

TAYLOR YANTZ WELLS – AARC GRADUATE #448 – 2010

EXECUTIVE PEER SUPPORT WORKER AT THE ALBERTA ADOLESCENT RECOVERY CENTRE



As a young boy, I had very many struggles, I had always felt like I didn't fit in and that I had to attempt to impress those around me any way that I could. Once I found drugs and alcohol, I had felt like this was the answer to all my problems. In a short period of time, I had lost all control in 2010 when I entered the AARC program and finally found the acceptance I had always been looking for. After a year I began to take everything back and once again found myself in the grips of addiction. I battled with this on and off for 7 years, I struggled with my mental health as well as finding lasting recovery.

In 2017 I finally decided enough was enough and that it was time to make a change. While going through recovery I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, anxiety, and ADHD. The first year with those diagnoses made things difficult as I went through different medications to manage my symptoms. I still stuck to the program and ensure that I continued the path of recovery and despite this I went against all odds and am now experiencing a successful life sober. **In May 2023 I celebrated 6 years sober** as well as the birth of my second daughter, I also **became a certified addictions counselor** and experience a life of freedom that at one time, I never imagined was possible. Today I am grateful for the ups and downs and all the gifts that recovery and life have to offer!

This photo is one of my proudest moments with both my girls.



TAYLA NORRIS – AARC GRADUATE #647 – 2022

PEER SUPPORT WORKER AT THE ALBERTA ADOLESCENT RECOVERY CENTRE



'My life before treatment consisted solely of drugs, alcohol, multiple Pchad visits, skipped classes, and fights with my family. **My addiction was slowly killing me** while I fully believed it was the solution to all my problems. After 5 years of living this way I didn't recognize myself anymore, I had this heart wrenching feeling of loneliness, I felt like I was constantly running away from myself and began to think the only way to stop this was suicide.

In the summer of 2021 my parents brought me to AARC. Although I was filled with fear and didn't want to let go of my old life I pushed through many obstacles and made my way through the steps with the help of my group and the staff. I started to find joy in the simple things and **a new meaning to life that wasn't drugs and alcohol**. I felt as if I was finally home and I could stop running. Graduating from AARC was filled with a bunch of emotions. Luckily I'll always have the community I found while in AARC to support me through anything. I have a new view on my life and motivation to reach the goals I set. My days are filled with a sense of peace and serenity I had no idea existed. **AARC truly saved my life** and I am forever grateful..



Tayla graduates High School



Tayla sharing her story to raise awareness at Lord Beaverbrook High School



Tayla now works as at AARC as a Peer Support Worker

LIANNE PERICH – AARC GRADUATE MOM – 2019



FOREVER GRATEFUL

My son was an energetic, curious, little boy who had happiness shining all over his face. He was fun loving. He had a passion for life, a bright shining zest for what interested him.

In my son's using, he lost that light, that curiosity, that determination, that happiness. It was gradual at first, then in the latter part of high school, he missed many classes, was struggling. We went to parent teacher conferences. I could not figure out why he was having trouble. My son would fall farther behind. I was becoming more afraid. I tried to find counselors, psychologists, doctors that would help him, my boy who seemed so lost, whom I could not help. They tried their best to reach him, but my son knew what to say. His friends changed around this time too. I felt so alone, I could not figure this problem out. **I could not help my sweet boy.**

From the bottom of my guts I asked for a way out. I went online and I found the AARC website. I have never forgotten that call. I felt just a little hope, that somebody out there knew a way out of this craziness. **The AARC parents took my broken son to their homes and loved him when I couldn't.**

I had time now, I didn't have to chase after my son. I wanted something better for myself. The support and guidance, the sharing of stories, is a gift I treasure. **I am grateful.**

When my son returned home, I was nervous, we made mistakes, but this time, AARC had our backs. But I was also seeing a healthy son, and we were learning to be healthy together. Now, I find it easy to ask for help from the AARC community around me. **I don't have to do this on my own.** I have a big support system and am so thankful. AARC has not only shown my son a healthy way to live but has shown me as well.



HOPE IN HUMAN FORM

As a kid, I never really felt like I fit in anywhere and it led to a lot of obstacles early on in my life. At the age of 10 I was getting diagnosed with disorders left, right and centre which made me feel like even more of an outcast from society. I never thought I was good enough and always felt like I had to put a mask on to fit in. By the age of 11 I had been experimenting a bit with alcohol and weed. The week I turned 12 the “experimenting” had turned in to full blown daily abuse of substances. At first this felt great, I had finally found my escape and felt as though I didn’t have a worry in the world while under the influence. Very quickly though, things came crashing down extremely fast and my life was crumbling all around me, preventing me from any thought that there was any light at the end of the tunnel. During my active addiction I was always very quick to throw all the blame on my mental health and deny that drugs or alcohol had any part to play in the destruction of my life. Once the overdoses started, that thought process would slowly start to change but I never wanted to admit that I had a problem, that too would change once I had my final two overdoses which ended up in flatlines and comas.

At 17, my family entered treatment at AARC. Going through the program I was able to identify and work around the real biggest issue in my life. Addiction. Going through the program not only gave me the chance to work on my problems with addiction, but also worked a lot on myself internally and began to work on the underlying issues of how I was living when I had no substances to turn to. Since then, I have been able to fix a lot of the damage I have caused in my past and rebuild/make new relationships with old or new people in my life. On Saturday November 18th, 2023, I **celebrated my 20th birthday** (photo) which just a few years ago did not seem achievable. I now have my relationship with my family back along with new friendships I have made along the way. I am so grateful that everything AARC, recovery and sobriety have shown me since making that choice to turn my life around. It feels great to finally say I am okay with being myself and that others like me for the person I am. I have made so many amazing memories in recovery and it is without a doubt that it has been the best thing to ever happen to me. I am forever grateful to Dr. Vause and the amazing team at AARC for their support and for finding a solution to adolescent addiction.

