



*Marin County Superior Court*

# *We Write*

*Juvenile Drug Court Participants  
2008*

*Edited by Lynn Duryee*

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## *Introduction*

Thursday is my favorite day of the week. After lunch, the Juvenile Drug Court team meets to discuss the 15 or so teens we have on calendar that afternoon. Who lied to her probation officer, blew off curfew, skipped school, smoked pot on the way to an AA meeting? Who completed community service work, got a job, graduated from high school? You can't always guess who has done what. These teens surprise you more often than not, although truthfully I wish a few of my chief troublemakers would surprise me a bit more often. Welcome to Juvenile Drug Court, where the hopeful and the horrible collide, and the courageous and calamitous live side by side.

During court sessions, we talk about honesty, making good decisions, and setting goals. We issue homework every week – it might be helping around the house, writing an essay, reading a book, making amends for law violations. Every few months, the team and participants do something together – pick up trash, hike in the hills, go to a Giants game. We cheer when grades improve and tardies disappear, when teens are promoted to the next phase, when they reach 30, 60, 90, 120 days' sobriety.

Drug Court uses a team of professionals working together to help participants lead happy, clean, and productive lives. We are blessed with a dedicated and hard-working team that appreciates and embraces the challenge of our sometimes-maddening but always-inspiring teens. After reading this collection of our participants' writing, I think you'll understand why my Thursdays shine.

Lynn Duryee

Marin County Supervising Juvenile Court Judge

## Why We Use...

Participant	I started using drugs because...	Using made me feel...	What I fear the most is...
Heather	I wanted to know what it was like. I'd seen friends enjoy the feeling.	Good, like I was someone else and all my problems were gone.	Feeling rejection.
Justin	The people around me were using.	Like Superman. I liked that.	Going to jail
Melissa	I wanted to know what was so great about them.	I was doing something with my life, and it made me feel good.	Feeling hopeless.
Careina	I was curious, hanging out with people who used.	Good, happy, invincible, powerful.	Being humiliated.
Katie	I was curious; people around me were into them.	Good at first but over time it turned into a habit and then an addiction.	Feeling hopeless.
Alex	I liked to get high; it was something to do when I was bored. Older kids influenced me.	Good in the short term but in the long term made me feel bad. Felt like I was always doing something wrong.	Not being able to accomplish my goals and feeling that I could have done a better job.
Ryan	I wasn't happy with myself. Drugs were easily available.	Like nothing could harm or affect me. It numbed my emotions.	Being alone. I'm a very social person.
Johnny	I looked up to my peers and they were doing it.	Good at the time but not on the come down.	Feeling depressed.
Cesar	It made me feel better.	The opposite of when I was sober.	I hate feeling depressed.
Amanda	I wanted to experiment and they got me high.	High and some type of happiness. They covered up my pain and gave me instant pleasure.	Depending on drugs for pleasure and happiness.
Stuart	I wanted to try new things. They sounded like fun.	Better, let me leave the situation and just have no worries.	Feeling sad and lonely. Drugs made that feeling go away

# *The First Step*

**“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.”**

No one likes to admit defeat. Many people don't like to surrender. It feels like a sign of weakness, when really admitting that you're powerless takes a lot of strength.

When you're an addict or alcoholic, drugs and alcohol overpower you. You lose control. Step one is being able to admit that you've lost control, that maybe you have a problem. It is only by knowing that you're defeated by drugs and alcohol that you can begin to take steps towards recovery. This is why it is the first step.

Humility plays a big part in this step. If you think you know how to live your life and how to handle everything, you won't be willing to take suggestions and work the program on AA's terms. Everybody wants to be in control of their lives, but when you're in your disease, you're not. It's important to know that the way you were living your life wasn't working, and this is why you need to get help.

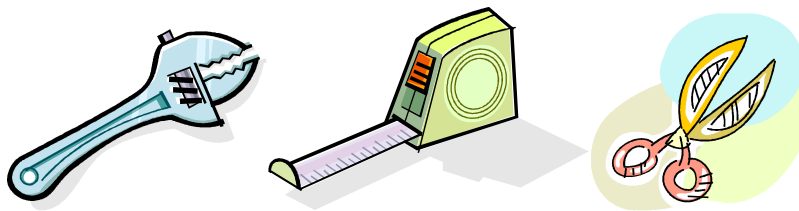
For me, step one has always been tough. I was able to admit that my life had become unmanageable but a small part of me couldn't accept that I lost all control. Part of me thought that maybe if I just try drinking and not do drugs, I won't have a problem. Deep down, I know that's not true. But alcoholics like to hold on to a fantasy that they might one day be able to drink. But it's only a fantasy and the reality is much different. It's necessary to admit complete defeat and powerlessness in order to recover.

