

A COLLECTIVE CAFE offering a refuge for safety, redirection, support and resources at times of difficulty or crisis, success or celebration



Part 1: Describe your idea

1. Tell us what you want to do. How will it enhance the quality of life in the community? Who will it benefit?

A. What I want to do: Create **"Halfway Cafe"** A collective cafe that is open to all, but attracts primarily young people (ages 17-24) by offering a refuge for safety, redirection, support and resources at times of difficulty or crisis, success or celebration. It is a grounding point, with a physical location, ideally a storefront/cafe location or perhaps a home. It will be a known safe place to gather. It will have a casual atmosphere where you can grab a coffee, a (non-alcoholic) drink at the **So/Bar**, and something to eat. Shelves will be lined with books. Free wifi will be provided. A public phone, computer access, printer and bulletin board to share community posts. A donation rack will make clothes and necessities available to those in need. And for those who seek, it will also provide services, resources and a network to aid young people as they navigate through challenges they may be struggling with in life. Often, typical resources don't apply, because they are too old, or not old enough. (see attached article: *Can Early Drug Abuse Stunt Emotional Maturity*)

B. How will it enhance the quality of life in the community: While there are programs that support this age group with emotional, behavioral, and chemical issues, the entry point for some is intimidating. **The Halfway Cafe** is an approachable, open door, gathering spot. As welcoming as a coffee shop, as resourceful as a library, and safer than a friends' couch, it is a place where people can regroup, get their feet back on the ground, and take advantage of the provisions and the ambiance at **The Halfway Cafe**.

Many 17 to 24 years old are busy planning their futures, well on their way to going to college, or taking on their first real job. For some, their course has been redirected by drugs, abuse or other circumstances. Often, rehab, therapy and counseling serve to remedy the problem. However, re-entry to the real world can be overwhelming. Some people have to go through one or more forms of treatment over and over again, only to be released to face the same risks, threats and challenges. **The Halfway Cafe** will always be a place for on-going "after-care". There will always be a place where they can find comfort, strength and support from like individuals.

C. Who will it benefit: Ultimately, being involved at **The Halfway Cafe** will instill feelings of self worth, trust and confidence, and growth. Ideally, as they succeed, they will want to give back. They will welcome others in need. They will create awareness. And quite possibly, make at risk peers aware of the **The Halfway Cafe** before crisis occurs.

A RESPONSE TO THE 2019 STILLWATER AREA GREAT IDEA FOUNDATION

The following response was not selected. However, the process of putting this idea in writing was hugely beneficial. I still believe this is a great idea. The recent overdose of another young man, once again shocks the same nerve. With compassion and concern, it seems like this is something I need to carry through. At the service, attended by hundreds, it pained me to ask the devastated parents "is there anything I can do?". In my heart, I wish I had asked earlier. Candidly, they reveal the secrecy of their son's struggles with addiction. Certainly, he was and is not the only one. Many share his same darkness. The father stated that he kept questioning, "what good can become of this?". He shared his answer, and that is awareness. The halfway cafe is about awareness. It is about uncovering the darkness. It is about finding a place to shine, and sharing the light among others.

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2. Describe why your idea is innovative

Particularly in its approach to solving a specific problem:

The Halfway Cafe as a place where we breath life back into young residents who have felt helpless and hopeless. More vibrant than a meeting hall, and not formatted around organized talk groups, it is more like a day hostel. It's a place along the way. On the journey of recovery, self discovery, or challenge, **The Halfway Cafe** will help to make those who venture in feel better about who they are, and what they can achieve.

The Halfway Cafe would provide direction, collaborating with existing community programs, and making them easily available and to navigate: Going back to school, writing a resume, rectifying the consequences (cost of DWI, driving privileges/options), financial resources, legal help, employment, wellness ...

The Halfway Cafe would provide learning opportunities: Relying on local talents, a chef could come in a talk about how to open a restaurant, and perhaps offer working opportunities in their restaurant. Lakeview could provide information on most needed skills, and direction for career opportunities, trade schools could present learning opportunities, and pathways for employment. Businesses could come in and offer guidance and understanding for life skills; how to open a savings account, how to save and spend money. What is required regarding health insurance, car insurance.

