



Craig Rodriguez flips an egg while making an omelet while working in the kitchen at The Saddle Restaurant on Wednesday in Pendleton.

DRUG: ‘I didn’t see any hope. I got to a place where I accepted my life as a junkie’

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she got pregnant. At age 21, however, she fell hard into the drug lifestyle.

“It was all day, every day,” she said. “I hung out with scary people. I did things I shouldn’t have done with a kid on my hip.”

Miller remembers wanting to escape from that “dark world,” but not knowing how. She made multiple attempts to get free, but failed each time. When one of her friends got clean while in prison, Miller decided to commit a crime so she could get clean, too.

“I thought prison was the way out,” she said. “I asked myself, ‘What’s the worst thing I could do to get into prison and not hurt anyone?’”

She settled on burglary, stole some guns and was arrested. Instead of prison, however, the judge gave her the option of drug court. She would attend rehab, undergo regular drug testing, touch base with the judge each week, get counseling and do community service.

At first, her heart wasn’t in it.

“I was still actively using,” Miller recalled. “I was loaded in court.”

She went to detox, then spent 89 days in treatment. As she got clean, she gained resolve.

“I was determined to do well,” she said. “So many people fought to get me into treatment. A lot of people put their necks out for me. I didn’t want to let anyone down.”

She turned her back on her previous life.

“You have to change everything,” she said. “You can’t hang onto strands of that dark world. You have to break all those ties.”

She started college, not stopping until she graduated with a master’s degree in social work from Walla Walla University. These days, eight years clean, she works as Umatilla County Drug Court’s court coordinator, tracking drug court participants (between about 80 and 100 at any one time) and keeping tabs on policies and procedures. Graduation, which happens once a year, is a joyful occasion.

“Drug court works,”

Miller said. “People blend back into society. I truly believe it saves lives.”

Amy Madrigal

Amy Madrigal remembers stealing sips from her dad’s alcoholic drinks when she was five. At age 13, she started smoking pot. By late teens, she was into drug trafficking and at age 22, she almost died of a cocaine overdose.

She often landed in jail.

“I was a frequent flyer,” Madrigal said. “They never took my name off the board.”

The Pendleton woman, now 44, is almost five years clean. She credits drug court, a pastor who visited her in jail and her daughter who told her: “I need you.”

To satisfy the requirements of drug court “I had to change everything,” she said. “Everything I ever thought I loved, I had to give up.”

Her schedule included thrice-weekly urine screens and regular appearances before a judge to gauge her progress. She drew encouragement and learned skills during daily group sessions. When she graduated from Drug Court, she worked as a flagger and later at a hotel’s front desk. Now a night aide at the Eastern Oregon Alcohol Foundation, she is working toward a psychology degree and plans to become an addiction specialist. She has newfound faith, keeping her well-thumbed Bible close at hand and attending services at Living Word Christian Center. Pastor Sharon Miller had visited her in jail.

The journey hasn’t been an easy one. After drug court graduation, the only home she could afford was a 28-foot trailer where she lived with her daughter and grandson until she saved money for an upgrade.

She has some stern advice for other addicts who want to get clean.

“Stop lying to yourself,” she said. “Keep looking forward. Get a plan and do it. There’s a lot of footwork involved — it doesn’t just come to you.”

She said she remains vigilant to temptation.

“I have a respectful hate for my disease,” Madrigal said.

Her possibilities continue to expand.

“We limit ourselves,” Madrigal said. “We need to get past our limits.”

Craig Rodriguez

Craig Rodriguez doesn’t even remember life before drugs.

“My parents were drug addicts,” Rodriguez said. “As their drug addictions progressed, they didn’t pay attention to my addictions.”

When Rodriguez started drinking and smoking marijuana at age 13, he lost interest in baseball and other pursuits. By 17, he was a full-blown heroin and cocaine addict who had dropped out of high school to sell drugs with his parents. His mom eventually died of a heroin overdose. His dad died in prison. Rodriguez figured he would go down the same path.

“I didn’t see any hope,” said the Pendleton man. “I got to a place where I accepted my life as a junkie.”

Enter Umatilla County Drug Court.

After serving 50 days for a parole violation, a judge offered him the chance to change. He entered a drug treatment program at the Eastern Oregon Alcohol Foundation. Time with counselors gave him strategies for successful living as he combated his addiction.

Rodriguez now works as kitchen manager and line cook at the Saddle Restaurant & Lounge in Pendleton. He attends church. He is married. He is no longer a deadbeat dad.

