

# SECOND CHANCES



CELEBRATING  
100 YEARS OF SUCCESS  
IN  
KENTUCKY'S  
JUVENILE COURTS



This publication was prepared by Northern Kentucky University.  
Equal Education and Employment Opportunities M/F/D.

CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER, INC.  
SEPTEMBER 2006

# Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the National Juvenile Defender Center, Inc., Florence Christian Church, the Scripps Howard Foundation, the Eastern Kentucky University Training Resource Center, Northern Kentucky University, and Toyota Manufacturing North America, Inc. for their financial contributions to this project. Without the financial support of these organizations and corporate sponsors, we could not bring this project to print.

We also wish to thank our writers John C.K. Fisher, Crystal Harden, Lisa Aug and Debra Vance for their work on developing these wonderful success stories, and Mike Farrell for his expertise in editing the publication. John Fisher, Crystal Harden and Debra Vance previously worked as reporters collectively for many years at the Kentucky Post, and frequently covered stories on children's issues for the Northern Kentucky community, and throughout the state. Mike Farrell formally served as Managing Editor of the Kentucky Post, and is now a Professor of Journalism at the University of Kentucky, and Director of the First Amendment Center there. Lisa Aug is an author and former reporter for the Niagara Falls Gazette and USA Today.

Special thanks also go to Carol Hiatt and Katherine Siereveld at the Children's Law Center, who leave no detail undone, and who worked endless hours coordinating the information for this publication, and putting the finishing touches on it.

Finally, we wish to thank each of our story participants for sharing what were painful and difficult times in their youth with us. We congratulate each of these individuals for overcoming these circumstances, and for the successes they now enjoy. We are confident that their stories will be an inspiration to youth who face similar challenges, as well as to judges, policy makers and others who must make difficult decisions about outcomes for children in the juvenile court.

We hope you enjoy reading these stories, and getting to know the individuals behind them, as we have. We also hope you will share the successes of these individuals with others whose lives can be touched by their stories.

Kim Brooks Tandy  
Executive Director  
Children's Law Center, Inc.  
104 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Covington, Kentucky 41011  
859-431-3313  
[www.childrenslawky.org](http://www.childrenslawky.org)

## Dedication

**This book is dedicated to Rachel Votruba, who has touched so many lives,  
and inspired so many souls, young and old.**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>FORWARD .....</b>	<b>5</b>
----------------------	----------

## **SUCCESS STORIES**

<b>Hasan Davis.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Gil Esparza .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Richard Lykins .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Dustin Murphy.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Paul Patton .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Art Ritchings .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Jennifer Shaffer (Vasseur) .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>R.G. Williams .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Jennifer Zaccheus.....</b>	<b>49</b>

**Poems and drawings throughout this book are by youth currently involved with the juvenile court system.**



# FORWARD

## Celebrating 100 Years of the Kentucky Juvenile Court System

This one hundredth anniversary of Kentucky's Juvenile Court system reminds us that, we, as a society, have been struggling for a long time to answer the question 'What kind of persons are children in the eyes of the law?' The early reformers sought to distinguish children from adults and protect them from the vagrancies of the adult criminal justice system. While the focus was placed on rehabilitation rather than adult style punishments, over time, the juvenile justice system has continued to have difficulty finding the right balance between punishment and treatment. Despite the due process protections established for children in the 1960's by the United States Supreme Court, we still anguish over the right ways to protect children's rights, intervene in their lives appropriately, and keep communities safe.

What keeps us going in this difficult work is that sometimes we succeed – a child succeeds – and we see that our actions have given a young person the opportunity to turn their life around. This publication closes the circle on several unfinished stories. These are the stories of young people who made mistakes, some very serious mistakes, but were given a second chance to make better choices. These stories are at the heart of Kentucky's juvenile justice system. They tell of childhood mistakes, youthful indiscretions, treatment and rehabilitation, resilience, and the support needed to make things right. The stories in these pages are shared between the young people themselves, their families, and the professionals and advocates in the juvenile justice system that looked past the crime to see the whole child, determined to find ways to help give a child a second chance.

The Kentucky Juvenile Court system has come a long way in one hundred years and we have much to celebrate. These stories are a testament to that. They also help us remember that all children have strengths and that if we seek out and build on those strengths we are most likely to set them on a path to success. These youth are much more than the mistakes they have made. They have the potential to become our future teachers, doctors and lawyers. They have the capacity to wage peace, promote justice and become productive citizens of which we can be proud.

These stories are inspiring. In the hustle and bustle of every day life, and the in the busy hallways of our juvenile courts, just stop for a moment and remember the power of these individuals and their stories. As partners in this work, we each play an important role in helping a child get a second chance. When they succeed we succeed.

Thank you for all you do on behalf of children in the justice system.

