

Court convenes to help addicts conquer habit

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Assistant Features Editor

The only other option was prison. Three months after she was arrested Dec. 9, 2002, Kami Hubbard, 32, chose Drug Court. "It was definitely an unbelievable experience," she said. "I was in a lot of trouble. I had been in active addiction for quite some time, was in jail and was pretty sure I was going to prison. One of the public defenders asked if I'd be interested in a new program."

Dec. 9 became Hubbard's clean date, and she began her seventh attempt at recovery, she said.

"I knew in my heart, and I knew in my mind," said Hubbard, a Novinger resident who recently applied to Truman. "I just knew with every part of me that it was over. It was an answered prayer."

Adair County Drug Court kicked off in March 2003 after presiding Circuit Judge Russell Steele of the Second Judicial Circuit and several other Drug Court team members attended a training session about the program in another county. Steele said he soon knew he was interested in bringing the program to Adair County.

"What you quickly find out in these training sessions is that people with drug and alcohol problems aren't bad people," he said. "They've just got a bad problem."

Traci Ciepiela, Drug Court tracker and Department of Public Safety officer, said the program is very selective but can benefit greatly the 25 to 30 applicants accepted at staggered times. She said no Truman students have entered Drug Court, but it would be an option if they were charged with a felony amount of drugs.

"Drug Court takes these individuals who really aren't violent, who are ... in this circumstance where they just can't seem to kick this habit on their own," Ciepiela said. "And when we've run out of other options and suddenly they have a felony on their record, we can put them in this program."

The program includes four phases. The first and most demanding is 90 days, and the other three are a minimum of six months. Elements of the phase progression include frequent appearances in Monday morning Drug Court, reports to the probation officer, random urinalysis and breath-alcohol content tests, individual counseling, attendance at Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meetings, intense drug or alcohol treatment and strict curfews. Each phase gives the participant more freedom than the previous.

Steele said the actual Drug Court on Monday mornings convenes with about 12 to 14 people from different phases. He said he calls each to the bench individually to check on his or her progress and to provide any number of sanctions or incentives the Drug Court team thinks are necessary. Sanctions might include verbal admonishment, writing assignments, house arrest, community service or jail time, according to the Adair County Drug Court participant handbook. Incentives might include gas cards, reduced jail time, dental care, food vouchers, early phase advancement or merely verbal praise.

"Some of these people have never heard that from a judge," Steele said. "Mostly they're hearing that they get kicked in the seat of the pants by the judge, not a pat on the back."

Steele said Drug Court also aids the participants in finding housing, obtaining their GEDs, job training and receiving health care.

"We try not only to help them deal with the addiction or dependence problem they have, but we help them try to get control of and correct many of these other problems that have arisen out of their addiction or dependence," he said. "Because we find that if you treat this one problem, they've still got all these others out there, and oftentimes that leads back to failure. That leads to relapses."

Steele said that from 1970 to 2005, the prison population increased by about 1,000 percent, and about 80 percent of the people in prison have a drug or alcohol problem. He said he has been a judge for seven years and is beginning to see people from early in his judicial career cycle back through the system.

Ciepiela said decreasing the prison population is one of Drug Court's goals.

"People always talk about how there's thousands and thousands of people clogging up the prison system on nonviolent drug offenses, and you know everybody's complaining about this," she said. "This is one way we can alleviate that."

Ciepiela said Drug Court provides necessary structure to avoid relapses.

"They don't have a chance to fall through the cracks," she said. "Well, obviously they do fall through the cracks occasionally, but we give them every chance not to. We are there to support them every chance we can."

Graduates, such as the 14 who have completed Drug Court, are rewarded with terminated probation and a second chance, Ciepiela said.

"They get their life back is what they get," she said. "Because they're on a train that's heading right off the cliff in one direction, and we get that train stopped, turned around, and we head them in the right direction."

Hubbard, who hopes to begin her undergraduate work in psychology at Truman this spring, was the first participant to enter Adair County Drug Court and the first to graduate Jan. 24. Her journey lasted 21 months, the minimum length for entrants, and Steele said she progressed through all four phases without relapse or failure.

"She didn't get a single sanction, never had a single violation when she was in the program, got her kids back, entered college, is a 4.0 student and just got back from a trip to Europe," he said.

Ciepiela said it is nice to see people like Hubbard get their lives back.

"I just knew with every part of me that it was over. It was an answered prayer."

Kami Hubbard
Novinger Resident

"Kami's just doing a great job and moving forward with her education," she said. "And she's just not going to quit. She's absolutely not going to quit until she gets there."

Hubbard said she was deep in her addiction and knows her former lifestyle is not how God intended her to live.

"I'd take shots that were way too big and knew that it was more than what I could handle or should be taking," she said. "And it would just be 'Oh please God, oh please God. Don't let this be the one that I don't come back from.' And he was looking out for me."

Hubbard said that midway through her Drug Court experience, Adair County prosecutor Mark Williams told her how dire her situation was before she entered the program.

