

Former drug addict wants others to learn from his mistakes

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backyard.

"There might be a few people that don't like what we're doing, but we're just helping recovering addicts," he said.

Police Chief Philip Mahoney, who as a patrolman arrested Malonson more than 20 years ago, is now working with him to resolve neighborhood conflicts with the houses.

"These are not homeless people," Mahoney said. "Sure, they are walking around, but they are trying to recover and better their lives."

Malonson's efforts is winning high praises from the people he works with and for. In the four years since he opened his first home, he has helped

several hundred people dry out and learn to lead productive lives.

"I've got hundreds of letters from people thanking us for what we've done and for bringing their families back together," he said.

Continuing with the success here in Woburn, Malonson hopes to open more sober homes in Lynn, Stoneham and Medford. He is also opening a thrift shop on Main Street to provide jobs to some of his residents and revenue to pay for some free beds for indigent addicts.

Setting the example

Every day Malonson sees the devastating aftermath of drug and alcohol abuse, but, in light of the recent over-

dose incident at the Boys & Girls Club, he is becoming more concerned about children's substance abuse.

"I was never brought by an ambulance to a hospital and brought back to life, but I would almost overdose on a nightly basis," Malonson said. "I would take so much until I couldn't take anymore."

Malonson was younger than the Boys & Girls Club victims when he started getting stoned off glue fumes. He was their age when he tried heroin for the first time. The difference he sees, though, is not in the activity, but in the drugs themselves.

Cocaine, heroin, crack and other drugs are far more potent, purer and more addictive than the stuff he was hooked on in his youth, Malonson

said. Even prescription drugs are more addictive than the street stuff of 10 and 20 years ago.

"These kids today are hooked on what they're doing," he said.

In the coming years, Malonson hopes to bring a few sober homes into the schools to tackle the problem of substance abuse. He is showing their broken families how to struggle to repair themselves and deter some kids from the same drug — kind of like what he never had.

"I wish I had a good role model when I was a kid," Malonson said. "I wish I had a good role model who would never end up