Strengthening Community Connections:

The opportunities for older residents to participate would be an additional benefit, and strengthen community connections. Imagine if a retired senior could share a skill, perhaps how to make a guitar, write a book, rebuild small engines, repair furniture. Anyone who wants to share their knowledge and inspire the dreams of other. These opportunities would provide experiences to members, perhaps sparking academic interests, or qualifying them for a new jobs.

The Halfway Cafe would give back to the community: Finding purpose, **The Halfway Cafe** would use its' members to participate in the community. Planting container gardens on Main Street. Helping seniors with chores, volunteering, speaking at schools, participating in local events. Throughout the year, the Cafe would host an event where anyone could participate. Relying on the gifts of the people who visit the Cafe, it would include music performance, and art show, and a stage for any other talents to shine.

3. Once your great idea project is implemented, will it leave a lasting impact? Please explain.

An endless list of opportunities exist that would cause and create a lasting impact. Both serving this group of people in need, as well as our local resources, seniors, employees, business owners, institutions. Most important though, is removing the anonymity of recovery, in any form, and making it public. In doing so, the awareness diffuses the shame and replaces it with pride. These people are warriors. We recognize their difficulties, their diseases, their battles. And we honor their efforts. We celebrate their success. It becomes something we talk can about.

Part 2: Tell us how you will do it

1. Describe the experience and qualifications of the people who will be involved, including yourself and others.

The Halfway Cafe would need people on site. Good listeners, who can provide thoughtful feedback. I'd be on site full time. Ideally relying on our "collective" to staff and/or volunteers as we get started. Initially, it could be an internship, and eventually, with funds, a hired position.

My services in marketing and graphic design would allow me to build and promote **The Halfway Cafe**. I've organized events, worked in administration, and have experience that would allow me to manage the multitude of tasks required, on a lean budget. My husband could lend his services in construction to make any space more suitable.

I'd search for candidates locally: I'd start by interviewing staff and participants of programs in the valley, like Canvas and New Beginnings, seeking successful graduates who could help refine a business plan. With a goal to make them feel vested from the beginning, and as ambassadors moving forward.

I'd go to the high school and speak to counselors, teachers and advisors.

And, most importantly, my son. His struggles have given me the telescope to see the world through the lens of an addict in recovery. He is my inspiration. He defines my intent, and my ambition.

2. Does implementation require collaboration or consent from other organizations or government entities? (For example, does it require city approval or permits?) Have you secured the necessary approvals?

No. I need to research a suitable location. In my mind, the former Camrose Hill Studio, or "Bumble-Bee" locations are what I envision. There would be no overnights, and no kitchen, beyond a sink, microwave, and fridge/freezer. Food service would be convenience food. Coffee, tea, healthy beverages. Oatmeal, nutrition bars, cheese, etc.

Although, it might be suitable to operate during extended business hours, perhaps until 9:00 pm. A public presence would be important. I envision **The Halfway Cafe** being the site for events, such as open mic nights, art shows, fund raisers, and other community events.

3. Outline four major steps or milestones for completing the idea.

- Step 1: Complete Business/Financial Plan
- Step 2: Find location
- Step 3: Simultaneously create **The Halfway Cafe** brand, marketing plan, website and print collateral
- Step 4: Find community sponsors

Part 3: Explain why you need the money

1. How much money do you need? (You may request up to \$10,000.) Is this only a portion of the total amount of funding you will need to implement your idea? Please explain.

I anticipate needing the entire \$10,000. This money would go toward rent, and first year start up costs. I would work hard to find sponsors to donate funds, and possibly offer reduced rent. The funding provided by the Stillwater Area Foundation would only be a portion of the funding required. After the first year, the Halfway Cafe would be sustainable relying on sponsors, donations, and fundraising events.

2. How will you spend it? Budget summary available upon request