“My kids can count on me today,” he said.

Despite being four years clean and sober, Rodriguez knows he can never fully relax about drugs. He likens the process to kicking cancer.

“You live with it forever,” he said. “You take steps to keep this thing in remission. It’s a lifetime deal.”

He will forever be grateful to drug court, something that still amazes the 42-year-old.

“The court system was locking us up,” he said. “Now, they’re cheering us and rooting us on. It is a different twist — and it works. They know we’re better than this.”

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or call 541-966-0810.

DISPATCH: Hermiston’s tab is \$309,684

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of response and the city’s then-upcoming budget meeting. The police chief said he wanted to be able to answer questions about why Pendleton police and fire pay almost \$25,000 less for dispatch services than the Hermiston Police Department and Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services.

Capt. Kathy Lieuallen, head of the sheriff’s office communications division, recently said Pendleton’s bill for dispatch services for 2015-16 would be \$284,753 while Hermiston’s would be \$295,691. But Edmiston said those figures don’t jibe with information he received from the sheriff’s office.

Hermiston’s tab is \$309,684 — \$255,684 for police and \$54,000 for Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services.

But again, there was no explanation on how the sheriff’s office calculated those figures.

“All entities using this service should be paying a fair amount, and the formula to get to that fairness is not

a difficult concept,” said Edmiston.

The Hermiston chief is not alone in his ire. The Pilot Rock City Council more than a week ago demanded the sheriff’s office explain why its bill was \$6,000 more than ever before. Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts stated the sheriff’s office needs to be more accountable. And Stanfield City Manager Blair Larsen said in an email the sheriff’s office “won’t tell anyone anything” about dispatch costs.

Larsen stated Stanfield does not have a solid number on what it will pay the sheriff’s office, though Lieuallen has said it should be about \$46,000 a year. Larsen said Stanfield cannot afford that without major economic development. And he is not happy with the county’s dispatch system being the only game around.

“We are all in the crappy situation that no one has any other options anymore,” he stated. “However, when small cities were first brought in, they were told that the 9-1-1 fees would be enough to cover everything.

Now they are telling us that we have been subsidized all this time.”

The state 9-1-1 tax covers the sheriff’s office cost of handling emergency calls, but those funds do not pay for non-emergency calls. And previous sheriff’s administrations did not charge small cities with police departments for providing those non-emergency services. That changed with the Hermiston call center merger.

“If they have been subsidizing us, and are continuing to do so, it is their own fault for not being upfront about what the dispatch center costs,” Larsen said in an email.

Edmiston also stated that he thinks Sheriff Terry Rowan inherited the problem. Edmiston after the meeting said it was tough to call out his fellow lawman, but he and others want answers and they are getting tired of waiting.

Edmiston also said he is willing to use Oregon’s Public Records Law to press the sheriff’s office for the information.

CODE: Grass cannot reach higher than 15 inches

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re-coloring before being sold as new paint. Fetter said the paint company the city contracted with said the 1,275 gallons was a record for the most paint they had ever collected at a single event.

The city warned that after the free recycling event gave people a chance to fix their code violations that it would step up its code enforcement and work to be more proactive rather than merely complaint-driven.

Fetter said city staff plan to accomplish as much as they can through education and voluntary compliance, but if people refuse to clean up problem properties the city can come in and do it and bill them for the work, placing a lien on their prop-

erty if they don’t pay.

“No one wants that,” he said.

Property owners interested in becoming familiar with the codes that outline their responsibilities can find the city’s entire code of ordinances at www.hermiston.or.us/code-of-ordinances. The majority of related requirements can be found in Chapter 92, “Nuisances,” and Chapter 135, “Structural Maintenance Regulations.”

Rules for property upkeep in Hermiston include:

Weeds and grass cannot reach higher than 15 inches.

Disabled vehicles cannot be stored in an unenclosed space for more than seven days.

Trees and other objects cannot hang down lower than 10 feet above a side-

walk and 14 feet above a street.

Yards and lots must be kept clear of trash, scrap materials, indoor furniture, vehicle parts, appliances and other items “not designed for outdoor storage.”

Dead trees and bushes must be cleared away.

Correct address numbers must be clearly displayed.

Exterior walls must be free of holes and loose boards.

“Obnoxious, offensive or objectionable odors” are not allowed to escape the property in levels that cause “significant discomfort” to others.

Property owners or lease holders must not allow snow and ice to stand on sidewalks for more than two hours between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.

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