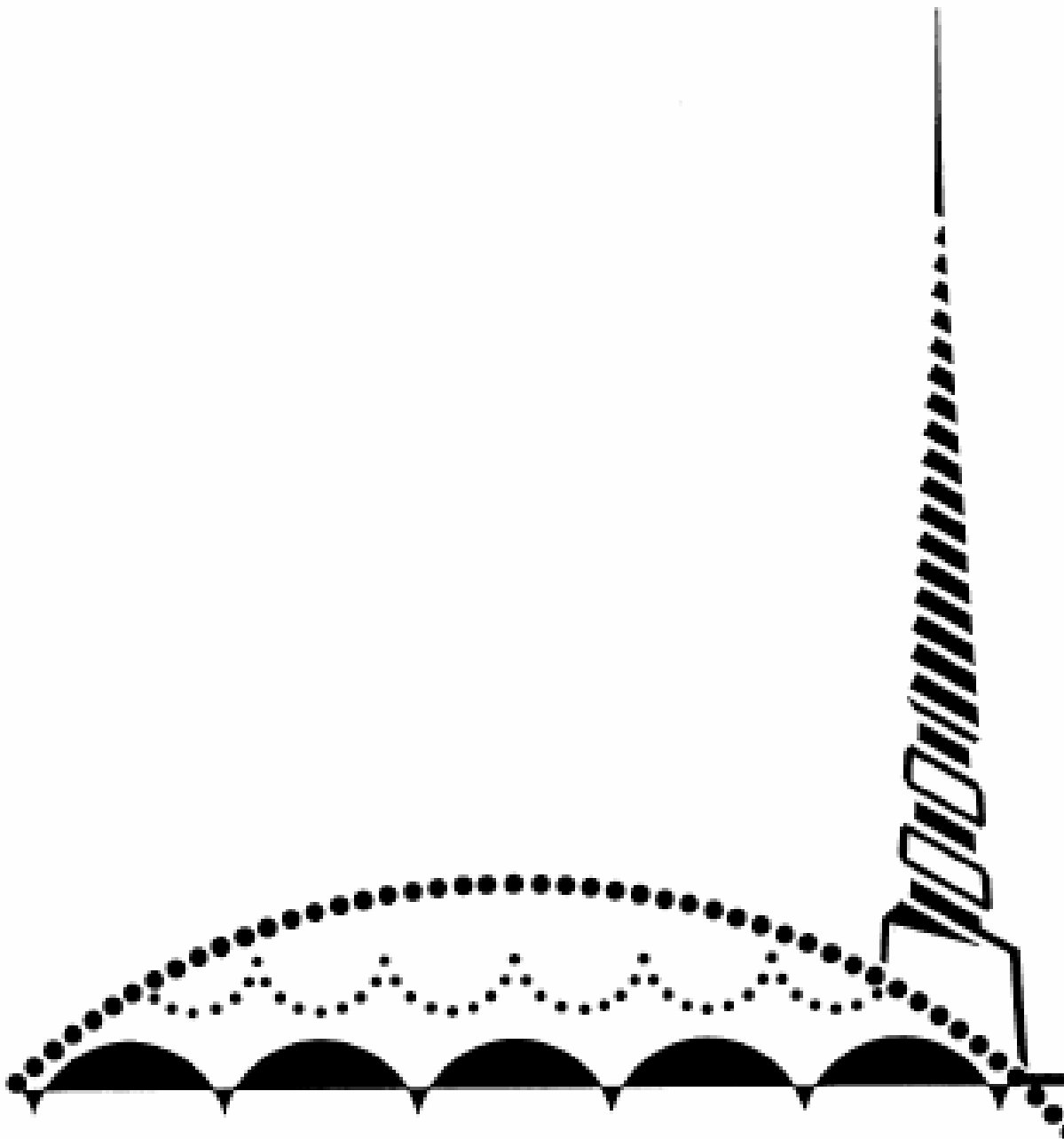
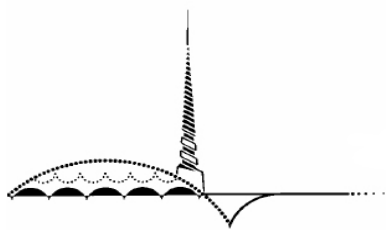


