



SUNDRE Round Up

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Drug awareness up to parents, says former addict

Dan Singleton, Sundre Round Up

Parents who want to save their children from becoming victims of drug addiction need to get involved and stay involved in the prevention process, according to Tom Barthel, a former drug addict and drug dealer.

Barthel will be speaking to parents and others at the West County Centre on January 26. The information lecture and meeting is being sponsored by Greenwood Neighborhood Place.

"I've been succeeding in getting kids off drugs by going through their parents," said Barthel. "I don't mean to sound opinionated, but a lot of what is being done simply isn't working. It is kind of in the box and where I'm coming from is outside the box and with the most amount of credibility a person can have in talking about this particular issue."

Barthel, who says he was formerly addicted to cocaine and ecstasy, says if anything there are more drugs and drug trafficking in West Central Alberta than ever before.

And the only way to keep kids safe from the scourge of addiction is for parents to take proactive steps, he said.

His so-called alternative strategies system focuses on the parents and what they should be doing, he said.

"All the parents focus on the kids and on the drugs," he said. "The first thing I teach them is that none of that even matters; that's not the problem and that's not what leads to addictions. The problem doesn't start with the kids; the parents are the key to causing a difference in their kids."

"People are often frustrated and they are scared. They've had so many years of

hearing the same story over and over again and seeing that it is not working."

Barthel says he teaches parents "how to make changes in themselves and cause a reaction in their kids that doesn't make them vulnerable to addictions anymore and it's based on my experience as a recovered drug abuser and drug dealer right here in Central Alberta."

On his website (www.streetsmartcounselling.com) Barthel offers the following services for parents:

- Teach parents how to "facilitate a recovery" in their struggling child (adult or young).
- Give parents a road map to the future of their experience so they can navigate themselves, and always know what to do next.
- Show parents how to navigate the mental health and legal system so that efforts aren't wasted and it works for them.
- Show parents what kind of help works, what doesn't, and why- so that parents can reclaim their own lives.
- Explain the importance of timing so that parents know when to take action, and when not to take action.
- Bring experience from several different types of recoveries and belief systems.
- Teach families how to structure their home to benefit a troubled loved one.
- Convey all information in street-smart terminology.
- Provide mentorship from an "experienced" point of view to troubled kids (adult or young) so they can manage their problems with experience.
- Give referrals to competent practitioners and services in the mental health industry.
- Interpret and explain alternative and holistic solutions to problems of the mind.

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