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‘Heroin destroyed my life and Vivitrol saved my life’

Glouster woman given new lease on life through prosecutor’s office program

ATHENS, Ohio – Cary Losey awoke groggy with pain in her face. Her head drowned in confusion from the drugs in her system. As her vision began to clear, the face of her eldest son started to come into focus; as did his hand coming toward her face.

This was the second time she had overdosed. Friends brought her back the first time but this time it was her son — panicking and smacking her in the face — that revived her.

The realization of what her life was with drugs came crashing down on Losey and she knew she had to get into recovery. Baby steps towards that goal came with giant leaps backward. Heroin had a grip and fought to keep it.

In June of 2015, the Athens County Prosecutor’s Office busted a drug ring in Losey’s hometown of Glouster. Losey was one of 14 arrested and was charged with trafficking in heroin and engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity — a crime that carried the potential of 11 years in prison.

“I was lying, cheating, stealing ... hiding things from my husband. (Addiction) destroyed my marriage. I let my two boys down and I felt that I was an embarrassment to them,” Losey said. “It turned my world upside down. Everything I had was gone.”

Losey misused drugs for more than a decade. She almost died twice in that time. She’d alienated everyone around her who wasn’t also misusing drugs and now she was facing a lengthy prison sentence for her actions. On top of everything, she was suffering violent withdrawal symptoms while in jail awaiting adjudication of her case.

One shot of Vivitrol made the difference between yet another failed sobriety attempt and a real chance at sustained recovery.

“That first shot killed everything. It killed the cravings and everything. It took away the craving, the sickness, all that stuff that comes with coming down off drugs. It took all that away,” Losey said. “It was easier to cope with and get my head clear rather than worry about waking up with sickness or going to meetings but only being able to think about getting more dope. With Vivitrol, that doesn’t even cross your mind. It’s amazing.”

The Athens County Prosecutor’s Office’s Vivitrol program was started in 2015 when Prosecutor Keller Blackburn wanted a way to treat people suffering from drug misuse. The initiative is part of the office’s Community Justice programs, which have helped Athens County lower its five-year unintentional drug overdose rate to one of the lowest in Ohio. In its five years, hundreds have graduated the Vivitrol program and gone on to better their lives.

Losey was one of the first to take advantage of the program.

“I knew I wanted to be clean but it’s very hard to do that and keep that state of mind when you’re sick (from withdrawal) and you can find heroin right down the street to take that away. That is the demon you fight with constantly,” Losey said. “Once you get past that sickness though, it’s easier when you have the mindset of wanting to get clean.”

“Heroin destroyed my life and Vivitrol saved my life,” she added.

Losey’s sons were 17 and 21 years old when she first started Vivitrol. Reestablishing a close relationship with them played a large part in Losey’s motivation to make recovery a success.

“That took it to the next level. Losing your job, even your husband is bad enough but losing your kid ... I had to straighten up,” she said. “I had to do it for myself but also my boys. Getting sober was for the boys. Staying sober was for me.”

Losey applauds every aspect of the Vivitrol program. She said the program’s counseling is as important for the mental side of recovery as Vivitrol is to the physical. Counseling also inspired her to take a few courses on her own to educate herself on the brain and how it can be affected.

Losey graduated from the Vivitrol program after a year. Although she was worried about being on her own, she said the feeling was “amazing” and was assured that officials within the prosecutor’s office would continue to support her as she needed. Losey said she considers Reuben Kittle, an investigator and director of the program, and Jay Barrett, chief investigator for the prosecutor’s office, close friends now.

“I live on the straight and narrow now. I don’t make millions of dollars but I’m content with how I live my life today,” Losey said. “I’m not embarrassed about my past. That past has made me who I am today and I’m a better person now than I’ve ever been.”

Now at age 44, Losey’s remains sober in recovery and her relationship with her sons is fully repaired. They speak daily and she gets to enjoy the love of her three grandchildren.

“My sons are very proud of me. They tell me all the time and they make sure they tell me. That makes it all worthwhile,” she said.

Losey credits the Vivitrol program and the Athens County Prosecutor’s Office personnel not only for providing an alternative to prison but for providing a new life path.

During those 10 years when addiction controlled her life, Losey did not recognize herself in the mirror. The reflection now is one Losey is happy to view.

“I actually see myself again. I understand why my husband and my kids couldn’t recognize me. Now, I see someone that is very happy and content with their decisions. I’m very proud of myself,” Losey said. “I’m extremely grateful for everyone in the prosecutor’s office. Keep up the good work because there are more out there like me that just require a little help.”