2005-2006 MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

# Detox Redux: Helen Vine Detox Center Revisited

June 8, 2006





## DETOX REDUX: HELEN VINE DETOX CENTER REVISITED

### SUMMARY

A 2002 Marin County Civil Grand Jury report states, "The present location and condition of the Helen Vine Detox Center is vastly inadequate and inappropriate for a facility devoted to recovery from alcohol and substance abuse. It may even be unsafe."



Helen Vine Sitting Room  
(March 2006)

The 2005-2006 Grand Jury's concern was that after reading this 2002 Grand Jury assessment, people needing essential, even life-saving, detox services might decide not to receive treatment from the only residential detox facility in Marin County. Therefore, we initiated an investigation to determine the current conditions of the Helen Vine Detox Center. The purpose of this report is to provide updated information regarding the Center.

The current Grand Jury discovered that the once-valid statement is no longer an accurate depiction. Helen Vine now has a new facility. The Grand Jury was impressed with its location, the configuration of the facility, the cleanliness, and the pleasant, colorful décor. This atmosphere appears conducive to implementation of Helen Vine's mission "to promote the health, safety, and sobriety of individuals."

## GLOSSARY

Detox – The initial 3-5 day period of withdrawal from alcohol or drugs

Detox center – A facility designed to take in and care for those under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs and who are in a crisis condition

## BACKGROUND

In 1999, the County made an arrangement to locate a detox center on the old Honor Farm, part of the Silveira family ranch (off Smith Ranch Road) in San Rafael. The Center was named in memory of Helen Vine, who suffered from alcohol and drug abuse and was the daughter of a Marin County couple.

In 2002, the Grand Jury issued a report, “Acute Psychiatric Care in Marin County – A Plan Fails for Lack of Leadership.” At the time of that report, these quarters provided a crammed 14-bed, coed residential program that was considered a temporary solution while the county urgently sought a permanent county-owned site. It was staffed and operated through a contract with Community Action Marin.

The 2002 Grand Jury report described the original Helen Vine Detox Center as “just short of a disgrace.” The report stated, “The interiors are crowded and depressing” and wondered, “how the Center has met County health and safety standards.” Finding #6 in the report states, “The present location and condition of the Helen Vine Detox Center is vastly inadequate and inappropriate for a facility devoted to recovery from alcohol and substance abuse. It may even be unsafe.” This report and description are what currently appear if one does a search on the Internet of “detox, Marin County.” Early in 2006, the current Grand Jury was told that people needing essential, even life-saving, detox services might decide not to go to Helen Vine after reading the 2002 report on the Internet. This investigation was initiated to determine whether the Center’s physical facilities had been appropriately improved and made safe for occupation.

## APPROACH

In order to provide accurate information to the public and to describe the current conditions of the facility, members of the current Grand Jury visited the facility several times and interviewed officials of the County Division of Alcohol, Drug, and Tobacco and the staff of Helen Vine about the facility and its current operations, programs, and services.

In addition, we reviewed Community Action Marin Helen Vine annual reports, Marin County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Alcohol, Drug and Tobacco Programs’ request for letters of interest from prospective applicants for financial management, and County of Marin Standard Form Professional Services Agreement for Alcohol and Drug Program Services.

## DISCUSSION

### History

For approximately twenty years, Marin County contracted for detox services with Center Point, San Rafael, a nonprofit treatment center. After that contract was terminated in 1995, there was no detox facility in Marin County for approximately four years.

