

Martin Dodd and Anne C. Leach

History Corner: Anne C. Leach
A Front-Row Seat to Growth & Recovery

Written by Jorge Rubio

When Anne C. Leach joined Sun Street Centers' Board of Directors in **1996**, the organization looked very different than it does today. Over the next 21 years, including service as **Board President**, she witnessed the agency grow from a single-campus organization into one that expanded services, facilities, and opportunities for people seeking recovery.

Anne's connection to Sun Street Centers began through her father, **Judge Edmund "Jim" James Leach**. As a judge, he often saw the same individuals appear before him because of alcohol and drug-related issues. He believed there needed to be a way to help people break that cycle rather than continue repeating it.

"I remember my father talking about him getting involved because when he was a judge, he would see the same people getting in trouble and appearing before him because they had alcohol and drug problems. He felt that it was this cycle that needed breaking, so he met Martin Dodd and got involved with Sun Street Centers."

Her father became involved alongside friends **Martin and Nancy Dodd**, and through that connection Anne became familiar with the organization's work. Years later, when substance use affected members of her own family, she found a personal reason to get involved.

While she knew recovery was a choice individuals had to make for themselves, she saw an opportunity to help others who were ready to take that step. That decision led her to join the board and become part of many of the agency's most significant milestones.

At the time, Sun Street Centers was much smaller. The **Peach Street administrative offices** had not yet been purchased. **Andy Church Hall** had not been built. The **Huntington Recovery Center** did not exist yet. What are now key parts of the campus were still only ideas and long-term goals.

One of Anne's earliest assignments as a board member involved a property that decades later would become the Huntington Recovery Center.

"I remember the first thing that Martin Dodd ever asked me to do was to buy the motorcycle club property. To figure out how we can do that."

The process proved far more complicated than expected and took years to complete. Looking back, seeing the vision become reality remains one of the accomplishments she is most proud of.

"It was very very gratifying for me when we were finally able to acquire this property and build this beautiful Huntington Recovery Center."

Anne also remembers the effort to purchase and renovate the Peach Street properties that now house administrative offices and supports the agency's daily operations. During her years on the board, she helped support fundraising and renovation efforts that strengthened the Salinas campus and expanded services for participants.

Another project she remembers fondly was the creation of Andy Church Hall. Named after longtime board member **Andy Church**, the building became an important gathering place for the organization.

"My law firm also had a long standing relationship with Sun Street Centers because Andy Church was on the Board of Directors for many, many years."

Built with support from **Hartnell College's Construction Program**, the hall created much-needed space for meetings, events, classes, and staff gatherings.

"That building made a huge difference with having our Board Meetings there and the use of that building for various classes and large employee meetings."

While Anne witnessed significant physical growth during her years on the board, one accomplishment stands out above many others: the development of sober living environments. She recalls a time when participants often completed treatment only to return to environments that made maintaining recovery difficult.

"I know that was a real challenge that people would complete the initial program, be doing very well, going to meetings, and working their program. Then they would go home, go back to their own life and maybe it wouldn't stick. I think the development of Sober Living Environments has really helped people get more deeply committed to their recovery and more comfortable with the changes they needed to make in their lives."

For Anne, these recovery housing opportunities represented an important step in helping people build **long-term success** beyond treatment.

She remains equally passionate about the **Anne C. Leach Scholarship**, a fund established in her honor that helps participants overcome financial barriers as they work to rebuild their lives.

"It also has the benefit of telling those people that the community believes in them and the community values them. That people have chosen to give to this fund and that we are trusting this person who is receiving the award that they've embraced recovery and they plan on working their recovery and we want to help them get their lives jumpstarted."

What continues to inspire Anne most is seeing the transformation that recovery makes possible.

"I've heard many talks from people in recovery. Talking about where they were before they embraced recovery and where they are now. It's very moving to see how people have chosen to change their lives and what people can accomplish when they have the support to help them do that."

Reflecting on nearly three decades of involvement, Anne believes the organization's greatest strength has always been its people and their shared commitment to helping others.

"To me, there is more meaning, there's more love, there's more commitment, and all of the people who have worked together to build what this organization is for the benefit of the people who really need this specific help."

For Anne, those people, and the lives changed along the way, are the true story of Sun Street Centers' history.



(left) Jerry Bunker, Oly Gomez, Martin Dodd, Anne Leach, and Anna Foglia



Anne with ACL Scholarship brick order in honor of her dedication and leadership



Anne speaking at the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony of the Huntington Recovery Center.