

Erdal's Story: a Drug Court Graduate Vignette

April 13, 2009

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At 36 years old, Erdal was tired, broken and headed for prison. It was just another in a series of drug charges that would lead him back to jail and the revolving door of incarceration and drug use. Erdal had been to rehabs before...they didn't work. When his attorney told him about drug court he thought that maybe this would be the program for him because it was a year long. Maybe this one would work! Erdal lied to the Probation Officer about where he intended to live when they released him from jail. Really...he was homeless and had no where to go. Just before his arrest around the Thanksgiving holiday, he was living in elevators and on roof tops and eating out of dumpsters. Erdal will tell you that he would pray to God that he would choke on the food and die because he did not want to live another day on drugs.

Having no residence, no bed, and no alarm clock put Erdal at a disadvantage when he first entered drug court. He was so afraid that he would miss reporting to the treatment center or be late that he slept in the dumpster enclosure in the alley behind the drug court program.

Eventually, Erdal found that attending the program and staying drug free had its advantages. He found work and started getting a regular paycheck. He got all his dental work done and put on weight. His self-esteem soared. Ironically, on Thanksgiving, one year after his admission to drug court, Erdal was invited by recovering friends to join them at the Ritz-Carlton for Thanksgiving dinner. What a change from eating garbage out of a dumpster only one year earlier!

By the time Erdal was ready to graduate, he had purchased his own home and vehicle. He was proud to pay for an airline ticket to fly his father in from Florida for this graduation and was enrolled in college for classes in drug and alcohol counseling.

Although Erdal has had a series of ups and downs in his recovery, he just celebrated 6 years of sobriety, has a wonderful, solid relationship with a recovering

woman and has reunited with his 18 year old son. Erdal will tell you he is a miracle and that it was possible only through the help he got in drug court.