

DHS
MAKING
AN
IMPACT

One in every 100 American adults is in prison today, more than half of them for crimes involving drug or alcohol use. Each one costs \$23,876 per year—as much as tuition at many colleges. What’s more, the system doesn’t work: most addicts relapse after release, and two-thirds commit new crimes.

Drug courts, on the other hand, do work, and they work at less than 10 percent of the cost of incarceration. Based on 2010 data, Allegheny County Drug Court graduates recidivate at a rate of just 9 percent in their first year after incarceration.

But numbers are only part of the story.

For Jerome Maynor, the Allegheny County Drug Court opened the door to a new life, a life without handcuffs and prison bars, where he has become, in his own words, “a productive citizen instead of a menace to society.” He’s quick to say that it wasn’t easy—but he works around the clock now to help others find the strength to reject the street life and the crime fueled by addiction.

Jerome’s story is the real story of Drug Court and why it works. If you want to know more, visit the DHS website at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/drugcourt.aspx or call 412-350-7337.



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“
Drug Court
gave me my
life back.
”

—Jerome Maynor, Sr.

“Dollar Bill”

is Jerome Maynor’s nickname. He’s had it ever since he began a life of crime as a child by sneaking a dollar from the purses of his mother’s visiting friends. Even then, he knew that a petty theft would probably go unnoticed. It did—until his sister caught him in the act and “ratted him out.” (He’s since forgiven her.) Not long after, his older brother introduced him to higher stakes—drug dealing on the streets of Detroit. This time he paid dearly for his crimes: at 16, he was sent to Jackson (Michigan) State Prison, where he spent the next 13 years.

Paroled at 29, Mr. Maynor came to Pittsburgh, where he moved in and out of drug use and trafficking, spending more than half of the next 32 years behind bars. He did make good use of his time while incarcerated, spending hours in the prison library, where he read law books and wrote poetry. (His first poem, “Checkmate” won first prize and a cash award from Jet magazine, and a volume of his poetry is currently in press. Please see the reverse side for the full text of Checkmate.) His last relapse, in 2004, led to a referral to Allegheny County Drug Court and the road to a new life.

That road wasn’t easy: intensive inpatient drug rehabilitation, then a closely monitored transition back into the community with frequent testing and monthly court appearances to track his progress, attaining at least a general equivalency diploma and getting and keeping a job. A slip-up meant immediate intervention—a stern lecture, sometimes a brief return to jail and/or dismissal from the program. Mr. Maynor finally came to the realization that he could go on fighting, but this was a battle he’d never win.

“At last,” he recalls, “I was honest with myself. I knew if I picked up that spike again, I’d die, so I surrendered. God blessed me, and I never turned back. I’ve been clean now for more than seven years.”

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During the frequent court appearances during his recovery and parole, Mr. Maynor developed a high regard for Common Pleas Judge Lester G. Nauhaus, who ensured that Drug Court participants received the help they needed.

When Judge Nauhaus was criticized as being “soft on crime,” Mr. Maynor mobilized Drug Court graduates to rally at the Courthouse in support of his retention bid. He continues to chair a Drug Court alumni association, encouraging members to support and counsel current participants.

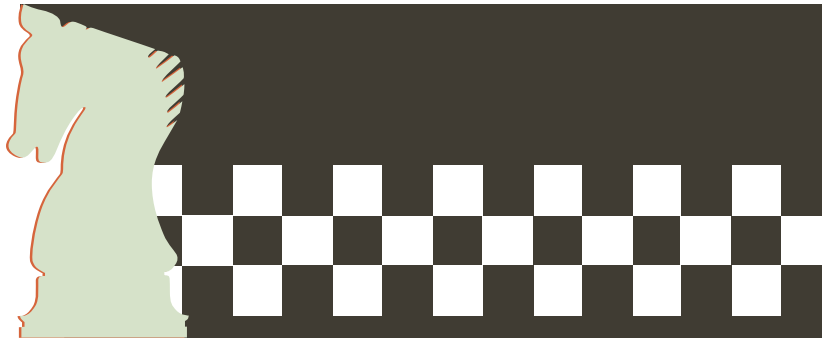
Today Mr. Maynor moves freely through the County Courthouse without handcuffs, and police officers and judges greet him warmly as “Dollar Bill.”

“It’s a good feeling,” he says, “not to run, not to dread the clank of handcuffs or jail doors, to be productive instead of a menace.”

And it’s an even better feeling to know that he’s helping others to turn their lives around as he did. As an outreach counselor, he works the streets and public housing communities that are at highest risk for drug trafficking and violence, and he has a list of success stories to relate.

No success story, however, is quite as impressive as his own. He revels in the new life he has found in recovery—and in his young granddaughter who is compensating for the relationship with his own children that was lost to years of addiction and incarceration.

“I’m having a ball without drugs or alcohol,” he says. “And I’m so grateful—to God and to Drug Court—for giving me back my life and the opportunity to help others regain theirs.



Checkmate

Living here in this prison,
a number instead of a name,
I’m just a pawn for a jury and judge
in the world’s only human chess game.

“Your move, Judge,” said the lawyer
Hired for me by the state.
The judge said, “Ten to twenty years.”
The jury shouted, “Checkmate!”

After serving ten years in this prison,
The parole board said it was time to see.
They said, “I’m sorry, son. It’s not your move.
Bring another year for me.”

Well, I finally made parole,
Set loose with not a penny to my name.
And now I’m back in this prison again.
Same jury. Same judge. Same game.

Jerome Maynor

September 9, 1967

Out of the Game

*From Jerome Maynor’s remarks to
Allegheny County Drug Court graduates:*

In biblical days, Pharaoh instructed the children of Israel to make bricks without straw. Today, the underclass is asked the same thing: get a decent job without an education, get off welfare, live legally after years in prison...the list goes on.

The children of Israel served an awesome God. They did it, and you can make bricks without straw, too. No one says it will be easy, but it can be done. Here are the ingredients:

*1/4 cup of consistency
2/3 cup of humbleness
1/4 cup of dedication
110% belief in God.*

Mix together to make the impossible possible.