

# SYNANON STARTS ADDICTS' CENTER

Rehabilitation House Here  
to Accept 1,000 This Year

By EDWARD C. BURKS

The Synanon Foundation, which operates West Coast rehabilitation centers for 700 narcotics addicts, announced plans yesterday to accept at least 1,000 New York addicts this year.

Details, however, were somewhat vague.

The announcement coincided with the formal opening of an eastern headquarters in a handsome, comfortably refurbished four-story gray-stone house at 35 Riverside Drive, near 75th Street.

The building, now designated as Synanon House, cost \$84,000 and also will serve as a kind of reception center.

James Georgelas, an ex-addict who is in charge, said that addicts accepted at Synanon House would not be "treated" here. Instead, he declared, "I get them on a plane and they're off to the West Coast centers in a few hours."

An important feature of the plan for New York addicts, he said, "is to put 3,000 miles between the addict and his connection"—his source of drugs.

The Synanon program has no staff doctors or nurses and does not permit use of any substitute drug, such as methadone, which is being used in city-supported programs.

The name Synanon came from an addict's mispronunciation of "seminar."

## Forceful Approach

Although Mr. Georgelas spoke in generalities when questioned about the actual program, he did say that Synanon treatments provide "an environment for the addicts to grow up in" because "they're babies" emotionally. Group therapy in which rehabilitated addicts often use hard, forceful talk is a major part of the program.

During a news conference at Synanon House, Mr. Georgelas was backed up by Representative Leonard Farbstein, State Senator Manfred Ohrenstein and Assemblyman Jerome Kretchmer, all Democrats representing the district.

Mr. Ohrenstein recommended an allotment from the state's new narcotics control program, which will be formally initiated April 1.

Joining Mr. Ohrenstein in criticizing the new state provisions for compulsory treatment of addicts, Mr. Kretchmer said: "We must see that the state provides funds for private programs in order to prove there are other approaches to this problem besides locking people behind closed doors."

Mr. Georgelas, now 53 years old, has been off drugs for nearly eight years but before that was addicted to one narcotic or another for at least 35 years, he said. As for compulsory treatment of addicts, he had a one-word comment: "ridiculous."

The new state law provides for the compulsory program but also will fund specially authorized privately sponsored voluntary programs to take a many-sided approach to the critical problem.

Mr. Georgelas was vague when asked how Synanon planned to handle 1,000 additional New York addicts, but he said, "it is highly unlikely that we will have to turn anyone away." He conceded, however, "we don't have a place to put 'em right now. We're liable to have to rent 50 to 75 buildings."

Synanon derives its income



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**OPEN REHABILITATION CENTER:** Representative Leonard Farbstein, New York Democrat, cutting ribbon to open Synanon Foundation offices at 35 Riverside Drive. With him are, from left, Assemblyman Jerome E. Kretchmer, James Georgelas and State Senator Manfred Ohrenstein. Mr. Georgelas directs the building, Synanon House.

from donations, foundation grants and the sale of such articles as India-made rugs and writing materials. As for getting state funds, Mr. Georgelas declared: "If we take a large number of addicts off the hands of city authorities, then we want the government to throw us a slice of bread."

Although there have been informal talks between Mr. Georgelas and officials of the State Narcotics Addiction Control Commission, no formal application for state funds has been made.

Mr. Georgelas said that city, state or Federal funds were welcome provided that no effort was made to curb the organization's independence or to change methods. In California, between 300 and 400 of the 700 addicts under Synanon care are New Yorkers. They take part voluntarily in group therapy programs at Santa Monica, San Diego, San Francisco and Tomales Bay, and they are housed by Synanon in apartment houses or rooms where Synanon pays their rent.