Patricia Puritz  
Executive Director  
National Juvenile Defender Center

**S**TAY IN SCHOOL

**E**XTRA EFFORT IN EVERYTHING I DO

**C**ONCENTRATE ON ONE DAY AT A TIME

**O**VERDOSE MY MIND WITH KNOWLEDGE

**N**EVER GIVE UP ON ANYTHING

**D**ESIRE TO DO WELL IN LIFE

**C**OOPERATE IN EVERYTHING THAT INVOLVES YOUTH  
GROUPS IF I HAVE A CHANCE

**H**ONEST ABOUT THINGS I DO WRONG

**A** POSITIVE ATTITUDE

**N**O NEGATIVITY IN MY LIFE

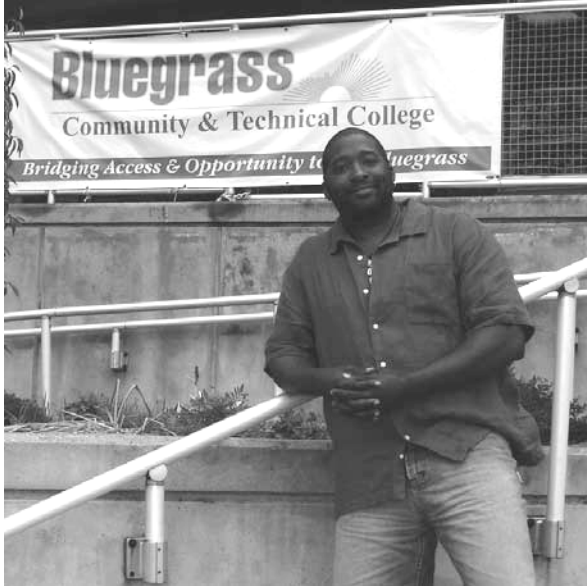
**C**ONSIDERATION TO OTHERS

**E**MPATHY TO OTHERS BY PUTTING MYSELF IN THEIR SHOES



# HASAN DAVIS

By Lisa Aug



They hear it every day. Not in so many words, but in what society teaches about who and what they are: poor, black, urban males from broken homes, living on welfare. Their only future is a bullet or prison.

Hasan Davis heard it, too. “I was never expected to move beyond that.”

But Davis overcame that expectation. Today, armed with a law degree, he’s a nationally honored speaker who teaches that there is a better way. He teaches that message to the adults who run the juvenile justice system and to the kids who are at risk of becoming part of it.

Davis was arrested in a suburb of Atlanta at age 11.

“Me and the boys I ran with had been wild for a while,” he said. “I had started down a destructive and anti-social path.”

At the police station, waiting for their mothers to pick them up, Davis and his friends were confronted by a long-time adversary: a cop who was the brother of an apartment complex manager who used his brother as security to keep the boys away.

---

## HASAN DAVIS

**Age:** 39

**Occupation:** Founder and president of Empowerment Solutions, Chair of the Kentucky Juvenile Justice Advisory Board since 1999, and Vice-Chair of the federal Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee since 2004. He is Past Vice-President and a founding board member of the Boys and Girls Club of Madison County. In 2001 Hasan was selected as a Rockefeller Foundation Next Generation Leadership (NGL) Fellow. In 2002 he was hired as Consulting Co-Manager of the Next Generation Leadership Program.

**Education:** Bachelor’s Degree in Oral Communication from Berea College and J.D. from the University of Kentucky

**Delinquency History:** Arrested and placed on probation

---

“He was a blatant racist,” Davis said. “We built up this righteous indignation about that.”

But there he was, staring belligerently at the boys. “We had a lot of bravado while we were held at station. But then this guy said the most chilling thing. ‘You’re lucky I didn’t get the call (to arrest you); you all wouldn’t have made it here.’ It was a “whoa” moment for me.”

Yet when his mother came to pick him up, Davis was still ready for a fight, to justify himself to her.

“She said nothing. Then, ‘Hasan, if you could just see what I see when I look at you, then you’d understand what you could be.’

“That completely defused and confused me. That sat with me.”

The judge read Davis the riot act but put him on probation, citing the presence in court of his mother and his stepfather at home.

“I realize what a difference it is that I had two parents willing to give me advice and support no matter what. That’s why the judge was lenient – I had two parents.”

Davis and his family moved to the suburbs. The next year, the family lost everything in an apartment fire and moved back to Atlanta to start over. There his mother enrolled Davis, who was having academic trouble because of dyslexia and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder in an alternative school.

“I’m always saying my mother has super powers,” Davis said smiling. “She can see far enough into the future to do something about it. She’s always one step ahead of the world.”

The alternative school provided work-study programs that gave students extensive responsibility. Davis started there in the eighth grade as a boarding student.