Katie, age 18

# Sobriety Tools

What works for me is to **surround myself with the right people** who are sober and will look out for me. Have a **regular attendance at AA** or NA meetings. It takes only one hour out of the day, and I feel good for the rest of the day. It fills me up on thoughts of sobriety and gives me strength to be clean. Stay in touch with program people because they have a positive effect. Another tool is **staying away from the old people** and **places** involving my old use. Hanging out with sober people makes a huge difference because it takes away all the stress.

Stuart, age 15



Things have been going well for me on **home restriction**. I try to stay as **busy as possible** and be as helpful as possible for my mom. My sobriety is going well. I believe this is the longest time that I have been sober in Drug Court. It's crazy...I never thought that I could **want to be sober**, but the truth is now that I am sober, everything is great. I am happy, healthy, and most of all, my parents are really proud of me. So I don't feel the desire to use.

I have experienced a lot of hardships and I don't want to go down that path any more. I am **not willing to sacrifice everything** that I have worked so hard for. Next week I start school and I **look forward to finishing** it and graduating drug court.

Careina, age 17

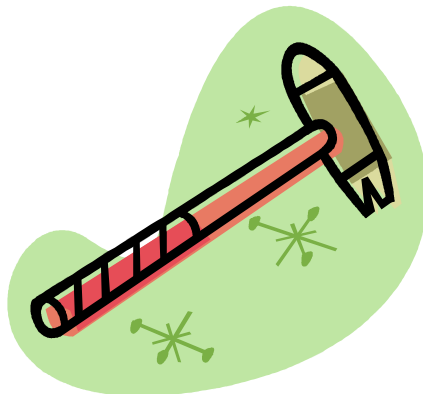
My Sobriety Plan from Juvenile Hall:

For the next 30 days. I'm going to **a meeting a day**. I will **exercise every day** for one hour. Each day, I will make sure I have one hour of **family time**, where I do something with my sister and grandma. I'm going to **focus on finishing high school** and then take classes at College of Marin. I will apply for an internship to be a nurse's aide. All of this will keep me sober because it will keep me **busy**.

I read most of the **Big Book** while I was here and it helps. I'm going **to put my sobriety first**. If you don't want sobriety, you won't be sober. You have to really want to be sober to stay sober. Right now I want that more than anything. I'm not going to be happy if I keep doing drugs.

I hate being here. It is so lonely. I never want to come back. I'm miserable.

Amanda, age 16



# How to Speed Through Juvenile Drug Court

Do I want to get off probation ASAP?	What is the fastest way to get off probation?	What might get in the way of my speeding through Drug Court?
Yes	Do everything I'm told to do.	If I relapse.
Yes I do	Get through drug court and do everything right.	Drugs. Anger.
Yes	Do what I'm required to do.	Getting in trouble. Not doing what I'm supposed to be doing.
YES!!!!	Stay sober. Be honest.	Using friends. School attendance.
Yes	Do what I need to do. Stay honest.	Lying. Using.
Yes!	Do everything drug court asks of me.	Using. Breaking curfew. Lying.
Yes	To do everything in drug court and follow all the rules.	Using. Breaking the rules. Not caring.
Yes	Do whatever drug court asks of me.	My old ways and friends.
Yes	Stay sober and do what I am supposed to do.	Tempting situations and not doing what I'm supposed to be doing.
Yes I do	Stay sober.	Friends.
Yes	Do what I'm told.	Not following directions.



## *We Are Inspired...*

Favorite quotes from Katie's Journal:

"It is never too late to be what you might have been."

"Follow your instincts – that's where true wisdom manifests itself."

"It's kind of fun to do the impossible."

"I used to think that I had all the answers, but today I am glad that I don't."

"What we want most is to feel good about ourselves."

"Our real value is in being ourselves."

"We want to look our past in the face, see it for what it really was, and release it so we can live today."

