

Chemical Dependency Ministries: Summer School inspires new career purpose

By Aloise McCullough

Growing up, Jonathan Triplett often felt “pain, embarrassment, and negative feelings” toward his alcoholic mother, he said. Their strained relationship continues today. Alcohol abuse was something he himself overcame during college.

Now he helps other people conquer addiction.

In 2008, he signed up for alcohol awareness training through the Summer School on Chemical Dependency, presented by the United Methodist Chemical Dependency Ministries of Oklahoma Conference.

In the two-week program, clergy and laity are taught “the facts about addiction, the effects of addiction on the individual and family members and faith communities, and the spiritual roots of addiction, through the 12-step program,” according to Annette Harper, director of Chemical Dependency Ministries.

Triplett has played basketball professionally, in Turkey, Switzerland, France, Taiwan, China, and Argentina. Then he changed careers; he now works at Oklahoma City University, where he is director of Intramural Sports and Recreation.

In 2008 the university established an alcohol awareness program. As a leader, Triplett wanted more knowledge about the topic. So he signed up for the Summer School. The program stirred a calling on his life, which he spoke about at the 2009 Oklahoma Annual Conference.

In the Summer School, Triplett heard one of the 21 presenters talk about adult children of alcoholics.

“How does this guy know all this stuff?” he pondered. “He said some things in that session that caused me to

start to tear up—things that have happened to me in my family, things I had been through from having someone in my family that has dealt with alcohol and drugs.”

He left the classroom to regroup. The former pro athlete, 6 feet 6 inches tall, has traveled the world. But the sudden emotion made him uncomfortable in public. After he returned and spoke with the presenter, he knew what he had to do.

“I decided I wanted to be a licensed alcohol and drug counselor. I wanted to have as much training as possible from the Chemical Dependency Summer School,” Triplett said. The credits he earned there count toward a master’s degree in counseling.

Now he teaches in alcohol education programs commonly known as “DUI schools,” and he especially reaches out to educate even younger people. In July, he directed the OCU *First Class Individuals Life Skills/Basketball Camp*. Campers were in grades four through 12. Resources from Chemical Dependency Ministries were used.

The risk of becoming alcohol-dependent is greater for a person who starts drinking at age 14 in comparison to age 21,

according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Triplett said children and young adults will make better decisions about alcohol if they are alerted to its dangers. He senses “awesome” potential in what he has learned to prevent others from encountering what he did as the child of an alcoholic.

“It makes me believe that I am serving the Higher Power in the way I am supposed to be serving Him,” Triplett said. “I feel I should be doing this.” ✦



Jonathan Triplett presents a trophy to a young camper in the OCU LifeSkills/Basketball program.

Photo by Ricky McCulliffe Photography