“We had rednecks, ghetto boys, even rich nerds,” he remembered. Although he struggled academically, the teachers made sure every student had a chance to feel successful. One teacher he remembered as Lorraine saw Davis’ skill with numbers and devoted one day each week to his forte. “Math day, I was the brightest child in the room,” he said. “That made a big impact.”

But not enough of an impact to counter the “me against the world” attitude he’d learned so young. As a boarding student, part of student government and a natural leader, he clashed often with the principal, who had less respect from the students than Davis did.

“For five years he and I had been vying for control of the school.” The principal flunked Davis during his senior year in one class required for graduation.

“The day I was expelled, I was so angry and hurt and betrayed,” Davis said. “I banged on the principal’s door with the intent of hurting him, but he was not home.” Eventually, Davis calmed down and packed up.

With his best friend Derrick, who had also been expelled, Davis got his general equivalency diploma, passing in the 98th percentile. But the lesson he learned from getting expelled was more valuable than a diploma.

“He (the principal) became my necessary evil,” Davis said. “They are against you and force you to improve your game and be better than the thing in his cross hairs. He was saying I could never be as great as I thought I could. I set myself to proving him wrong.”

That was 1985. He’s been proving *them* wrong ever since.

“I heard about a little school in Kentucky where if you are poor and nobody will give you a chance, they might.”

When he called the administration at Berea College, they told him they had one space left, but he was competing against a guy from Virginia with a great record.

“I knew I didn’t have a chance,” Davis said. “But I called them back anyway. They said, ‘OK, you got it’.”

The family’s old Gremlin broke down in Tennessee on the way from Atlanta to Berea, so Davis arrived too late to get a dorm room and ended up sleeping on a couch in the student center lounge for a few nights.

“My mother gave me the last \$20 in her purse,” he said. “She said, ‘OK, Hasan, this is where you prove everybody right or everybody wrong. It’s up to you.’”

“My mother for some odd reason had this incredible sense of herself and her children and spent a lot of time countering the message that the rest of the world gave us – that was our saving grace. She saw what the rest of the world was unable to see.”

Berea was Davis’ fresh start. No one in Kentucky knew him or anything about the fights he and his brothers got into with other people. “Sometimes if you want to be *somebody* else, you have to be *somewhere* else.”

But that wasn’t enough. “It was hard to get used to the new cues,” Davis said. At one point he almost got into a fight with the entire basketball team. “They looked like a gang to me,” he said. “I challenged the whole group to a fight. They looked at me like I was an alien.”

A classmate tossed off a casual, “I’ll kill you,” and before he knew it Davis’ hands were around his neck. Davis chased a truck full of guys who called him a racial epithet and almost caught them.

“Berea was so different, but the experience of low expectations was the same.”

Davis was expelled that first year on academic grounds and returned home to brothers who challenged him to prove he hadn't lost his street skills. Davis had learned to switch hats when he went home, from the student to the brother, but this time was different. “I didn't just switch my hat this time – I had changed.”

And it almost got him killed.

A confrontation between a group of six guys and Davis, his stepbrother Shawn and best friend Derrick in a parking lot one night led to guns being drawn.

“Shawn reaches for the Uzi behind the seat,” Davis said. “I was 19 years old, the oldest. Now I was being tested. I'm pushing the seat back, no, Shawn, no, trying to get Derrick to drive. The other guy goes to his car for his weapon. I'm thinking about mother and Lorraine giving me power and the Berea administration giving me a shot – all these people making me believe. I'm not wanting to go away in film at 11.

“I can't let my mother come down to the morgue and claim her boys. But I thought, you die with your brothers or you let go of the situation. So I let up and Shawn pulled the machine gun out and chambered the first round. Everybody dives for cover and the guy is yelling please don't kill me. You gotta do something, so I grabbed the barrel of the machine gun and made him take his finger off the trigger.”

The next day he packed up and told his mother, “I can't come back until I'm the man you see in me.”

Davis spent two years in the Army, then joined the reserves and headed back to Berea.

“I said, ‘I want to come back.’ They said, ‘You must be kidding.’ But I convinced them to let me back in.”

On probation, he got expelled again when a professor refused to believe that Davis' research was original.

“My first instinct was to throw him out the window,” he said. “I thought, ‘You can't stop me getting what I need to get.’ But I was really crushed. Then I thought, ‘Maybe I'm fooling myself. I need to go back home. Maybe the world won't let you change’.”

On the way out of town, his mother's super powers asserted themselves yet again. At the post office, there was a package from her: a bandana headband, with a note reading: “Inevitable Victory. Love, mom.”

“I sat there and said, ‘OK, I need to keep going’.”

He sat out the next year and worked construction, then once again headed to Berea. This time, they said, he really had to be kidding. He insisted. Required to justify himself before a committee, Davis made this argument:

“Nobody is going to say what evil people you are for giving a guy like me three chances. If you let me show you what I can do, everything about Berea is proven. If not, I walk away. You have nothing to lose.”

