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THE DIXON PILOT, PAGE 8

Hometown Focus



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A Special Monthly Section of THE DIXON PILOT

Wednesday, March 25, 2020

The Evolution of a Drug Addict - A Drug Court Success Story



Judge Colin Long is shown with two of the four Pulaski County Drug Court graduates at their graduation March 5, 2020. L-R Leonna Coffman, Judge Colin Long, and Colin Carney. Submitted

By John Groves
 She was barely able to pull herself out of bed in the late morning because she had shot up with Crystal Meth the night before and it was wearing off. She felt sick to her stomach which was churning from the lack of food and the drugs. She stared in the bathroom mirror and saw the remnants of what used to be an attractive young woman and now was a middle aged burned out drug addict. She asked herself, "How did I get to this point in my life?"
 The woman is Leonna Coffman who gave permission for this article because in her words, "If this helps just one person get off drugs,

then it is worth it." However, in order to really determine what this woman's life is about, we have to travel back in time to when she was an 18-year-old girl growing up in the 1990's.
 Leonna said she was a straight "A" student and on the honor roll of the high school she attended. She was also engaged to be married and her life was on track for the perfect American dream. As we all know, things in life can turn on a dime and in her case, they did. The marriage suddenly was called off and she moved to the Dixon/St Robert area where her mother was still living. Her mother came to pick her up and

bring her home because, she had fallen in with some not so good people as she put it. Leonna said she began to smoke marijuana and experiment with it because she wanted to fit in with her so called friends.
 In 1995 Leonna met another man who would become the father of her son and things really took a nose dive for the worse. In 1995 she was traveling with her significant other and they were involved in a car crash. The severity of the crash killed her male friend and she had to be air lifted to Columbia Medical Center with internal injuries, a broken jaw, and crushed spine.
 The doctors worked on her feverishly and were able to save her life but with the medical miracle at work came the need for prescribed drugs to ease the constant pain. Leonna said she took Morphine and Percocet and a group of other pain killing drugs to give her the ability to make it through the day. Within two years the doctors began to issue less and less drugs to help her with the pain and by now, she was hooked on the pain killers.
 When she could not get the drugs legally, she worked through the network of friends that provided her with prescription drugs that were acquired through illegal means such as theft or buying them from other people and reselling the drugs. I asked her how difficult or easy it was to purchase the drugs in the Pulaski County area and she said it was a walk in the park. She said she could get prescription drugs or illegal drugs anywhere in the area.
 Soon, she was using marijuana

and crystal meth when she could not get the pharmaceutical drugs. A person she had started to hang around introduced her to a needle and shooting up crystal meth because it gave an immediate high she had not known before. The problem with using meth with the needle is that it wears off quicker and your body needs more and more to get that high.
 At Leonna's peak of shooting meth, she had an ounce a day habit which can be very expensive, she said she and her male companion would steal things from homes or out of yards, from cars, basically, whatever it took to buy the drugs. She said she was living in the Dixon area at the apex of her drug habit, she said the peer pressure to get involved in such a high demand habit evolved around peer pressure to steal and use more drugs.
 She said the more she used, she would feel sick to her stomach and when she did not have the drugs, she would have sweats, pain in her joints, and overall ill health. She said she would seek out that next fix just to feel semi normal, not even so much the high as it was to just feel half way normal. She said when she could not get her fix on, she became very aggressive. She said she did most of her drug deals and usage on the back roads around the Dixon area so as to not run into law enforcement.
 Eventually her luck ran out one night when she and her friend were stopped by a Missouri Highway Patrolman on a minor violation, which lead to the discovery of drugs and a scale in her car. Over the next few years she was arrested four times for possession and sale of narcotics.
 Leonna said her mother did something on the last arrest that saved her life, she contacted Rachelle Beasley, the Circuit Clerk for Pulaski County and asked if she could get her daughter into the Drug Court program. At first she was turned down because she did not fit the criteria the court has for drug abusers. Eventually she did meet the standards for entry into the program.
 I asked her what was the most difficult thing she had to do at first when she entered into the program. She said it was making the meetings early in the mornings because when you use drugs, you are mostly out at night and using the drug meth would cause her to stay up until almost mid day and now, she had to rise early and be there on time.
 I asked Leonna if she ever had a time when she felt like she could not go on with the program. She smiled at me and said "Yes!" She said, "I had a melt down and wanted to quit the program until finally I began to adapt to the first phase of the program." I asked her how many phases there were in the program and she said there were a total of five.
 I asked her in her observations how much of a success rate there was and the failure rate too. She said in her view she thought it was around fifty per cent both for failure and success. Leonna concluded



Pulaski County Prosecuting Attorney Kevin Hillman. Submitted

that most of the people who fail are people who just can't or don't want to adapt to the rigid structure of the program. The people are there to help you but you have to want to help yourself first.

Continued on page 9.



Leonna Coffman, graduate of Drug Court in Pulaski County. Submitted

Dixon's Upcoming Events

(Events are tentative due to possible COVID-19 Precautions.)

- Wed., Apr. 1: APRIL FOOLS DAY
- Mon., Apr. 6: Dixon City Council Meets at City Hall, 203 S. Walnut, 6:00 pm.
- Fri., Apr. 10: NO SCHOOL - Good Friday
- Sun. Apr. 12: EASTER
- Mon., Apr. 13: NO SCHOOL - Teacher Workday
- Thur., Apr. 16: Good Samaritan at the Dixon Area Caring Center to pass out monthly commodities 1:00-3:00 pm
- Thur., Apr. 16: Dixon R-1 School Board Meeting at 6:00 pm - Dixon R-1 Administration Building
- Mon., Apr. 20: Dixon Area Chamber of Commerce meeting, The Bank of Missouri Community Room, 6:00 pm
- Wed., Apr. 22: EARTH DAY
- Sat., Apr. 25: Kickapoo Trace Muzzleloader Mountain Man Experience, 10 am-2 pm at 16490 Cracklin Dr., Dixon
- Sat., Apr. 25: Dixon High School Prom at DES Gym

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