“A smart person learns from his mistakes. A genius learns from the mistakes of others.”

-- Wardell Anderson

What we can learn from the story of Robert Downey Jr., as described in “I Rose From the Ashes.” (Available on-line at <http://news.yahoo.com/page/parade-rdj/rdj>).

- Don't be in a relationship where drugs are tolerated. – Natalie
- That it's possible to turn my life around; that I have to work on my life for it to get better; that life is better than the instant gratification of getting high. – Peter
- It won't be fun forever; have goals and do what it takes to reach them; it's easier to live clean. – Stuart
- Get clean sooner. Be yourself. Realize it before it happens. – Alex
- If you want something bad enough, you can achieve it. Using always has consequences that aren't worth it. Stay clean and everything else falls into place. – Katie
- Have goals. Sobriety is a way of life. Believe in a higher power. – Heather

## **Character**

Watch your thoughts,  
They become words.

Watch your words,  
They become action.

Watch your actions,  
They become habits.

Watch your habits,  
They become character.

Watch your character,  
It becomes your destiny.

## **Precious Human Life**

Every day, think as you wake up,  
Today I am fortunate to have woken up,  
I am alive, I have a precious human life,  
I am not going to waste it.

I am going to use  
All my energies to develop myself,  
To expand my heart out to others,  
To achieve enlightenment for  
The benefit of all beings.

I am going to have kind  
Thoughts towards others.

I am not going to get angry,  
Or think badly about others,  
I am going to benefit others  
As much as I can.

H.H. The XIV Dalai Lama



# *When We Slip...*

## **Relapse Essays**

Dear Drug Court,

I have been screwing up a lot lately. I am sorry. I'm ashamed of myself for going back to my addict ways. I truly want to change. I WANT TO BE SOBER. And I want to make it happen now.

Everyone has given up on me. People think I'm crazy. It hurts. There's no one out there that I can call a true friend, because everyone is too caught up in using. Most of all, my mom doesn't respect me. I can't spend more time in Juvie. I miss my job and the biggest thing on my mind is to make my career happen. None of this is going to happen if I'm using.

Please don't give up on me because I know I can really push myself through this. I can't do it alone. I need help from the whole team. I hope I can start back on my life as a sober and better person on Thursday when I see you all. Thank you.

Ryan, age 17

I smoked again. I've messed up a lot of times and you keep giving me chances. It's been hard. My best friend has been using meth. I've spent a lot of time with him lately hoping to help him quit. The other day he realized that I can use his help too. He doesn't want me to end up in placement. We agreed to quit together, go to meetings together, and to be there to help each other no matter what. I hope it's not too late for me

to ask you for one more chance to show you and everyone else I'm ready to do this. I will try my absolute hardest to stay clean and graduate from Drug Court. Thank you.

Johnny, Age 16

I am disappointed in myself for drinking. I was not thinking. When I feel stressed or angry, I don't think things through. I let down the judge, Wardell, and my parents.

Some ways that I can prevent myself from doing this again is by calling my dad or uncles, because they struggled with drugs and alcohol and know what it is like. Another way is when people bring stuff around me, I can leave. I can also go to meetings more often. I hope to graduate drug court. It's a ways away but that would be a great accomplishment.

Justin, age 15

I started back at school after 2 weeks of break, 3 weeks of doing good in court, and not messing around at all with my home restriction and a meeting every night. That felt good and made everybody else happy and my life a lot easier.

It's been hard at my school since because all of my friends graduated. A kid from my rehab came to San Andreas that day for his first time. At lunch, I went with him to Round Table and he had weed with him. He asked me if I wanted to smoke. It crossed my head that I had just had a good therapy session the day before and was proud of how I was doing. But I had my mind on one thing and that was to get high.

I can prevent this from happening again by sticking with kids who are sober. Not letting stupid things get to me like how boring school is. I can use my resources like my

therapist. An important thing I got from this was how much better I feel when I'm sober and doing exactly what I'm supposed to do, and that when I do that, probation just got so much easier.

Stuart, Age 15

Staying sober is hard, especially when everyone around you is using. The temptation is strong when you feel in a bad mood or are fed up with stuff. One of the things I need to work on to stay sober is to stay out of the places and not hang with the people that I'm likely to use with. I've realized that if they want me to use or don't care if I use then they must not really care about me. If I had kept myself away from sticky people and sticky situations, I might not have relapsed.

