

Still Breaking Through: Hazelden Betty Ford Celebrates 75th Anniversary

The nonprofit Hazelden Betty Ford, the nation's leading force of healing and hope for people impacted by substance use and mental health conditions, turns 75.

CENTER CITY, MINNESOTA, U.S., May 1, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The nonprofit Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, the nation's leading force of healing and hope for people impacted by substance use and mental health conditions, today celebrates 75 years of challenging its industry, defying cultural beliefs, and helping millions break through to recovery and well-being.

Hazelden, as it was originally known, launched on May 1, 1949, with just a single “lay” counselor and one patient—opening on the banks of South Center Lake in Minnesota as a refuge for “the convalescent alcoholic.” It was a place of nature strolls, easy chairs, long conversations over coffee and a holistic approach to healing the body, mind and spirit. At the time, creating a humane, therapeutic environment for people with addiction—a population long looked down upon and written-off by society—was a truly radical idea. This spark of hope became a catalyst for an entirely new realm of health care.

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*Dr. Joseph Lee, President and
CEO*

Today, Hazelden Betty Ford is the largest nonprofit substance use and mental health care provider in the nation and widely regarded as the gold standard in its field, producing the strongest [patient outcomes](#) and routinely earning recognition from third parties such as [Newsweek](#). With nearly 1,700 employees across the country, the organization serves 23,000 patients a year, their family



members, and many others through its graduate school and its publishing, prevention and professional education arms, as well as through its [Patient Care Network](#) and numerous other collaborations. For example, Hazelden Publishing sold nearly 1 million products in 2023 to aid people in recovery, and more than 70,000 students, parents and school employees in 43 states and 17 countries took part in Hazelden Betty Ford's prevention solutions.

Hazelden Betty Ford has 15 direct-care sites and online services across the United States, fields nearly 200,000 calls for help each year, provides resources to 10,000 unique visitors to its website every day, and reaches millions through its public education and advocacy.

"Hazelden Betty Ford is more than a treatment center; we are a movement," said President and CEO Dr. Joseph Lee. "For 75 years, we have challenged health care and our popular culture to see addiction as a condition that can be overcome and to see people affected by addiction as worthy of dignified, respectful care rather than moral judgment and disregard. Driven by mission over profit and founded in a grassroots fashion by people affected by the disease, we are deeply and genuinely motivated to empower recovery and well-being for all. And I'm proud that we have always been a voice for the people we aim to serve, in addition to being the gold standard for care. I'm also grateful to the many partners, providers and likeminded others—including tens of thousands of our own alumni—who have helped advance the movement over the years."

In Newsweek's annual ranking of the best treatment centers in America, Hazelden Betty Ford sites earned the three highest scores among all those recognized across the country. And new patient outcomes data—monitored and analyzed by the Butler Center for Research—demonstrate the sweeping, positive impact of Hazelden Betty Ford's care, with the vast majority of patients reporting sobriety, low cravings, staying on plan with medications, and



From the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation archives:
The original "Old Lodge" building at Center City



Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation President and CEO
Joseph Lee, MD

good or improved quality of life and general health a full year after treatment.

“Started by people in recovery and inspired by the relatively new—at the time—and profound influence of Alcoholics Anonymous, Hazelden’s focus has always been on advancing the science of hope and supporting lifelong recovery,” Dr. Lee said. “From day one, we’ve combined the power of lived experience with breakthrough thinking, addressing addiction from every angle. And today we’re continuing to create an even more integrated ecosystem of support—including expanded mental health and family services—to improve outcomes further and help even more people outlive addiction and reimagine their lives.”

Hazelden Betty Ford’s spirit of innovation and leadership has led to many breakthroughs in 75 years, and the organization is now credited with:

- Developing the first replicable model of professional substance use disorder treatment — spurring the spread of healing and hope around the world while continuing to lead innovations and breakthroughs to this day; and
- Culturally mainstreaming treatment and recovery through books, education, and advocacy — diminishing stigma, helping Twelve Step recovery become one of the greatest social movements of the 20th century and laying the groundwork for the diverse recovery movement that continues to expand today.

While the small group of pioneers who started Hazelden in a secluded farmhouse had ambitious aims, they could not have imagined how big the mission would become or how much it would help change society. Nor could they have foreseen a former First Lady of the United States, Betty Ford, visiting in 1980, modeling her treatment center in California after Hazelden, and becoming a public recovery advocate herself—creating a legacy that continues to grow and gain recognition today, most recently with the release of a new Betty Ford Commemorative Forever® stamp by the U.S. Postal Service.

“If Hazelden gave respect to treatment and recovery, Betty Ford gave it a face and voice,” Dr. Lee said. “Mrs. Ford led the treatment and recovery movement into an important new phase, and when Hazelden and the Betty Ford Center merged in 2014—more than three decades after her initial visit to the Center City campus—it was a wonderful coming-back-together. It also symbolized this organization’s enduring commitment to sharing its knowledge and experience widely with other professionals, aspiring professionals and organizations through education, published resources, research, consulting and advocacy. And it’s an example of how our story, as a pioneer and catalyst, is intertwined with others all over the world who are now part of an ongoing movement—and that’s what we’re most grateful for as we celebrate: all those who share this cause and calling with us.”

Though May 1 marks the day Hazelden first opened its doors in 1949, Hazelden Betty Ford is celebrating its diamond anniversary all year, with events in multiple cities and exciting details to be announced soon.

Learn more at HazeldenBettyFord.org/75.

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