And because he had nothing to lose, he added: “Oh, and I need \$3,000 for a computer with spell check and grammar check.”

How could they refuse? The first semester Davis made the dean’s list, including receiving a “B” from the professor who had accused him of plagiarism.

“I was embarrassed to come back, but I had to change their impression.” He already had. That year he met a freshman who told him horror stories about this “other Hasan.” “That’s when I recognized how much I had changed.”

Davis started piling up honors: President of the student body. Homecoming king. Lobbying Congress for work-study funding. Navy V-12 award for “outstanding contributions to human kinship and international understanding on campus.” Giving the welcome and invocation at graduation in front of his mother. “I finally was the man she had seen all along.”

Apparently needing a new challenge, he enrolled in law school at the University of Kentucky. “Mostly I went to law school because ‘they’ said I couldn’t.”

His learning disabilities – and getting UK to accommodate him because of them – continued to be a challenge.

“I got expelled three times but never missed a day of class,” he said. “I just don’t go away. We had three years of good fights (over compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.) I just kept coming back.” Davis graduated in 1996. “You never heard so much applause from the faculty; they were so glad to see me go.”

Davis never considered going to work for a law firm. He’d already found his life’s work: helping troubled and at-risk kids.

“I had been working with kids in Outward Bound,” he said. He’d worked as a counselor every summer rather than do the usual law firm clerking.

“Twelve hours a day working with kids nobody thought could do anything. I told them I just got expelled, and I’m going right back. These young people needed someone who refused to let the world run over him.”

What they gave Davis was confirmation that he was reaching them and that what he did had an impact. “I got a letter from one of them, David, who said I heard you and now I’ve

graduated from school. Another student called to say I'm a counselor at school now; you got me here because you told me it's up to me.

"That's really powerful for me – what's driving me to this work."

"This work" is Davis' company, Empowerment Solutions, through which he teaches young people, teachers, social workers, parents and community leaders all over the country that there are always alternatives and even the most disadvantaged kids can use them.

"Young people are struggling and want to be told that what they did is not who they are," Davis said. "The system is not equipped to do that. They need alternatives, other ways of being."

"Juvenile justice is not a pass-through place. I profess and believe that it makes things better." Speaking at conferences to teachers and social workers, he urges them to see in troubled kids what his own mother saw in him.

"I tell them, if when you look at these children, you can't see the most intelligent, capable people, you can't help them become different."

Davis is a nationally popular speaker not just for his message, but for the passion, humor and performance skills he uses to transmit it.

"I have the pleasure of engaging workers on their own ground and sharing with them through laughter and teasing what makes this work great and how important they are to the process," Davis said. Those workers include even police officers.

"I spoke to a group of (school resource officers)," he said. "Surrounded by cops, I told them how important it is for them to be the first impression on a child of what the uniform means – something to run away from or someone to help. That first encounter is important. They need to know how to deal with juveniles, how to have authority but be responsible."

One of the officers in that audience, a veteran of 17 years, told him, "I was going to quit, but after hearing you, I'm staying on. Thank you for helping me see this work as valuable again."

That is how Davis' work today reaches so far beyond the kids he worked with at Outward Bound to the adults in their lives.

"I can create a sense of urgency and passion in people to do this work," he said. "They are not just keepers of the gate. There is so much more to it."

Through all of his honors – Rockefeller Fellow, chairman of the Kentucky Juvenile Justice Board, vice-chairman of the U.S. Justice Department's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee – Davis keeps tight hold of the experiences that brought him here.

“Everything I went through provides me now with the possibility of helping another child and to teach adults how to hold a child up.

“The reason I do the work I do – my responsibility is to provide some real service despite my bad choices. I can still provide some valuable service to my community, my country, my world.

“I honor the fact that somebody reached out and helped me. The gift is that I get to be one of those people, to help somebody walk out of his own darkness.”

*If I could have a second chance  
I would go back to school  
And not get kicked out of school.  
Talking back and cutting up trying to be cool  
That's not for me no sir indeed, that's not how I want to be.  
True to me college degree I want to achieve.  
First a Bachelors, then a Masters, last not lest go back  
For Anatomy and get my Ph.D.  
Even if I started out by achieving my GED.  
Staring my life I'd have a wife with a couple of kids  
And support our way  
And tell the story of my life when I get old someday.*

# GIL ESPARZA

By John C.K. Fisher



*Photo by Bruce Crippen courtesy of  
Kentucky Post*

No one has to tell Gilberto Esparza about the benefits of a juvenile justice system.