The night I relapsed I'd gone to an AA meeting. They help but it's hard to relate to all the old guys there. After I went to a coffee shop and saw an old buddy of mine. I was on home restriction and shouldn't have been there in the first place. He was still using and I knew that. He asked if I wanted to hang out and I had been going crazy because of all the home detention so without thinking I just said "fa sho."

I started drinking and got really drunk. The next morning I felt like crap. I thought of how I how disappointed myself. In the short run I feel good when I'm high. But in the long run I feel way better when I'm sober. When I use, I take steps back, and I'm trying to take steps forward. It's not worth it for me. I want to complete this. Using hurts me and my family.

Alex, Age 18

## What's Important to Us...

	<b>The most important thing for me is...</b>	<b>What my parents want most for me is...</b>	<b>I think Drug Court would work better if...</b>
Alex	Graduating from drug court	To graduate from drug court	I talked to Wardell more
Natalie	To stay sober	To be happy and have a great life-style	We would meet later?
Stuart	Staying sober, good relationship with parents	Be happy and free	More contact with Wardell
Johnny	Family	To be clean and honest	We did more activities together. More contact with Wardell.
Katie	Family, friends, sobriety	To do the best I can	I stayed in contact with Wardell
Peter	Staying sober & living a healthy life	To stay sober and have the best life possible	I had more time to get my weekend UA. Maybe extend it to noon
Heather	My sobriety, friends and family	To stay sober, go to college, be successful	I stayed in contact with Wardell more often
Andrew	Completing Drug Court	Stay sober	Show up every 2 weeks
Ryan	My family	To live a successful and happy life	The staff would be more involved
Amanda	Having a manageable life and staying sober	To be happy	More contact with my p.o.
Justin	Family, friends, school	To stay out of trouble	There were more people and Wardell saw me more
Cesar	My family	A better lifestyle	I had home restriction

# We Grieve...

Dear Mom,

The anniversary of your death is coming up. I feel stressed and sad and want to use, to follow in your footsteps instead of my own. I love you so much and wish your life could have been better. I tried to change your life but only you could do that.

I have been put on probation, on the bracelet, locked up several times for dirty UA's and lying to everyone at school and in drug court thinking they will never know, but they are not stupid. They know what's up.

Mom, I know it's not your fault, and I take responsibility for my actions but we have a lot in common. We look alike, and we did the same drugs at 15. There are just so many problems that are difficult to explore. I don't want to be like you, mom. My life is going down. I want freedom. I hate the idea of staying sober, but I am slowly getting there.

I am sorry for tomorrow, the day you died. The words I said were so horrible and every day I think, why did I not ever go in and say I'm sorry for what I did. I feel that I made you do what happened. But that was six years ago and now there's nothing I can do about it. I'm scared to open up and tell people about you. I look at all the other kids in court with their mothers, and wish I could have a relationship with you like they have with their mothers.

Mom, I miss you truly.

Love, Your Daughter, age 15

## We Imagine...

When your adorable little sister or brother is 12 years old, she starts smoking cigarettes found in an old backpack of yours.

A year later, you smell beer on her breath when she comes home from the movies.

At 14, she starts hanging out with the fast crowd and smoking a little pot.

When she's 15, she is arrested for possession and expelled from school.

At 16, she gets faded at a party, blacks out, and is raped by older kids. Six months later, she tries to kill herself by slitting her wrists in your mom's bathtub. She is hospitalized for a week, leaving your mom with medical bills of \$25,000.

By 17, after serving her 9<sup>th</sup> sentence in Juvenile Hall, she runs away.

Occasionally, she breaks into your mother's house to steal food, money and property. Your mother is heartbroken and terrified. She turns to you for help.

Like Harry Potter, you are magically given the gift of going back in time to visit with your sister. Because time travel is so risky, you are only allowed to select one moment, and you are only given an hour with her.

What moment will you choose? What will you say to her? How will she respond? Will your visit change anything?

Look, sister, I know you are growing up and you want to explore life and enjoy it, but drugs are not any way of helping you explore the life you want. They will make your whole teenage life the opposite of what you want. You won't have fun, you put yourself at risk, and you will regret it. Trust me, I've been there. Let's do other things like hang out together, exercise or go to the movies.