"Mark Williams told me, 'I had a very strong case on you. You were going to prison,'" she said. "And my heart just stopped. I just wanted to vomit all over the table and cry. I was just so grateful ... for this program."

Hubbard, however, is only one of Drug Court's success stories. Steele and Ciepiela said they develop relationships with all of the participants.

"I don't see these people as frequent flyers anymore," Ciepiela said. "I really don't see these people as drug addicts that don't have a life. I've gotten to know their kids. This past Christmas I bought little gifts for everybody that had kids."

Steele said he also sees the importance in connecting with the participants.

"We try to develop some kind of a relationship with these people," he said. "I call them my kids because it's kind of what I feel like, is these are my kids."

Hubbard said she, in turn, gained respect for many members of the Drug Court team.

"Judge Steele is outstanding," she said. "... He's so understanding. He's not gullible or naïve, but he's just really put a lot into this program. He's put his heart and soul into it."

Hubbard said she is grateful that he helped bring the program to Adair County.

"It makes perfect sense that there would be attention and need for this sort of program," she said. "Here in northeast Missouri, it is a sickening problem, and ... it just ebbs down into so many peoples' lives."

Her life now, however, is truly blessed because of Drug Court, Hubbard said.

"Drug Court saved my life," she said. "And I'm glad it did."



House Fire
photo by Courtney Robbins

Firefighters stand outside 802 E. Pierce St. on Sunday evening. The fire damaged the roof, and smoke damaged the interior of the building.

Reenactments show Lewis and Clark history

The Kirksville Arts Association brings in historical role-players

Mandi Sagez
for the Index

A man in black boots, knickers and a linen tunic carrying a leather sack and tin mug spoke about his expedition in the 1800s.

The Missouri Humanities Council is presenting "Changing Lives: Lewis and Clark Meet the West," a four-week program with speakers every Friday night from Oct. 14 to Nov. 4.

The presentations observe the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition in partnership with the Kirksville Arts Association, Adair County Historical Society and Quota International of Kirksville.

Performing humanitarian scholar Ritchie Doyle presented "Home-Bound on the Roche Jaune: Clark on the Yellowstone," a program displaying Clark's recollections of the expedition, Oct. 21 at the Kirksville Arts Center.

He said he began presenting as the character of William Clark nine years ago.

"I chose William Clark at that time because of his interesting life after the expedition," Doyle said.

Doyle said he role-plays Clark as accurately as possible during the presentation.

"I actually try to get into character, and I hope William isn't rolling in his grave tonight," Doyle said.

He said that because Clark was the mapmaker on the expedition, Doyle copies Clark's maps out of an atlas.

"I soak them in coffee or tea, and I put them together," he said.

Doyle said he delights in showing people the maps.

"There's a lot of other people speaking about Lewis and Clark that have all the guns and the instruments and stuff, and I don't

Changing lives: Lewis and Clark meet the West

Oct. 28
"Home-bound on the Roche Jaune :Clark on the Yellowstone"

Nov. 4
"Wilderness medicine in early America Science & Medicine in the Era of Lewis and Clark"

*Presentations take place at 7 a.m. at the Kirksville Arts Center.

Designed by Roger Meissen/Index



have a gun," he said. "I have maps."

Doyle said he enjoys presenting because he is able to clear up myths about the American Indians and their role in the expedition.

"I think my favorite part is setting the record straight, clearing up poppycock that I hear," he said.

Judy Neuweg, director of the Kirksville Arts Association, said the Adair County Historical Society and Kirksville Arts Association had talked about putting on educational programs.

"We have the space, and they had all of the monies, and so we are coordinating [the programs] together," Neuweg said. "That's

how it came together, along with celebrating the bicentennial."

She said they expected about 50 individuals to attend the presentations each week.

Friday night about 35 people attended.

Neuweg said making the programs available to the community is exciting.

"It gives our community visibility, and then we get visibility for the arts to the community as well," she said.

A sign language interpreter will sign for all four presentations, she said.

"The reason that they provide it is not only to serve the

citizens but because the expedition often had to depend on sign language as well for communication," Neuweg said.

Fred Fausz, history professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, conducted the first presentation "Passages to the West: From Lewis and Clark to Many Trails of Tears."

"[Fausz's presentation] had to do with the fur traders and what they did ... through their administration and acquisition and exploration," Neuweg said. "He used a lot of artifacts."

Sandra Kaye Massey and Marianne Long will present "The Lewis and Clark Expedition from the Sac and Fox Perspective" on Friday.

David J. Peck will present "Science and Medicine in the Era of Lewis and Clark" on Nov. 4.

"The last week will be the science and medicine aspects of the expedition," Neuweg said. "That [presentation] will actually be conducted by a physician."

Leola Daniels, president of Quota International of Kirksville, said the organizations are pleased with all the artists who are in the four sessions.

"I'm really looking forward to [the programs], and I hope we have a good turnout too," she said. "I'm just glad that we had the funds that we could help bring something like this of such value to the community for everyone to enjoy."

All presentations take place at 7 p.m. in the Kirksville Arts Center, located at 117 S. Franklin St. in Kirksville.