Esparza – an entrepreneur who has started two businesses, spent a career in the Navy and now serves as an adviser, advocate and friend of the Latino community in Kentucky and Ohio – had a brush with the legal system as a teenager more than 30 years ago in San Antonio, Texas.

“I was 16 years old. It was 11:30 p.m., and I had stolen a motorcycle,” said Esparza, 49, who lives in Boone County.

Esparza, the ninth of 14 children, said he didn’t go to the YMCA or to church back then.

“I was just a bad kid. I got into a gang when I was 10 because I was good with my fists. The gang had an allure for me. The guys had money. They wore black, pointy-toed shoes. They were all slick. They had tattoos.”

He liked how the gangs operated. The members were tough and independent. And Esparza wanted to be like them.

So, one hot July night in the early 1970s, he stole a motorcycle for a joyride. A police officer spotted him; Esparza waved at the cop and drove the motorcycle carefully under the speed limit. The police officer sensed something was wrong and tailed him.

---

## GIL ESPARZA

**Age:** 49

**Occupation:** Business Owner, Social Activist

**Residence:** Boone County, KY

**Education:** Completing College Degree

**Delinquency History:** Arrested as youth for auto theft; ordered to complete GED requirements

---



Esparza laughed when he talked about the incident. He said he kept driving and hoped the police office would turn. He didn't.

Eventually Esparza turned into a dead-end street at a campus research center. The joy ride was over.

The officer took him to juvenile jail, where he was held for three days, including his 17th birthday. His father refused to get him out of jail and left his son's fate in the hands of a judge.

Esparza said he didn't know whether he would be tried as a juvenile or an adult. He didn't have a clue what would happen. The judge, a large man called "Hippo" Garcia, offered Esparza a break.

"I believe you have some potential," Esparza recalled the judge's words to him. "If I let you get a GED, will you join the military?"

Facing time in jail didn't appeal to the teenager, so he agreed to the judge's offer. He earned his high school equivalency degree, joined the Navy and set off on the journey to become a man.

Esparza, while grateful for the chance the judge had given him, was not ready to be a responsible adult. He had not been in the Navy long when he decided military life was not for him. He deserted.

He was absent without leave for several months when the Navy found him and sent him to the brig. Esparza still had two years to serve. He was hoping the service would discharge him.

The military judge, however, looked at him and said, "You want me to kick you out. But I'm going to keep you in." Esparza was locked up for two years at Quantico, Va.

A master gunnery sergeant there encouraged him to use his time in prison to think about his future. What did he want to do when he was released? Was there a better road for him?

"He made me think and act positive. And then I started reading books. I started reading about equal rights. I read about Ellis Island and new immigrants. I started ironing my uniform. I started engaging people and I cared about them."

When his time was up, Esparza was released and then signed up for a two-year hitch. After that he signed up for another four years. Eventually he put in 20 years and served as a maintenance worker and radioman. He saw action during the American invasion of Panama and Operation Desert Storm in Iraq.

Esparza, a native of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, said he moved to Boone County after his retirement from the Navy and took a job with an electrical manufacturing company.

By the early 1990s, Esparza said he began engaging high school students in conversations about their future. He often shared his story about his teen years misspent fighting, stealing motorcycles and wasting time.

“I started encouraging young students who were on the path that I was on,” Esparza said. “I told them that you don’t have to cuss your teachers out. A lot of kids have to fend for themselves.”

Esparza said he could understand their frustration growing up, wanting to be adults but not knowing how to handle their anxiety. But he said he enjoyed being with the gangs because he felt he wanted their lifestyle.

But not anymore. By the 1990s, after settling into Boone County, Esparza had two sons and a desire to help those who were struggling as he had struggled. “I thought it was time for me to give back. I became a foster parent to African-American kids and white kids,” said Esparza. He said his wife, Jonell, has helped him with the foster children.

He began taking classes at Northern Kentucky University and expects to graduate soon with a degree in criminal justice and a minor in political science, which he will use to further his businesses and create a mentoring program for students.

In 2000, he founded the Hispanic Resource Center in Covington, a non-profit organization to help Latinos in court, medical programs and educational systems. The Hispanic Resource Center translated documents and language for Latino immigrants who appeared in court or needed help understanding what their doctors were saying. Esparza also worked with school systems to create programs helpful to new Hispanic students, including a truancy program at Florence Elementary School to encourage kids to stay in school.

Esparza founded DocuTrans, a company that translates English materials into Spanish for many companies. With the influx of many Hispanic families into Kentucky, Esparza said many companies are finding a need to translate their handbooks, safety materials, job applications and other documents into Spanish. Ron Crouch, the director of the Kentucky State Data Center, said last year that the Hispanic population in Kentucky has more than tripled since the 2000 census, with much of the growth in Northern Kentucky, Lexington and Louisville.

Esparza said DocuTrans is working with a number of universities – including the University of Cincinnati – on Spanish language texts, and he is also creating Spanish subtitles for the motion picture industry.

