

NEWS

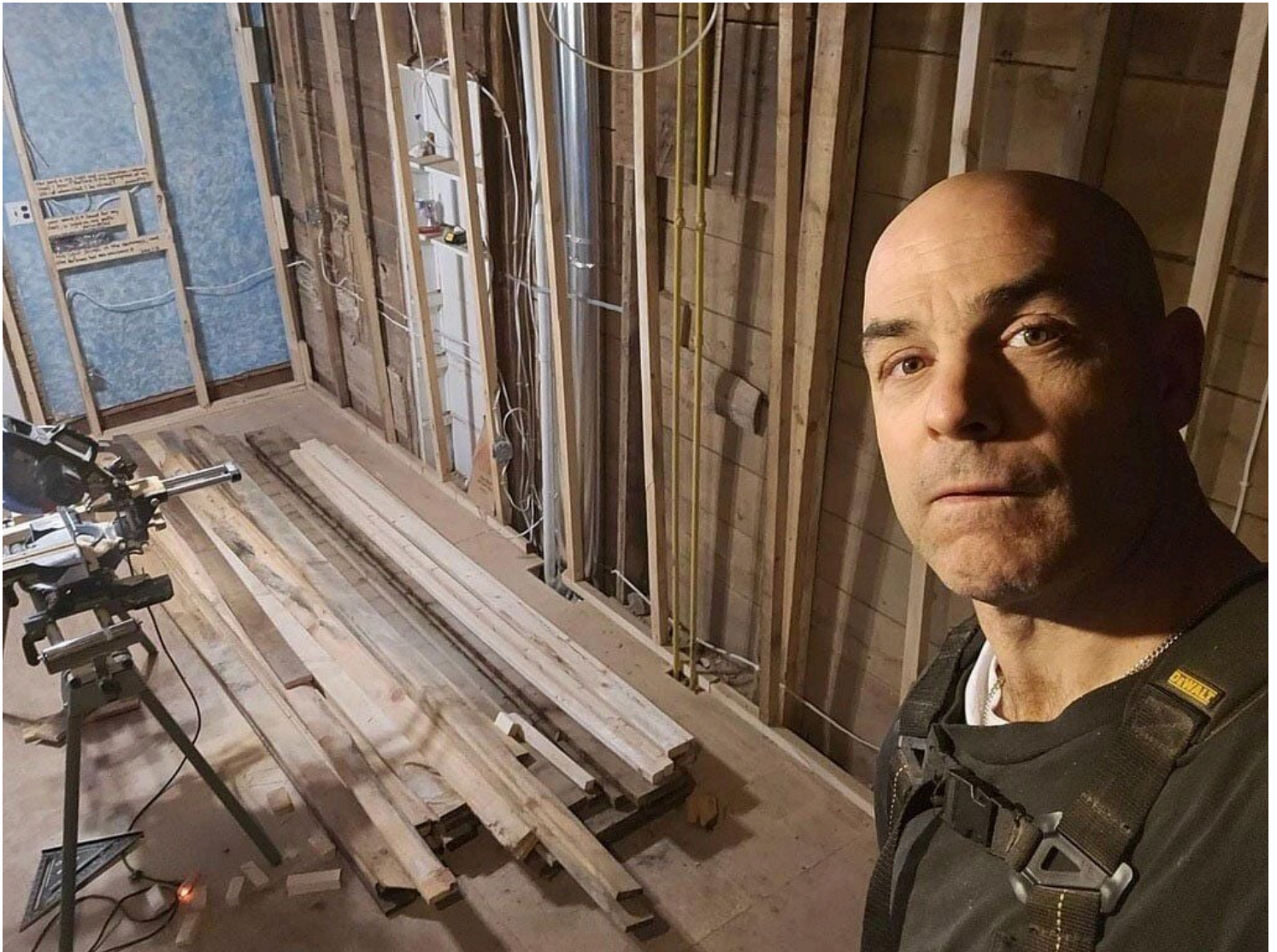
'Love Soluble was a dream': Addictions treatment facility to open in Maberly

Spencer Kell is offering a helping hand, a place to stay, and a fighting chance to those seeking meaningful change



By **Laurie Weir** Perth Courier

Article was updated Dec 24, 2023



Spencer Kell has created the Manie Daniel's Centre in Maberly to help men struggling with addiction. He is busy with renovations and upgrades to the building he purchased in Tay Valley Township in September, 2023. He hopes to have the new centre open by March 2024.

Spencer Kell photo

When Spencer Kell was incarcerated, he developed a plan to help others with addictions.

Crystal methamphetamine was his drug of choice. He said he was in and out of prison many times because of his 20-year drug addiction. Knocking on death's door, the 45-year-old said he prayed.