Baby sis, you need a lot of support because you are at a time in your life where you need a lot of love and support. You don't need to be "cool" or "belong" to the crowd. Believe in yourself and be yourself, not what the world wants you to be.

I show my sister the love and joy of being sober and staying out of trouble. I show her the tools and skills there are that can help. I explain to her the cost-benefit of her situation.

Melissa

With my Harry Potter skills of time travel, I go back to the beginning, when she finds my cigarettes. I choose this scenario because I recall before I drank or smoked anything. It started with finding cigarettes and smoking them.

I say, "It seems harmless now, but you can't tell where this is going to take you, because the smoking cigarettes thing turns into a whole thought process, and the way you think, such as, oh I'm rebelling, I don't care what you have to say."

She responds, "No, not me! I'm a good, happy person, I won't let this get to me!"

"I thought the same exact thing when I was deeper down this path of drug and alcohol abuse," I explain to her. "You might be able to convince yourself of that, when you're going deeper down into this life, just to make yourself happy. It's much better to address the problem in the beginning, rather than the end or the middle, when it's already progressed. The problem grows."

I tell her how I went from smoking my friend's step-dad's cigarette butts, to taking sips of beer when my parents weren't looking, to smoking a little bit of weed with a new crew of friends, who were at least 5 or 6 years older than me. Once I started hanging out with the older crowd, it really progressed fast, with not just using, but with doing things that you shouldn't be doing, especially when you are 11 and 12, like roaming the streets at 3 in the morning, stealing things from cars.

Stuart

Sweetheart, I understand you want to try new things with your friends, but drinking can lead to a lot of problems; believe me, I know. You've seen how drugs have dramatically changed my life and my relationship with mom, and I'm sure you don't want that because you two love each other and have a special bond. Drinking led me to all these problems, and no one wants to see you struggle.

You are a wonderful young lady who knows right from wrong, and you know drinking is bad for you. I know your friends pressure you to do stuff you don't want to do, and you want to fit in, but these kids don't care about your well-being; they are just looking for another person to get a quick high with. Stand up for what you believe in and say no. You are strong enough.

I'm just trying to save you from all the pain I have had to deal with through my experience. You don't want to end up like me, going to court every week, battling drug addiction. I'm sure you are mature enough to make the right choice.

Heather

I visit my little sister when she's 15 years old and is arrested for possession of drugs. I ask her to hear me out and trust what I say and the advice I give because I'm her older sister.

I tell her that I know exactly how it is to be where she's at and that at her age; I got into a lot of trouble as well. I explain to her that it only progresses from here and gets worse and worse, never better. I say that if you keep doing what you're doing, you're going to end up like I ended up: miserable, hating myself, losing people that I love and love me, struggling to make ends meet, and feeling overwhelmed with my life. I say that

I don't expect her to completely understand, but to at least try to. I tell her that it doesn't have to happen to her like it happened to me, that I would always be there to help her out if she needs it.

I tell her a lot of things... but I think in the end, everyone chooses to learn the hard way.

Katie

I time-travel to talk to my brother when he is 15. I tell him the stuff I did and the consequences that I got, and all the years that I was on probation. I tell him that he needs to get his emotions straightened out, and I try to get him to tell me why he is using. I recommend counseling. I explain that the reason he's using is because the drug and the alcohol are making it worse. And the more he is using the worse he is going to get. I tell him it isn't easy, and that people often relapse. Finally, I tell him I love him, and I don't want this for him.

Cesar

"I notice that you have been hanging out with the wrong crowd. Now you are starting to use marijuana and alcohol. When I was 15, I did the same thing. It started off as something fun. I would not use every day, only once in awhile, and for the longest time there were never any consequences. However, one thing led to another and before I knew it, I was using harder drugs such as cocaine and meth. This led me to things that you could never imagine. I became an addict.

"I know that you are so young and you cannot look too far into the future and see where something as little as weed and alcohol can take you, but I am telling you from

first-hand experience I don't want you to have to go through what I have. I was put on probation, I ran away from home, I went to juvenile hall on more than one occasion because I refused to listen to people who cared and who tried to help me just like I am trying to help you now.

