1987 I worked closely with Mr. Mullen and Naya Arbiter who were selected to assist us during Projects REFORM and RECOVERY to assist the states’ correction departments in developing comprehensive drug treatment for their offenders who had been drug users. In that role, they (and Mr. Williams of Stay 'N Out) guided the development of more than 50 therapeutic communities in these 22 state correctional systems (and others as well). Indirectly their work strongly influenced the federal Bureau of Prisons who borrowed the models these experts generated. The reason that Mr. Mullen and Ms. Arbiter were selected out the hundreds of possible leaders in the treatment field is that their program, Amity, was considered clinically the finest therapeutic community in the United States and one of the most experienced working with persons in custody. We had to select the best—in terms of clinical insight and wisdom, and their ability to work with officers and correctional managers—in order to have credibility within the correctional departments.”

“It should be noted that Amity staff have provided treatment services at R.J. Donovan CF since its outset. Results of Dr. Wexler’s evaluation of these services are quite positive despite the fact that a large proportion was offenders with records of violence. This finding has important implications for treatment in prison throughout the nation.”

**Douglas S. Lipton, Ph.D.** Senior Research Fellow, National Development & Research Institutes, Inc. September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1996 letter to the California Department of Corrections.

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“When you include the savings to society as result of reduced criminal activity {by Amity participants} we’re going to show that expanded drug treatment is good for the state of California.”

**John Erickson**, Assistant Director, and Director of the Office of Substance Abuse Programs, California Department of Corrections. March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1997, Sacramento Bee

I and my staff have worked closely with Naya Arbiter and Amity co-founder Rod Mullen on a range of substance abuse issues. Their guidance helped shape the 1992 reorganization of federal substance abuse treatment and prevention efforts (Public Law 102-321), an Amity’s impressive work in state penal systems throughout the United States, particularly in California and Texas, informed relevant aspects of the 1994 crime bill (Public Law 103-322). Throughout these years, Amity’s program for substance abusing women in Arizona has remained a model for the nation, and Ms. Arbiter’s work on international narcotics control issues has been influential in the Senate.”

**Edward M. Kennedy**, U.S. Senator. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1995

“We are convinced that the Amity model is successful. It provides a significant benefit to California taxpayers by reducing recidivism and a benefit to all citizens by reducing the level of crime, particularly violent crime, in our communities. Our only question now is how fast can we expand this model while achieving results similar to those achieved by Amity at R.J. Donovan.”

**Craig Brown**, California State Director of Finance and Former Director of the California Youth and Adult Correctional Agency.

“The Little Hoover report {an independent state funded agency which studies ways to improve state government} extolled drug rehabilitation efforts like the highly praised, 200-bed Amity Foundation “therapeutic community” program in operation for several years at the Richard J. Donovan prison near San Diego. The program has cut recidivism rates to 16 percent for a control group, according to a federally funded study.”

**Andy Furillo**, staff writer, Sacramento Bee. January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1998 S

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“The current policy of building more prisons wastes money and doesn’t rehabilitate those in situations where it might work. I don’t consider myself a do-gooder or a liberal on the issue. If this {Amity programs} can help a convict, improve public safety and save money, that sounds like a winner to me.”

**Bill Lockyear**, President Pro Tem, California Senate. Los Angeles Times, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1997

“A careful and detailed study of adverse behavior incidents among inmates {at the R. J. Donovan Correctional Facility} in the therapeutic community environment {Amity} contrasted to inmates not in treatment shows, across all types of disciplinary infractions, a lawful and strikingly significant less number in such reports among the ‘Amity’ treatment population.” There is a similarly positive striking reduction of work injury, sick leave and other personal quality of life/cost impact among custody assigned to the treatment unit {Amity} versus officers in all other yards and housing units.”

**David Deitch**, Ph.D., Director, Addiction Technology Transfer Center, University of California at San Diego

“The inmates in the Amity program are some of the most incorrigible inmates in the correctional system. They are one of the hardest groups of people to work with, with an average of at least eight years of prison time, strong gang affiliations, a long history of substance abuse, and violent backgrounds. The unit that the program {Amity} is in is a safer environment for correctional officers to work in, gives them an opportunity to be more involved, and there are less write-ups on the program participants resulting in cost savings for management.”

**J.M. Ratelle**, Warden, R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility. Testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on the Federal Crime Bill, 1995.

