

Elgin's Renz Center celebrating 50 years

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The Renz Center has been around for 50 years and those within the organization say it is bound to last for 50 more.

The agency, which started as an alcohol treatment office in 1961 and subsequently grew to a comprehensive substance abuse treatment and prevention center, will celebrate its 50th anniversary with an open house from 4 to 7 p.m. Wednesday at its Elgin office, 2 American Way.

Deb Howe, marketing and development director at the Renz Center, said the organization continues to be an important part of the Elgin community.

"Substance abuse is very prevalent in our society now," Howe said.

"If we do not recognize it and treat it, it can have a devastating effect on families, on employers, on our health systems and our legal system."

Howe said the Renz Center reduces as many barriers to treatments as possible, offering child care and convenient hours so people can fit the center's programs into work

and family lives.

The nonprofit organization offers prevention, early intervention and treatment programs for alcohol, drug and gambling addictions and related disorders as well as HIV prevention programs.

Jerry Skogmo has been the executive director of the Renz Center for 13 years.

He said the organization has been affected by the economy, noticing funding reductions and slower payments, particularly by the state.

"That's caused a lot of belt-tightening and some cash flow issues, but we're going to get out of it," Skogmo said.

As the economy rebounds, so does the Renz Center's finances.

But the nonprofit is always accepting donations, right now to support the purchase of extra office space in a second building.

As for the 50th anniversary celebration, attendees will have the opportunity to tour the agency and view a commemorative pictorial. A short program will begin around 5:30 p.m. and refreshments will be served.

Visit renzcenter.com for more information about the organization or for how to donate.