"I don't know if you understand or even care what I have to say, but I am asking you as your older sister to please stop using drugs and alcohol. All those times that I was gone and not at home, and you and baby sis missed me so much, that was all because I had put myself in such a bad position that I was not willing to deal with my problems. The only tool that I had was to medicate myself with drugs to hide all the pain. I thought it would make me feel better, but all it would do was make me feel worse. This life will lead you nowhere except for jail, a very unhappy life, and possibly death. Those people who you hang out with are not truly your friends. The only reason they are there is because of the drugs and once the drugs are gone, they will be gone also.

"I pray that you will not have to go through this, because I will always be here for you. I love you always."

Careina

I talk with my sister when she is 15. I don't tell my parents yet because she is more likely to tell me the truth and not get in trouble. I wait until she gets home from school. When she gets settled down, I walk in her room and see how she's doing. Then I ask, "Have you been using the past week or two?"

"Yes."

"How did you start using? Was it your friends, was it me, or mom and dad?"

“My friends started to do it, and they pressured me to use. After that I started doing a lot more, even during the week,” she says.

“Sis, it’s not for you. I’ve been through that and it didn’t help me one bit.” I explain how it can get you to do other drugs that are worse and can ruin your life. “I’m not going to tell mom and dad unless you keep using. I really want you to stop. I know what it can do to your life.” But when she is an adult it is her decision.

Justin

I go back when my little sister is 16 and at the party. I show up an hour before she blacks out and gets raped. I go in the party and watch my sister start to act a fool. Then when she picks up her first drink I come up.

“What you doing?” I ask. She is shocked to see me. I start clapping and yelling so everyone can hear us.

“Good job little sis! You’re continuing the family legacy of screwing your life over, let me tell it’s not that great! Do you want to spend your time in and out of the hall? Do you want Mom, Dad and me to worry if you’re dead because you haven’t come home in a week? It’s not all smiles and giggles when you’re at placement for almost a year and can’t be with your family that loves you! I’ve made some stupid choices and look where it got me. Don’t do the same thing. You’re better than that.”

Then I tell her to go home before anything gets worse or something really bad happens to her. I give her a little more time to think about it. “I’m going right now. Do you want to come with me, because I’ll take you home.”

The rest is up to her.

Derek

## *We Are Grateful...*

Dear Mom,

I can really see how good of a mom you are and have been to me over the past 18 years. We have gone through a lot and I think we have both grown from our experiences. I think it's awesome how I can relate to you through AA and how you know and can relate to what's going on in my life. And I love that I can get advice from you as my mom but also as another alcoholic. I love you with all my heart and I know you love me with all yours.

Love, Your Son, Age 18

Hi Mom!

You have done so much for me this year. You have stuck by me when it would have been easier to let me go. I am eternally grateful. Who knows where I would be right now if I didn't get help. Even though we fight, you should know that I love you. I will always love you unconditionally no matter what. You know very little of what I am going through but support me as if you know everything. You find ways to help me not think about my addiction. These things include going out to the barn every day so I can see my horse, ice cream, chocolate, etc. You do so much for me that Mother's Day should be everyday. I love you!

Love, Your Daughter, Age 17

Dear Mom,

I just want to let you know how much I love you. You are the most beautiful, funny, caring and supportive mother out there. You and I haven't always gotten along but when we try, we have so much fun! You're so much fun to be around, especially at family functions. You shine like the stars in the sky because of your love and care.

Love always, Your Daughter, Age 15

## *We Graduate...*

I'm soon to graduate from Juvenile Drug Court and need to commit to my sobriety in the future. I have a long history of using and have been on probation for three years. During my time on probation, I guess you could say that I've learned the hard way. My life has come so far from where it was, and I want to keep it that way.

It all started around seventh grade. Kids were beginning to experiment with weed and I decided to join in out of curiosity. I enjoyed smoking with the other kids. At first my use was just experimental, and I only did it occasionally. At the end of the seventh grade, my parents got divorced, and this was a huge deal for me. I was confused about the divorce and felt stuck in the middle of my parents' conflicts. I became angry and began taking my anger out on the people around me. Smoking helped divert my attention away from stress.

A year went by splitting from mom's house and dad's house and smoking my stress away until I finally began suffering consequences. I was constantly angry. I began getting in trouble at school for my defiance, getting referrals and suspensions. I had a hard time getting along with my parents. Eventually I was put on probation.