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“In my capacity as the County of San Diego’s Alcohol and Drug Program Administrator, I have become familiar with the excellent work that the Amity program has done at R.J. Donovan. The Amity program has demonstrated effectiveness within the incarcerated setting and has been effective in providing both residential and aftercare services in San Diego County for men who have completed the in-prison component and are in need of continuing their treatment involvement in the community. Since 1990, the Amity staff have worked collaboratively with our agency, other providers of service, and with the Mental Health Systems Parolee Partnership Program for Parolees. The outcome data has demonstrated significant reductions in recidivism for those men who continue treatment in the community, particularly those who choose to continue their aftercare treatment with Amity. This speaks very clearly to the competence and effectiveness of the Amity program. Amity has achieved an excellent reputation in the criminal justice system and in the treatment community here in San Diego.”

**Al Medina**, Alcohol and Drug Program Administrator, San Diego County, 1998

“Throughout the project {the federally funded Amity/Pima County Jail Project 1987-1995}, Amity maintained an excellent working relationship with my office, the major in charge of the Pima County Adult Detention Center, the captain in charge of the Amity unit, the probation officers who were involved in working with those released from the project, and the members of the judiciary were almost uniformly enthusiastic about having an effective treatment option available in the jail.

Amity also introduced the idea of regular cross training of our correctional staff by treatment experts, such as Rod Mullen and Naya Arbiter, and they insisted that the treatment staff receive cross training by our department. Cross-training ideas developed by Amity were widely adopted nationally. The newly appointed “drug czar” used those ideas in national conferences, and CSAT developed an entire written curriculum to be used in the development of correctional training programs based upon the model Amity developed in conjunction with my department.

During the jail project hundreds of Pima County Jail inmates went through the program. Outcome data gathered by the Amity Research Department showed that only 32% of those who completed the jail project were rearrested three years post-release---a much lower rate than those who did not receive treatment.

Hundreds of jail and prison officials, legislators, and other policy makers visited the jail project during its tenure. Dozens of programs were begun—inspired by the

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success of the Amity/Pima County Jail Project—and the American Jail Association used the project as a training site during most of its life.”

**Clarence W. Dupnick**, Sheriff, Pima County, Arizona January, 1998

“From my broad correctional experience in California, in the U.S., and around the world, I can say that without doubt the Amity program is one of the best, or the best, in the United States. It provides dynamic education on such real issues as sobriety, accountability, personal responsibility, and more. Amity staff have also recognized the importance of follow-up and of a genuine continuation of the in-prison program for parolees in the community. It is this continuity of services that has been critical in the dramatic reductions in recidivism that the program has achieved, and which have been noted by California and national authorities.”

**James Rowland**, former Director, California Department of Corrections. January, 1988.

We have established a very important database regarding reductions in recidivism for program participants {at Amity}...these data have also made an impact on policy deliberations regarding the efficacy of in-prison therapeutic community substance abuse treatment programs nationally and in California in particular. As more results are made available, the program will become even more prominent in the debate about effective options for drug-using offenders.”

**George DeLeon**, Ph.D. Director, Center for Therapeutic Community Research, National Development and Research Institutes. 1998

“The senior staff of Amity have worked closely with me on Projects REFORM and RECOVERY {federally sponsored technical assistance and training programs to help states develop effective strategies for drug using offenders}. Based on their many years of working with substance abusing offenders, they helped me design and implement a number of important programs around the country. The Amity residential program in Tucson, which had been identified as a national model, served as a training site for many state personnel during the five year span of both technical assistance projects. In addition, their Pima County Jail Therapeutic Community served as a model program for incarcerated populations.

While conducting the evaluation of the Amity operated Therapeutic Community at {the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility} I had the opportunity to closely observe their effectiveness at operating the project. Amity has done an excellent

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job...I strongly believe the Amity approach which has proved successful at Donovan should be extended to other institutions.”

**Harry K. Wexler**, Senior Principal Investigator, National Development and Research Institutes.  
1998

Evaluations of prison-based treatment have focused on residential treatment programs and suggest that length of stay in treatment and the availability of aftercare following treatment are important predictors of success. Amity, a therapeutic community-based program at the R.J. Donovan medium security prison in San Diego, for example, reduced reincarceration rates within one year of parole to 26 percent for Amity graduates who completed aftercare, compared to 43 percent for Amity graduates who did not participate in aftercare, 50 percent for Amity program drop outs and 63 percent for matched comparison group.

**“Behind Bars: Substance Abuse and America’s Prison Population.** January, 1998. The National Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.

“The state legislative analyst’s office last year reported that extending substance abuse treatment to an additional 5,000 inmates {using the Amity model} would save the state \$40 million dollars per year in prison operating expenses and \$110 in a one-time capital outlay to increase prison capacity.”

**“Ex-Addicts Bring Success to Drug Program.”** The Corrections Professional. November 20, 1998.