

# Family Forum

## Recovering alcoholic/drug addict learns to accept himself

By Cathy Cline, Editor

Editor's Note: This is the third and final article in the series focusing on the process of drug and alcohol rehabilitation for Native American Youth at Nanitch Sahallie; a Native American Youth Residential Treatment Program in Keizer, Ore.

The purpose of this series is to highlight the destruction which occurs when drugs and alcohol become an indispensable part of a Native American's life, to remind our readers of the thin line between casual use and dependency, and, finally, to share with you the personal battles which must be fought before one can turn his/her back on drugs or alcohol forever.

The first article in this series was published in the January issue of *Smoke Signals*. You were introduced to "Jay" and his long history with drugs and alcohol. After being surrounded by them his entire

life "Jay" sought counseling the day he woke up with bruises covering his arms from the needles he used the night before.

The second article in the series, published in the March issue of *Smoke Signals*, uncovered the struggle between the sober self and the old addict that must be overcome to be successful in rehabilitation.

In the last six months "Jay" went from wearing old torn Levi's and black T-shirts to silk shirts and slacks and even a tie.

He says he dresses nicer because he feels better about himself and also because he will be going home soon, and he would like to find a job.

"I have been spending a lot of time on a job search lately," he said. "I'm not exactly sure what I will be doing once I finally leave here for good, but at least I will look good when I pay my old traffic

tickets."

It was originally planned that "Jay" would be in Nanitch Sahallie until June, but due to his success throughout his rehabilitation process, his counselor feels he is ready to be out on his own.

"The first thing I will think about when I walk out of Nanitch Sahallie for good is that I don't ever want to have to come back," he said. "I've learned to accept myself as the recovering drug and alcoholic addict that I will always be and now I have to go on with my life."

"Jay" said he has learned more than how to be sober during his stay at Nanitch Sahallie; he has learned a lot about himself, life and the type of person he wants to become.

"I'm starting to actually be able to laugh at situations or myself, whereas, before I would have gotten mad or frustrated with myself or anyone around

me," he said. "Now I really try not to dwell on things."

Teasing is something "Jay" used to never put up with, but now he sees how fun it can be to relax around people and let them know that he is human too.

"I feel lucky because I have had some real positive influences on my life in the past few months," he said. "My counselor has shown me a lot of good qualities that I want to have like understanding and patience. He is a real neat guy."

Other positive influences in "Jay's" life are people who have enough willpower to stop drinking and doing drugs when the odds are against them.

"Jay" feels confident that he will have continued success with his rehabilitation once he leaves Nanitch Sahallie because of the positive influences and his own ability to be in control of his behavior.

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the season."

Even with all of the practicing, the boys still manage to get up early and go running.

The Leno family house is decorated with wrestling pictures, medals and trophies the boys have won and is sometimes a little hectic when one of them, or both, is trying to cut weight.

Shonn must weigh in at 123 pounds and Dustin 106 pounds for collegiate style wrestling; which is the style used in high school.

"It's hard to know what to feed them and what's going to keep their weight down," Liz Leno, the boys' mother said. "We pretty much plan our life around wrestling when they are deep into the season. Everybody has to work to-

gether."

And that is not easy, according to Liz, because the whole family eats what the boys eat, what they do depends on what the boys are doing, and Liz tries to make sure the boys get enough rest when they train harder than usual.

Reyn said will not eat ice cream or sweets in front of the boys if one of them is trying to cut weight, but, in the winter he sends them out on errands a lot.

"It takes a lot of discipline for the whole family," Reyn said. "That's why I feel like it is an accomplishment for everybody when the boys win a match. It's what we all work for."

So what does the family do for fun. You guessed it, they spend their vaca-

tion and extra weekends wrestling.

Reyn and Liz operated the Little Guy Wrestling Club in Willamina, Ore. when the boys first started to wrestle, more than 10 years ago. They learned then, that the summer meant travelling to wrestling tournaments and championships.

The whole family has always gone together when the boys have gone to a tournament, Liz said. "They have travelled across the nation for national championship tournaments in Freestyle and Greco wrestling."

Shonn, a member of the Junior Tribal Court, has travelled to Iowa, Idaho, Missouri, Montana and Washington to wrestle in tournaments.

With each style the boys wrestle, whether it is Collegiate, Freestyle, or Greco, they have to make a different weight.

The boys' coach from the Peninsula Wrestling Club in Portland, Roy Pitman, teaches them how to handle the stress of travelling, managing a diet, and anything else that comes up, as well as how to wrestle.

"Roy is wonderful," Liz said. "He teaches them about life, about themselves and most importantly, that there is more to life than what goes on on the mat. Because you make decisions in wrestling that can affect the rest of your life."

The entire Leno family looks to Roy Pitman when the stress of wrestling is overwhelming.

"His philosophy is that it is just another tournament, or just another match; there is so much ahead of them that we can't put everything into it," Reyn said.

"He has made a great impression on all of us. He is a counselor to any one of

burned out on wrestling," Liz said. "He keeps us going."

The boys are planning for college and are both interested in the Olympics.

"The hard work isn't over, but now we can sit back and watch it happen," Reyn said.

Angie Leno, a student at Portland State University, said, "I've watched them wrestle since they were four years old and a lot of hard work paid off when they won the state championship."



Brent and Vickie Merrill were blessed with Erika Kai Merrill born on Nov. 25, 1991. Erika joins her brother Aaron and sister Ashlee; Uncle Don Grishaber, Grandmother Donna Stronach, and Great Grandparents Freemond Bean and LaVerne Hosford.

CONGRATULATIONS!!