

Tribal member opens addiction recovery center

Christopher Dickie fighting substance abuse in Arkansas

By Danielle Frost
Smoke Signals staff writer

Grand Ronde Tribal member Christopher Dickie moved from Oregon to Arkansas to escape troubles caused by alcohol addiction and to restore his life.

Today, the 36-year-old is 11 years sober and opened Natural State Recovery Centers in Little Rock, Ark., in June. It includes a three-step system – unique to the area – to treat substance abuse ranging from opioids to alcohol.

“For me, getting sober was a lot of slow steps over time,” Dickie says. “I tried for six years, but there was a lot of hard-headedness and I wasn’t willing to take suggestions all of the way yet.”

When Dickie first sought help, he utilized the Tribe’s Behavioral Health program.

“I have a lot of gratitude for that program,” he says. “It got me started in the right direction. I made lots of progress, but I wasn’t ready yet to take those suggestions all of the way.”

However, the road to recovery is seldom straight and narrow, and Dickie experienced all of the bumps and detours to get there.

“When I moved to Arkansas, I was

finally ready to change,” he says.

Today, he is married to wife Tara and they have a 6-year-old daughter, Adelynn.

Armed with a GED he earned utilizing the Tribe’s educational assistance programs, Dickie enrolled in the University of Arkansas Community College and earned a two-year degree. He went on to Lyon College and received a bachelor’s degree and holds a master’s from Arkansas Tech University. He is currently working on his doctorate.

But of all of those degrees, the first one means the most to Dickie.

“It is the most important because it is the one I didn’t think I could get,” he says. “I had a .75 GPA in high school and was voted most likely to end up on ‘Cops.’ In college I was voted to be student government president.”

With a background in education, Dickie was working with several high-risk adults and youth, but there was a part of him that was not completely fulfilled. Ultimately, three major factors led him to open his own recovery center.

“My own experience going to an inpatient treatment center and then straight to my mom’s house



Christopher Dickie

was a disaster,” Dickie says. “The second piece was I started serving on a recovery foundation board. People who needed help weren’t getting it because there weren’t any locally based options. I started looking at what I could do to fill the gaps.”

The tipping point came when a female colleague’s son was battling heroin addiction.

“It just completely blindsided their family,” Dickie says. “I thought she was someone who had access to a lot of resources and there wasn’t a lot of help for her to navigate getting access to the kind of treatment he needed.”

One day, Dickie woke up and all of his motivation had shifted from becoming president of a college to opening his own treatment center.

“There are a lot of state-funded programs that work with corrections and the homeless, but nothing that works with middle-class people facing addictions,” he says.

So, Dickie based the structure of Natural State Recovery Centers on different models he saw across the country, as well as his personal experiences.

Treatment is a three-tiered process that spans 90 days and is designed to help keep the person on a recovery track. Both inpatient and outpatient options are available. These are clinical treatment, sober living and life skills training.

Clinical treatment includes a partial hospitalization program and an intensive outpatient program. For those choosing the sober living option, it includes collaboration with a 12-step program and round-the-clock access to staff. The life skills training program includes career development, college exploration, financial literacy and community engagement.

“All three aspects working togeth-

er really make an impact,” Dickie says. “It sets us apart and fills a gap within the recovery process.”

Dickie says he is hoping to help Indian Country with recovery services when he opens a new facility in northern Arkansas near the Oklahoma border.

“We want to help the Tribal nation as a whole,” he says. “Right now treatment is so lacking. A lot of people have to go out of state to get any type of services.”

The name of Dickie’s recovery center has a double meaning. “The Natural State” is the slogan for Arkansas and also has significance in step two of the 12-step program, which is believing that a power greater than yourself can help restore you to a natural condition.

“We want to inspire people through hope to get them back on the right track,” Dickie says. “We are seeking to serve two populations. We are exposing people to a different type of lifestyle than they had before. ... We also deal with a lot of professionals too, and they are not downgrading their lifestyle to come here.”

Dickie’s Tribal heritage comes from his mother, Andrea LaChance Singleton.

He says he owes a “debt of gratitude” to the Tribal programs and people that helped him thrive as an adult.

“I wouldn’t be where I am today,” he says. “These programs changed my whole life ... and I got started with my journey in Grand Ronde. They took a chance on me even though I was arrested 14 times in one year and had 25 different jobs. I don’t know what to do to say ‘Thank you’ except to pass it on and help others.”

For more information about Natural State Recovery Centers, visit www.naturalstatercovery.com. ■

Name changes in court

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