"I knew if I continued to use drugs, I was going to die," he said. "If there is anything good left inside of me, God could have it, because my life was over."

ARTICLE CONTINUES BELOW

Some six years later, he is sober and feels God is "probably using me ... so here I am."

Kell now lives in Maberly, where he purchased a rundown four-bedroom house with a studio.

He hopes to have his treatment centre, The Manie Daniel's Center (MDC), up and running by March. This is a non-profit, sober-living environment and safe place for those seeking help with substance abuse.



The Manie Daniel's Centre in Maberly was a dream by owner Spencer Kell to help men struggling with addictions. He hopes to have the centre open and running by March, 2024.

Spencer Kell photo

“Love Soluble was a dream of mine when I was incarcerated and thinking about the way addiction is treated through incarceration and how that system can be improved on.”

He went full tilt with the plan after losing a friend he met in prison — Manie Daniel, a man who was released after Kell but overdosed and died just two days later.

“That was so frustrating,” Kell said about losing his friend — one he had vowed to help.

“**I realized drugs might be the problem.” — Spencer Kell**

Stuck in the cycle of recidivism and suffering from life-altering substance use disorder, Kell had opportunities to try different treatment programs over the years, including going through the Ministry of Safety and Corrections “several times,” he said.

He noticed in all his years in and out of prison, when separated from his substance while incarcerated, that he would experience a change of heart.

“I realized drugs might be the problem,” he said. “That was an admission I wasn’t willing to make while I was on the street using.”

The willingness to change comes from the consequences an individual is facing, he said, “so there is motivation for change.”

He experienced some success in his recovery through private treatment, but after a year he relapsed, and back into the penal justice system he went.

“A few more sentences and a few more treatments later, I started noticing some other stuff,” Kell said.

He could find applications to drug treatment facilities while incarcerated, but consistently the answer was, “when the sentence is complete, we can then give you treatment.”

A lot of the problem for people who are incarcerated, pre-sentence, is that they don’t have an exit date.

Lifting this type of barrier for others facing the same dilemma is another key behind Love Soluble’s program at MDC.

“When you’re just a guy with a good idea, people aren’t really throwing money at you.”

He’s currently renting rooms under an agreement that it’s a sober environment.

Educated as a counsellor, Kell takes clients to 12-step meetings and to church if interested.

Christianity has been a big part of his own sobriety and is encouraged.

“It’s peer-to-peer mentorship and I provide an hour of counselling each week.”

Kell graduated from the addictions program at Willis College in 2019 and has since been working on becoming certified through the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation.

“I’m a professional in the field and have worked in other centres before, so when the guys come here, they’re getting a program.”

According to Statistics Canada, in 2021/2022 the average cost of incarceration in Ontario was \$365 per day, or more than \$133,000 annually – a life sentence of 25 years would be more than \$3 million.

“These guys are suffering from mental health and addictions,” Kell said. “Once they become incarcerated, 80 per cent are likely to return to a state of incarceration. Even when they’re not in jail, they’re not having a good life. They’re out there stealing your stereo; they’re committing crimes until they get caught. There is nothing good happening.”

It’s a vicious circle.



Scripture is written on the wood used to renovate the Manie Daniel's Centre in Maberly by owner Spencer Kell.

Spencer Kell photo

"And that's the problem," he said. "They can throw you in jail and keep you away from your substance and keep society safe from you for six months, but they haven't addressed the core issue."

Kell said the model of his treatment program is a one-stop shop.

"We're going to bring guys here, address the substance issue, and during those 30 or 45 days we'll be doing a rehab program. But the difference with us is that we work with the clients and find out what their goals are. Usually, it's going to involve education or employment or both, and then it's independent living. The major difference is that we are going to let the guy stay here while he's working — then he still has the safety net."

“The difference with us, is that we work with the clients and find out what their goals are.” — Spencer Kell

There is not a set time frame for the program, though, he said, but suggests the minimum would be 90 days as he will be helping those with moderate to severe substance abuse disorder.

“We’re not treating the weekend users,” he said. “Generally, they aren’t doing time because of their addiction. They’re messing up their lives in different ways. They need to get help too, but there are other places they can get that help.”

Now that the province has hired addiction counsellors at detention centres, Kell said he will make those connections for motivated clients who are determined to be successful in his program. Then the inmates will be able to apply to come to Love Soluble’s MDC after release.

There would be a screening process, as well.

Kell is currently seeking board members and volunteers for legal, marketing/advertising, research/writing, and graphic design. If you would like more information, email: spencercolinkell@gmail.com.



Laurie Weir *is a former news editor for InsideOttawaValley.com.*