As the result of community effort, Helen Vine was opened on July 1, 1999, and was operated by Community Action Marin, a non-profit service organization. After the 2002 Grand Jury Report, the County tried, unsuccessfully, to find a suitable, permanent location for Helen Vine.

In December 2002, Community Action Marin, with County encouragement and cooperation, took the initiative in a fund-raising effort to renovate the 4,800 square foot Silveira jail building. The necessary funds were raised, and the new Helen Vine Detox Center opened in September 2003. Since July 1, 2005, the center has been run by the Lawyers for One America (LFOA), a non-profit organization.



Helen Vine Women's Dorm  
(March 2006)

### The New Helen Vine Building

The new building contains more than twice the square footage area of the old trailers. The colors of the walls are pleasing, and there are many original paintings created by Marin County artists. The wall-to-wall patterned carpet runs throughout the living areas. The furniture is attractive, inviting, and well-maintained.

The living room area has comfortable sofas for reading and watching the large plasma television. There is a small library stocked with numerous books on subjects including addiction recovery, self-help, and spirituality. It also includes videos relating to sobriety and a variety of games.

The men's dorm with 16 beds and the women's dorm with 10 beds are separated at opposite ends of the facility. The bathrooms off each dorm are handicapped-accessible.

There is also an admission office, a staff office, a clean kitchen, a nurse's room and a separate, two-bed monitoring room for the four-to-six hour Penal Code §849(b)(3) detainees: people arrested only for being under the influence of a controlled substance or drug.

### Helen Vine Mission, Philosophy, and Objectives

According to official documents, the mission of Helen Vine is "to promote the health, safety and sobriety of individuals suffering from problems associated with alcohol and/or drug intoxication." According to the staff, the Helen Vine philosophy is "one of compassion and high expectations, bolstering self esteem, and self involvement in the recovery process."

As confirmed in several interviews with Helen Vine staff, the Helen Vine objectives<sup>1</sup> are:

- To provide a safe supportive environment to physically detoxify from alcohol and/or other drugs
- To educate individuals about the disease of alcoholism and addiction
- To provide safety and structure where individuals can integrate healthy choices into their lives
- To offer hope and acceptance, along with long term sobriety as a goal
- To provide advocacy and resource referral
- To offer individualized help in finding solutions to problems

### Helen Vine Services and Programs

As determined in interviews with Helen Vine staff, the Helen Vine services include:

- Three to five day detox monitoring
- Eight hour a day nursing coverage by County of Marin Detention Nursing Staff
- Personal counseling
- Individual case management
- Self-care activities assistance
- Referral and placement in long-term inpatient and outpatient treatment programs
- Four to six hour monitoring for those in legal detention by Sheriff and local law enforcement

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Vine Detox Center brochure, *The Vine*

These services are provided through several programs:

- Three daily groups:
  - 1) affirmation group
  - 2) education/living skills process group
  - 3) traditional Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous (AA/NA) group
- Three weekly groups:
  - 1) spirituality group
  - 2) health information group
  - 3) AA/NA alumni group
- Volunteer Mentor Program
- Volunteer individual therapy



Helen Vine Inspirational Art

### Helen Vine Operations

The State of California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs licensed Lawyers for One America to operate and maintain the Helen Vine Detox Center.<sup>2</sup> The County of Marin contracted with Lawyers for One America to provide financial and administrative management for Helen Vine.

Helen Vine is audited annually on-site by the State of California and by the Marin County Division of Alcohol, Drug, and Tobacco of the Department of Health and Human Services.

### CONCLUSION

The deficiencies of the Helen Vine Detox Center found by the 2001-2002 Grand Jury have been remedied.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury. The California State Legislature has stated that it intends the provisions of Penal Code Section 929 prohibiting disclosure of witness identities to encourage full candor in testimony in Civil Grand Jury investigations by protecting the privacy and confidentiality of those who participate in any Civil Grand Jury investigation.

<sup>2</sup> License Number: 210017BN; Effective Date 07/01/2005; Expiration Date 06/30/2007