

## EDITORIAL: Lewis honored for decades of helping

"We disappoint more people than we serve. The tragedy is that this is a chronic disease where treatment is effective if they can get it."

- Kevin Lewis.

Kevin Lewis has been one of the best friends people with substance abuse, and their families, have ever had in Southwest Florida.

For two decades, Lewis, CEO of Southwest Florida Addiction Services (SWFAS), has fought a relentless war on behalf of the people whose lives have been devastated, sometimes destroyed, by drugs and alcohol.

Without him, we doubt that substance abuse would be nearly the priority it is in our community.

So it's very fitting that Lewis has been selected by Lee County commissioners to receive the Paulette Burton Citizen of the Year award for 2007.

The efforts of people like Lewis will never win the war against substance abuse. Addiction is a disease that can be treated, perhaps avoided with education, never eradicated. But Lewis' career shows every battle is worth fighting. There's no telling how much suffering Lewis and his colleagues have alleviated, how many lives they have saved and helped rebuild.

Lewis was a passionate advocate for the triage center just funded by the state, a huge step forward in effectively managing substance abuse by getting people in the right place for treatment.

Ground will be broken at 10 a.m. Thursday on a new SWFAS Detoxification and Outpatient and Treatment Center at 3763 Evans Ave. in Fort Myers.

These are two landmarks of immense importance for the community. Many people worked hard for them, including County Commissioner Bob Janes. But Lewis played a central role, one he's sustained for 20 years here.

Recently, we were grateful for his vital role in organizing a substance abuse meeting at The News-Press. We are among countless organizations Lewis has partnered with in his crusade.

If you are interested in helping Lewis or in more information about SWFAS, visit [www.swfas.org](http://www.swfas.org) or call Lewis at 278-7595, ext. 700.

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