

Addiction, poverty, abuse are just a few things people today are facing. Part of the problem is knowing where and how to get help. That's the idea behind the new Pekin Outreach Center. One of the POC's organizers Laurie Carr said the intention of the place is not to compete with other ministries already at work in the community, but to point people in a direction to get help.

One example Carr said, if someone is struggling with addiction, they know that every Tuesday at 7, a group meets to deal with that at Pekin United Methodist Church.

If a family is new to the area and is low on food, Carr said the POC can point them toward the Pekin Love Center.

"(The Pekin Outreach Center) is a discipleship ministry, that takes in the entire family," Carr said. "The plan is to do different events that draw people here.

"We are mainly here for people to come in and have a safe place – a safe place to play, a safe place to talk, to get counseling. Our goal is to help this community any way we can. Whether it's helping churches or groups with special events or fundraisers, whatever we can do to help."

The other major part of what the outreach center will focus on is referrals, as mentioned above.

"If we can't meet a need," Carr said, "we can direct them to another ministry that possibly can."

One of those events is Painting with Pauline (Barger), which will teach the basics of paintings to 8 to 12 year olds. There is a women's Bible study already taking place on Wednesday evenings and there is a prayer meeting every Tuesday at 4.

"Then we have some things that are on-going and do some special events as well."

The building is also being used by organizations in the community. The East Washington elementary and middle school PTO is meeting at the outreach center during the summer months.

The outreach center will also be used by CARE as a satellite venue for pregnancy testing.

"For the young girls who can't get back and forth to Salem, this will be another place for them. Carr is a certified Christian counselor and is excited to about the opportunity to counsel those who need that service.

Plans also include a Vacation Bible School that will be held during the Christmas break.

The Pekin Outreach Center is based with Christian principals, but all the folks involved want the community to understand that are not just there for people who are followers of Christ.

In fact, their hope is that by reaching out to people who don't go to church, they will be able to get a better understanding of Christ and His love for them.

"We want to show people in the community that there are people out there who still care about them," Barger said. "They are not abandoned. If we show them Christ and the love Christ has for others, they are going to want to come and know Christ personally and get to know what we know and that will help them in the long run."

Carr agreed.

"We're just approaching this out of a lifestyle of worship," she said. "Our life is worship and we want to be able to show people how to live that Holy life. I remember being young and asking, 'How does God really want us to live Holy? How does He expect that?' 'How do we live in this world, but not be a part of it? How do we integrate Christ into every thing?'"

"People aren't learning that in church. We go to church and we get a refreshing message and we leave feeling good, but you know as well as I do, a couple of hours later once the pressures of life come back those feelings are gone. How do we make that feel-good feeling a 24/7 reality that can be tapped into at any moment? How do we teach people that's possible? The only way is for us as disciples to disciple, mentor and come along side people and say, 'We hear you, we've been there and these are the tools we put in place to be able to get through them.'

"That's really our heart's desire – bringing that approach into Pekin."

The Pekin Outreach Center is ran by volunteers and donations only. All services are free. Any one who would like to donate or get involved are encouraged to send checks made payable to the Pekin Outreach Center, to PO Box 94, Pekin, Ind.

The group is also open to people who may have ideas on how to reach out to the community.

One of the areas Carr said they'd like to get started is a Men's Bible study.

Pekin Outreach Center offers: Biblical counseling, support groups, addiction, grief, parenting, prayer support, community outreach, story time, movie night, game night, crafts, homework help, referrals to other services, special events (tba), special classes (tba), food drives and clothing drives.

The center is closed on Monday and are open Tuesday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. to ?; Wednesday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 6-9 p.m.; Thursday 3-7 p.m.; Closed on Friday; Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Sunday events only.

In addition to Carr and Barger, Jessica Hampton and Leslie Miller are also involved.

All are encouraged to stop in. and say hi!

