



SPOTLIGHT: The Other Side

Background

The Other Side is a sober bar located in McHenry County, IL, one of the five collar counties that border Chicago. The Other Side offers a place where people in recovery can meet and socialize with others recovering from addiction in a safe, substance-free environment. This nonprofit organization and its members work together to provide a healthy and positive experience for members of the recovery community who miss having an active nightlife.

The Other Side began as an accident. President Chris Reed started a construction company shortly after beginning his recovery journey. When his business ended, Chris found himself with an empty warehouse. This warehouse became the hangout spot after recovery meetings. Over time, the warehouse became a popular place to be for the recovery community in McHenry County. Chris offered keys to the door and the warehouse was furnished with a pool table, a sound system, and a bar offering Red Bull and soda. They began hosting monthly sober parties with bands and DJs. Over a hundred people would come to these events. They soon learned from the city that the building was not zoned properly to host such events. They also learned that renovations would cost \$50,000. After drawing publicity from a front page article published in the *Chicago Tribune*, they raised the needed money in just two weeks. The Other Side officially opened its doors on April 22, 2013.

How It Works

The bar features a pool table, ping pong tables, bag toss sets, darts, and video games. During the week, the location is host to various recovery groups including Alcoholics Anonymous and SMART. On the weekends, the bar hosts events such as concerts, card games, movie nights, karaoke, and open mic nights.

Admission to The Other Side is free. A \$10 monthly fee grants members a key card to the building that can be used to access the location outside of business hours. Over one hundred people have this access.

Resources & References

The Other Side website: <https://www.the-other-side.org/>

New Directions Addiction Recovery Services website: <https://www.ndars.org/>

¹ <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/PEP12-RECDEF/PEP12-RECDEF.pdf>

“The Other Side is a place where you can meet and socialize with others recovering from addiction in a safe, substance-free environment.”

- Chris Reed

How Is It Innovative

According to SAMHSA, recovery is “a process of change through which people improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential.”¹ People in recovery often find it difficult to enjoy their evenings, substance-free. The Other Side not only offers a sober nightlife but a community and a positive environment. According to Chris Reed, this bar was started because “There was nowhere else to go. You can only go to the movies or bowling so many times and you can’t take thirty or forty people to someone’s house.” This bar fills a void for the recovery community of McHenry County.

About the Organization

The Other Side Bar is a program of New Directions Addiction Recovery Services. New Directions is a nonprofit that supports the recovery community in McHenry County and the Chicago area by providing advocacy, housing, entertainment, support groups, and other services. In addition to The Other Side, New Directions offers recovery housing for men and women, with plans to open another recovery home in the future. New Directions also offers a 24-hour hotline that connects people who are in recovery to other members of the recovery community.

Spotlight Series: A series to highlight innovative programs across the country that contribute to a comprehensive strategy to address addiction.