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Finally freed from the insidious tentacles of addiction, four new Adult Drug Court graduates look to future

By Dean Shalhoup - Senior Staff Writer | Mar 19, 2022



Nashua Adult Drug Court graduate Kim Tello, seated, listens to fellow graduate Corey Lake address those in attendance at Thursday's ADC graduation.

NASHUA – Corey Lake is quite sure that had he not taken the opportunity to “plead into” Nashua Adult Drug Court nearly three years ago, “*I wouldn’t be the man I am today.*”

As a matter of fact, without the tools provided him by the ADC team from the outset, Lake said it’s quite possible he wouldn’t even be alive today.

Kim Tello recalls being arrested a few years ago, and her court-appointed lawyer coming to see her at Valley Street jail.

Adult Drug Court was mentioned, but Tello wanted no part of it.

“I knew Drug Court was so hard ... I told my lawyer ‘no drug court, no probation, just send me to prison,’” Tello said Thursday, addressing a courtroom full of people who turned out for a Drug Court graduation ceremony that honored the programs four most recent graduates.



Corey Lake, one of four Adult Drug Court graduates honored on Thursday, addresses Drug Court team members, fellow participants and other guests at the ceremony.

Tello turned toward the jury box, where members of the Adult Drug Court team sat. It's because of them and the Superior Court judge who heads the ADC program, Tello said, that she is where she is today.

In particular, Tello directed her gratitude toward that Superior Court judge – Jacalyn Colburn. *“It’s because of Judge Colburn that I’m standing here today and not sitting in federal prison,”* Tello said.

The other two ADC graduates, Kyle Hamel and Lewis Clark, were unable to attend Thursday’s ceremony. Colburn said Hamel was airborne at the time, heading for Nevada to take part in a tournament hosted by the National Sober Softball Association, while Clark was having difficulty with child-care arrangements.

Colburn pointed out that since each of the four graduates entered Drug Court in the past two to three years, none of them have been arrested.

Along the way to earning their coins and graduation certificates, they’ve taken part in a wide variety of programs ranging from in-patient and out-patient programs to individual therapy sessions, courses like Thinking for a Change, life-skills groups and community service.



Kim Tello, one of four Nashua Adult Drug Court participants who graduated from the program Thursday, addresses those who attended the event.

In addition, each of them has completed 400 hours of treatment time and attended all their weekly public sessions held in Colburn’s courtroom.

Lake, meanwhile, described his ADC experience as nearly three years of “*many highs and lows,*” during which he was able land a good job and accumulate, to date, 621 straight days of sobriety, and at other times had “*a few slips here and there,*” among them a period of time he had to live in his car.

“*Drug Court is by far one of the greatest, if not the greatest, challenge of my life,*” Lake continued. But the “*positive mindset and perseverance*” that the program instilled in him enabled him to “*pull myself up and give myself another opportunity to fight my addiction head-on.*”

Amanda Henderson, an attorney with the Nashua office of New Hampshire Public Defender and a member for several years of the Drug Court team, recalled the day she met Lake for the first time.

Assigned that day to represent defendants scheduled for arraignment, Henderson said the minute she saw Lake in his holding cell, *“it was very obvious that he was in a bad place ... he was sick, he needed help,”* she said, noting also that she eventually learned that Lake’s partner at the time had given birth to their child just nine days before the arrest that landed him in court.

“He was really struggling, but it was also clear he had a genuine desire” to enter treatment, Henderson said.

Looking back, Lake said, Drug Court helped him *“become the change I wanted and desperately needed. If all goes to plan, I’ll wake up old and content, with full life to reflect upon ... and with my children and grandchildren knowing I support them.”*

The grads, visitors and others present – including a dozen or so current Drug Court participants – also got the chance to hear a most articulate guest speaker named Kristen, a woman in her 30s who graduated from Drug Court in 2018.

“I was addicted to everything,” Kristen, who preferred her surname be withheld, began. “Drugs, socializing, money, hotels, wild adventures ... it was all just a good time.

“Realistically, though, I was falling into a soul-sucking abyss, playing a sick form of Russian roulette” with a syringe of heroin,” Kristen said, her eloquence and illustrative words holding her audience spellbound.

A full account of Kristen’s story will be featured in the March 27 edition of The Sunday Telegraph.

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