

CD System Northwest helps individuals, families make healthy lifestyle changes

AMY WADE WATCHED her life fall apart like a jigsaw puzzle thrown to the floor.

In college she had a 4.0 grade point average in accounting, with only one semester of classes left before graduation. She saved enough money to buy a car and a three-bedroom house. Then drugs took over.

"I dropped out of school. I lost my house. I moved everything I had into a storage shed. I lost my car. I made a fake bank deposit to get another one. My son was 5 at the time and he stayed with friends at night

life. The words she uses today are far more positive.

"I have huge amounts of faith, courage and hope," she says. "For the first time in my life I have self-respect."

Addiction to alcohol and drugs is a "non-discriminating illness," according to Will Rice, the director of CD System Northwest. He says, "It grips the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich." Rice knows about addiction firsthand. He has been in recovery for 20 years and has been treating addicts since 1992.

more than recovery. A range of treatment options help individuals and their families make healthy lifestyle changes. The completion rate for State of Washington addiction programs is about 40 percent, while the CCS average is higher at 50 percent.

Rice compares the work to being a farmer. "First you have to pull some weeds and break up the hardness of the soil. Next you plant some seeds and give them water, sunshine and a suitable environment for growth," he says, "and then you turn it over to God."

Amy Wade is taking college classes again and hopes to regain custody of her son. She thinks of her life as being like a plant.

"It starts small and you don't really see the growth, but then you look over one day and it's big and strong," she says. "It's going to bloom. I just know it."

– Linda Thomas

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while I slept in the car," she recalls. "I did a lot of sad and disgusting things for drugs."

Wade also lost custody of her son and went to jail because of her methamphetamine addiction.

She is one of the almost 4,000 people helped in the last year by Catholic Community Services' chemical dependency programs in Whatcom and Snohomish counties. Recovery Centers – part of Chemical Dependency System Northwest – treat and counsel youth, adults and families.

Wade, now 32, has been free of drugs and alcohol since May 7, 2004. She has a 2-year-old daughter, and recently completed a parenting class at the Recovery Center in Bellingham. In the past, she used words like "fear, shame and guilt" to describe her

Some of the strategies for breaking addictions and giving people tools for leading better lives are unique to the CCS Recovery Centers. Counselors realize that a classic 12-step approach doesn't work for everyone. Those programs are based on the belief that a person has lost power and ability to function in his or her life because of the addiction. The goal with 12-steps is to help the person recover what they lost because of drugs or alcohol.

"A lot of populations – women, minorities, and children – never had power in the first place," Rice says. "When you talk to them about recovery, they look at you and say, 'What am I supposed to recover? I can't go back to a time when life was manageable for me because it never was.'"

CCS programs emphasize "discovery"



Will Rice is the director of CD System Northwest.