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### Jan Jonas: Helping end addiction is 2-way street

#### Jan's Clan

By [Jan Jonas](#)  
*Tribune Columnist*  
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When an idea enters Sam Slishman's head, it drives him crazy until he does something about it.

One recent brainteaser: Find one solution for two problems.

One problem: Using precious time and resources for people with drug and alcohol addictions.

The other: Help them kick their dependence and live more useful lives.

As a part-time emergency room doctor at the University of New Mexico Hospital, Slishman, 34, sees situations he doesn't like.

Anyone who has ever walked into an inner-city emergency room sees the addicted tucked away into corners, sleeping off their habit.

"The truth is, we barely treat them," Slishman said. "Very rarely do they get some sort of assistance."

The other side of the problem is they take up space that could be used for patients whose conditions are acute or space that could be used by several patients during one shift.

His solution: Pair up with Bernalillo County's detox facility to offer more help for addicts.

Last October, Slishman's Endorphin Power Co. and the county's Metropolitan Assessment and Treatment Services opened within days of each other.

The Endorphin Power Co. is at 509 Cardenas St. S.E, while the county's center is across the street on Zuni Avenue in the former Charter Hospital building.

"They get Õem sober, and we help keep Õem sober," Slishman explained.

The parallel efforts began in 2003.

"In 2003, there was nothing in both buildings. Our goal was to decompress the ERs and provide better medical service," Slishman said. His nonprofit, in fact, hoped to buy the former Charter Hospital but didn't have the \$4.5 million asking price.

Slishman and neighbors took on the job of supporting the county's attempt to buy the building and relocate what was then called Sobering Services. The county got the price down to \$2.5 million, and the sale was final in July 2004, Slishman said.

Meanwhile, the owner of a building across the street offered to let Slishman's group buy his building, which became the Endorphin Power Co.

The nonprofit bought the building for \$330,000. Volunteers helped renovate it and staff it.

It's aimed at graduates of the detox center across the street, Slishman said, but it's also there for people in the neighborhood.

"What we offer there are programs, AA meetings, NA meetings, exercise." The group hopes to add yoga classes, life skills and job training.

"Once sober on the other side of the street, we try to help them integrate back into the community."

You don't have to be an addict to benefit.

"People who have never been addicted are using our gym right now," he said. "No one gets labeled when they walk in the

door. There's no requirement to use the exercise equipment."

People who use the gym are asked to contribute in some way, through volunteering or a small membership fee.

Slushman anticipates people will be able to contribute in another way.

"My hope is that our exercise center, one day you'll be able to walk into the door and generate electricity."

He expects some exercise cycles will be power-producing - not enough to keep the whole building in electricity - but enough to motivate people because they are contributing something.

And Sam Slushman knows something about contributing.

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