For the past two years, Esparza has been a member of the Covington Human Rights Commission, where he has urged the board to be aware of the problems facing Latino immigrants.

For example, he said that many immigrants don’t know that the courts or medical offices must provide translators for them so they can understand the proceedings. And having a child or relative is not good enough, Esparza said. He said a child may be able to translate a doctor’s

order but may not understand the dosage of a medicine and as a result the parent may take the wrong amount of his prescription.

Esparza said dialogue is the key when helping immigrants understand their rights in their adopted country and when engaging young people on the path to dropping out of school.

“I believe in the young kids. No one is engaging them. When you don’t engage them, people think you don’t care,” Esparza said.

Although he joined a gang at an early age, Esparza said there was a window of opportunity at the age of 16 when he thought he could have stayed on the path to a productive life through education.

“I loved science. I loved history,” he said.

But a teacher chastised him because wasn’t doing well in math. “He said, ‘If you don’t know, you don’t belong here’, ” Esparza said. Esparza said he left the class – and his high school – and never returned.

That’s the type of scene Esparza doesn’t want students to experience today.

Having been a gang member, having been AWOL from the Navy, having lived years of his life behind prison bars, Esparza said he knows how to get students to respect themselves.

“You have to engage them. Tough love is important. And you have to incorporate the parents,” Esparza said. “You can’t engage the youth without engaging the parent. And don’t settle for mediocrity. Until somebody breaks the chain, the change doesn’t occur.”

Esparza’s work to help youth and immigrants has earned him a reputation throughout Kentucky and Ohio.

In 2004, he shared many of his ideas as a panel member during a town forum that the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights organized in Louisville.

The forum, “Human Rights: Where Do We Go From Here?” featured panel members Beverly Watts, former executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights; Nathaniel Jones, the retired federal Court of Appeals judge who helped found the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati; Mardi Montgomery, deputy secretary of the Kentucky Education Cabinet; and state Sen. Gerald Neal, D-Louisville, who had introduced legislation to make public schools accountable to under-achieving students.

Esparza said he was honored to be included on such a prestigious panel to discuss human rights and education. And he traces much of his success to the day as a teenager when a judge called “Hippo” offered him the chance to complete his education instead of going to jail.

“He saw something in me that I didn’t see,” Esparza said. “It caused me to look at what I can do. And now my vision is clear. I love. I care. I hurt. I hope I can help make change.”

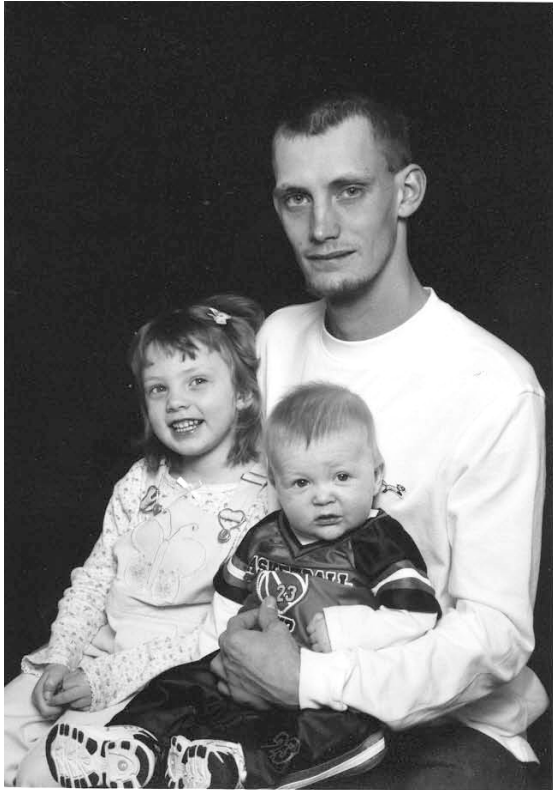
### A Second Chance for Me

When I get my second chance  
I plan on going to find a job to help my Mom.  
I will show more respect to my family, the ones who really care.  
Stop hanging with the ones who could care less about my life.  
This has opened my eyes to a better life  
because the one I was living was really not the true me,  
No its time to have a life change, for the better,  
so I won't end up with the short end of the stick again.  
*Now I see life is way too important to just give up on.*  
I am sorry I had to find out this way.  
I want to have a business career  
because the streets are not a career,  
Just a way to end a life quick.  
Now I take pride in doing the right thing  
because at the end I won't be wishing I did the right thing.  
I would love to help little kids understand  
that the street life is not what it's hyped up to be.

P.S. My favorite word was F\*\*\* Now it's AMEN.

# RICHARD LYKINS

By Crystal Harden



At 18, Richard Lykins could see where the road he was traveling would take him.

