



Successful investor puts his money into rehab



Bryan Cressey, a Chicago venture capital pioneer, is putting his money into fighting addiction and poverty.

He's founded and personally funded [Above and Beyond Family Recovery Center](#), a nonprofit alcohol treatment facility on the city's West Side.

Alcoholism touched his extended family, Cressey acknowledges. But it was his volunteering with the homeless at [Cathedral Shelter](#), also on the West Side, that propelled him to fund the treatment center.

Cressey, 66, and his wife, **Christy**, had served food to the homeless and, along with their three daughters, helped with tutoring. For years, says Cressey, he saw how alcoholism ravaged bodies and families.

He made the donations to Cathedral Shelter as well as other nonprofits—Lake Forest Academy and Junior Achievement, among them—and then he took a leap.

"I decided to be a doer where I saw a huge need," he says of addiction and its "attendant scourges of homelessness, poverty and unhappiness."

Above and Beyond treatment center was born. Today, along with Alcoholics Anonymous, it offers Smart Recovery, a cognitive behavior therapy program. There's also acupuncture, street yoga and programs that help patients find homes and jobs.

The facility's walls are inviting—decorated with art and a serenity prayer.

"We wanted it to be a place where people are proud to come," says Cressey, who visits the center regularly and talks with those utilizing services.

What really sets the center apart is that it serves uninsured homeless. "We don't charge. It's open to anybody," Cressey says. "I've seen people work incredibly hard to turn their lives around. It's harder than anything I've ever done. It inspires me to keep with it."

That's difficult to imagine, given Cressey's long career. He's founding partner of Cressey & Co. private equity company, which recently raised \$615 million to fund healthcare-related companies (his firm's specialty). Since 2010, the company has invested in 13 companies worth approximately \$2 billion.

Cressey, a Seattle native, worked his way through college repairing and installing conveyor belts. He was a building manager and janitor for a large apartment complex while studying at Harvard for his law degree and MBA—degrees he earned simultaneously. And he was an early partner in the Chicago private-equity firm GTCR. He was the "C." Governor **Bruce Rauner** was the "R."

"In law school, I recognized that the lawyer is the intermediary in a business transaction. I intermediary facilitating the transaction. I wanted to be the buyer or seller," says Cressey.

Before GTCR, he worked at First Chicago Bank, which in the 1970s developed a private-equity practice. The late **Stanley Golder** was there before heading up GTCR, and so was **John Canning Jr.** before he co-founded Madison Dearborn Partners.

Cressey still checks in with Rauner but only to talk personally.

"He doesn't ask my advice, and I don't give it," he says of the governor.

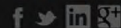
Rauner was on hand, though, for the recent ribbon cutting of the alcohol-treatment center.

Ben Bornstein, a former finance executive who now heads Imerman Angels, a cancer-focused nonprofit, describes Cressey this way: "He's engaging and a great listener. He's always giving people credit and here he is the one funding the center. You wouldn't know it." The two men met at a reunion of Harvard MBA/law school grads and share an interest in vegan eating and animals. Bornstein was among the first to join the board of Above and Beyond.

Cressey says starting the rehab center, which has a \$750,000 annual budget, has been exciting and challenging, too. "We'd funded people, but I had never done it personally," he says. "My dream is to get Above and Beyond self-sufficient and then start another one in another neighborhood. By then we'll have learned a lot."

Tags: [Bruce Rauner](#), [Bryan Cressey](#), [John Canning Jr.](#), [Stanley Golder](#)

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