When I was first on probation, I didn't take it as seriously as I should have. I just continued to live my life in the same way. In the first week of my freshman year, I was expelled for lashing out in an act of frustration and violence. As expected, Probation didn't take kindly to this violation. Here began my career as a regular at Juvenile Hall.

My first time in the Hall was an experience that fueled my situation. I didn't feel like being there, and it made me feel bad that I had been put there against my will. When I got out, I continued to smoke weed even though I had been warned that I would be drug tested. I ended up at County Community School and continued to catch cases that landed me in the hall. I kept drawing attention to myself. I convinced myself that probation was out to get me and that they were trying to make my life as miserable as possible. I would not cooperate so they referred me to Drug Court. Little did I know that Drug Court was going to completely transform my life.

I joined Drug Court a year ago. I joined thinking that it was a quick and easy way to get off probation. I thought I could stay clean for the nine months and graduate and go back to my old ways. I had another think coming to me.

My first couple months were what you would call rough ones. I was in and out of the Hall and failing, missing, diluting my UA's. I was stuck in a negative mind state and refused to follow directions.

The last straw is when I failed my UA and was locked up for my mom's wedding. This experience hit a soft spot for me. I had missed an experience that I could never share with my mother again as long as I lived. I lost this experience to my inability to stop and follow directions. At this point, I realized that I was an addict.

I made a very important decision to surrender to the program and see how it worked out for me. I progressively stopped using and started taking steps towards strengthening my sobriety. I applied for jobs and put a steady school situation in place. Through staying busy, putting structure in my life, things started to get better.

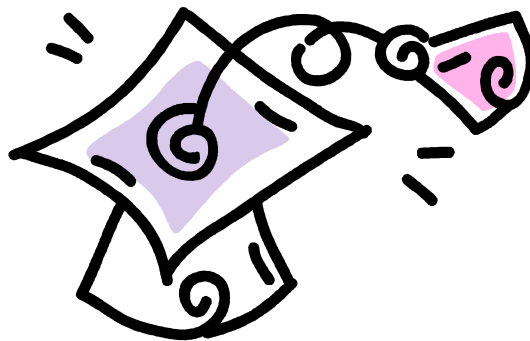
Wardell is the most humane and understanding P.O. that I've ever had. He always made it clear that he was not out to get me but out to help me, and he did everything he could to do so.

Through Drug Court and therapy, I've learned things that have been helping me in my daily life. Like being honest, taking responsibility, and getting my priorities straight. I have a full-time job, get good grades in school, and am living a full and rewarding life without drugs. My interactions with family and friends are good, my overall attitude has changed.

I never thought I would say this, but I'm really thankful I joined Drug Court. I appreciate my life the way it is today, without drugs and alcohol, and I have decided that I want to keep it that way. My job and success have given me a sense of meaning that I would never have felt if I was still using. When I look back on my life a year ago and compare it to how it is now, I realize how far I came, how much better my life is now.

By surrounding myself with positive people, staying busy, and always remembering where I came from, I can stay sober and succeed in my goals.

Stephen



## *Our Parents Write...*

To Our Dear Most Beautiful Joy in Life,

On the day of your birth, we saw in you a magnificent future – full of hope, joy and possibility. We still do. For most of your life, as your parents, we have been writing your story. It is now time for you to direct your own life. Cast yourself as the director of your own life and take advantage of the tools, skills and support provided by your family and Juvenile Drug Court. You face the daily challenges of real-life events; shift your thinking positively and take responsibility. We admire your strength and courage to take clear-minded control.

It is from this place, our Own Dear One, that we renew our faith and belief in your power to achieve your potential, secure your future and see your dreams come true. We remain steadfast in our commitment to love you, support you and continue to expect the best of you.

The day you arrived, awe, appreciation, love and tenderness filled us at the wonder of you. We still embrace you. We will always love you with all of our hearts.

Forever,

Your Loving Family

# *Juvenile Drug Court Team*

Lynn Duryee, Judge

Wardell Anderson, Probation

Marta Osterloh, Deputy District Attorney

Ronald Ravani, Deputy District Attorney

Sophia Amargi, Therapist

Meg Sherry, Family Connections

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*With Special Thanks to...*

Janet Minkewicz, Courtroom Clerk

Deborah Bartunek, Court Reporter

Paul Meyers, Juvenile Transportation

Kim Turner, Court Executive Officer