He could see it the day he walked out of the Jessamine County Jail.

He could see it the day he woke up from a drunken stupor with a broken nose and black eyes after partying with friends.

At 18, Lykins decided it was a destination he didn't want.

He realized he had to turn his life around or he'd be making the same mistakes 10, 20 years down the road. He didn't want to be sitting in jail at the age of 40, watching his back and worrying that someone would crack his head against a wall.

At 18, Lykins got a wake-up call.

In the six years since that call, Lykins has tried to stay out of trouble. He's working full time and raising a family in Mount Sterling, east of Lexington. He said he wants more out of life. He wants to be able to buy a home. He wants to be sure his children finish their education, something he missed out on after he dropped out of high school.

Jon Ledford, a court-designated worker in Montgomery County, said Lykins has turned his life around. Lykins works as an assembler at Wal-Mart in Mount Sterling. He's hoping to stay with the company, work hard and make a good life for himself and his family.

---

## RICHARD LYKINS

**Age:** 24

**Occupation:** Assembler at Wal-Mart

**Education:** 10<sup>th</sup> grade

**Delinquency History:** Charged as a juvenile with criminal trespass; alcohol intoxication; resisting arrest; beyond control of school and parents; criminal mischief; menacing; terroristic threatening; and two counts of theft by unlawful taking.

---

“He takes unbelievable pride in his work,” Ledford said. “He assembles bicycles. He can do 10 an hour. I don’t think anybody can compete with him. He has long-term plans for Wal-Mart. I like to think of him as someone who has his priorities straight. He’s working hard, and he’s helping the community.”

Wiry and amiable, Lykins doesn’t mince words about his past. He grew up in a troubled home where his parents’ marital strife deteriorated into alcohol abuse and frequent fights. After his parents separated, Lykins bounced from home to home. He stayed periodically with his mother, with his father, and with other family members and friends.

Lykins, who sports closely cropped hair and a light mustache and goatee, looks back on those times with sadness. He wonders at his own resilience.

As a teenager, Lykins never knew from day to day where he would sleep. He often had to rely on the kindness of others.

“I had to think about whom I could call and ask whether I could stay with them,” he said. “That’s a scary thought.”

Lykins’ family didn’t have much money and the instability of his parents’ marriage made the family’s financial situation worse.

“I grew up not having anything,” he said. “One time my mom put everything we had in storage. I was 15. I had to come up with the money to get that stuff out. It was everything I owned. These kids running around here driving brand new trucks that their parents bought them, they don’t realize what they have... I know what it’s like to have nothing.”

In elementary and middle school, Lykins was a fair student striving for good grades. His family’s emotional turmoil, however, started taking its toll. His parents split up for good when he was 14. He started hanging around the wrong crowd and lost interest in school.

That’s when he started having more problems in school. His academic performance slipped. He failed ninth grade. He started getting into fights. The first time he was expelled. The second time he landed in an alternative school “for kids in trouble,” he said.

One school administrator rode Lykins hard. Lykins felt like the principal didn’t expect him to amount to anything.

But another one encouraged Lykins to stay in school. He offered him a \$600 bicycle if Lykins would make it through the year with good grades. Lykins was a talented bike rider who loved to show off his talent around town. Lykins wanted the bike, but he had other things pulling at him.

Lykins’ friends picked him up in the morning, but instead of going to school they skipped instead. They would travel around town, sometimes drinking or smoking marijuana.

It wasn't long before Lykins was "into drugs and running with punks," he said.

Lykins said he didn't pick fights at school. He's a thin man – only 130 pounds. In high school he was skinny – hardly one to be intimidating. But Lykins couldn't see backing down from a fight either.

"I'm not the type of person to be pushed into a corner," he said.

He was in 10th grade he was 17, still smoking marijuana and drinking. The police charged him as a juvenile with being beyond the control of his parents.

"I ended up in the Clark County Jail," Lykins said. "You're sitting there with a bunk. You're lucky to get a mattress. You're freezing cold."

"I was there with a guy who was a 14-year-old who had shot another kid in the back of the head. Clark County helped me wake up to the real world real fast."

Lykins spent a long three days in the jail. It wasn't long afterward, though, that he again was in trouble at school. He was caught fighting. This time he badly beat another boy, breaking the teen's nose. Lykins said the boy was picking on the girl who later became the mother of his two children.

That fight ended up being the last one he had at school. It "ruined my high school for me," he said, referring to the fact that he never went back and eventually dropped out.

When Lykins appeared in juvenile court, he faced several charges, including alcohol intoxication and theft.

His second stint in jail lasted 45 days. Most of it was spent in the Clark County Jail, but he was moved to the Jessamine County Jail after he was beaten by another teen.

Lykins was 18 when he walked out of jail. He knew he needed a new direction. It became more apparent after a fresh bout of partying with friends left him with two black eyes and a broken nose. Lykins had had enough.

He needed a refuge. He stayed with his grandfather for a time, noticing none of his friends came around to see how he was. Lykins recognized he couldn't count on those he once had called friends.

He moved in with his mother in Louisville and determined he wasn't going to run the streets any more. He spent a lot of time during the next six months sitting and thinking. He kept to himself and stayed out of trouble.

Lykins and his mother moved back to Mount Sterling. Both had drinking problems, and Lykins hadn't quit smoking marijuana. He said he was tired of the drugs and alcohol but didn't know how to end his substance abuse.

Then an old high school sweetheart, Shannon, came back into his life. It wasn't long before she was pregnant with his child. Lykins credits Shannon with helping him to stop using drugs and alcohol.

"She changed my life honestly," he said. "She got me to quit smoking weed. We got our own place together. I quit doing all drugs and alcohol."

Lykins started working a steady job, knowing he had to provide for his family. He worked two fast-food jobs before landing his present position at Wal-Mart. He's been working there steadily for three years.

He is respected at work and is making progress financially. The first car he ever owned was given to him along with an extra motor. It was that unreliable. He now has a newer-model reliable car. When his first child was born, the family lived in assisted public housing. They now are renting a home and saving to buy one.

"I'm moving forward," he said.

Lykins is determined to have a stable home life for his two children.

"I know I don't want my kids to do without anything," he said. "I want to make sure they go to bed on time and to make sure they know school is important. I want to make sure they don't run with the wrong crowd."

Ledford, the court worker, met Lykins when he started skipping school and being charged as a juvenile. Ledford said Lykins never got into serious trouble before the age of 17, and he straightened up within a year.

"He turned 18, and he's never been charged again," Ledford said. "He's doing well."

Ledford remembers Lykins as a skinny kid who liked to "mouth-off." He knew how to irritate adults, he said.

"He was kind of a charismatic little guy who seemed to have a lot of self-confidence," even though he came from a troubled family and didn't have much money, Ledford said.

Lykins said Ledford, who handles diversion agreements in Montgomery County, always believed Lykins could turn himself around.

"I've met a lot of people who had faith in me," Lykins said. "I've always been a person with a good heart. I know when I die, I'll die a respectful man."

Wal-Mart will pay for Lykins to get his high school equivalency certificate. Lykins expects to take them up on the offer and may eventually go to a technical school.

"There's no way a smart man would pass that up," Lykins said. "I plan on keeping my career."



The company also offers him benefits, such as profit sharing and a 401K-retirement plan. He's earning wage increases. In Mount Sterling, a town with a population of about 5,800, good jobs are hard to come by.

Lykins can't think of a better place to be than working at Wal-Mart. It allows him the opportunity to do something he loved as a kid – working with bicycles.

"I can build 50 bikes a day by myself," he said.

His dedication and hard work have earned Lykins respect at work. His family gives him love and a sense of purpose.

With all that filling his life, Lykins can't imagine anything else that he needs.

*If I had a **SECOND CHANCE:***

*I'd love my family more  
I'd take back the things I said  
And make them run ashore  
I'd stay out of places I shouldn't be  
And pray a little more  
I'd thank God that I'm living  
And go to church some more  
I'd try and help my family all I can  
I'd keep going to school  
Because I know I should*

# DUSTIN MURPHY

By Crystal Harden



Dustin Murphy descended into the depths of hell before the hand of God pulled him back.

That's how he describes his remarkable turnaround.

His is a tale of redemption. He believes he required heavenly intervention, but his transformation might not have happened without a jail sentence during his youth.

Murphy's life hasn't taken twists; it's taken 180-degree turns. A once-promising student, Murphy became a practicing Satanist during high school and eventually set fire to a church. The Halloween night assault on Christianity sent him to jail for five years. He served 39 months, and while he was in jail Murphy returned to his Christian roots. He is now an ordained minister who visits inmates through a jail

ministry and preaches at a fledgling church in Cincinnati.

Murphy believes supernatural beings have intervened in his life. Demons and angels have fought a battle for his soul, and he doesn't shy from telling others about his journey.

As a boy, Murphy was a model student. He made straight A's, excelled at band and exhibited leadership qualities.

---

## DUSTIN MURPHY

<b>Age:</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Occupation:</b>	<b>Machinist</b>
<b>Residence:</b>	<b>Northern Kentucky</b>
<b>Education:</b>	<b>GED Certificate</b>
<b>Delinquency History:</b>	<b>Sentenced to 5 years on an arson charge, incarcerated for 39 months</b>

---

But Murphy also had a rebellious streak. He had lived most of his life with his mother – a religious woman who tried to keep her children on a narrow path – and Murphy was ready to veer down some new roads.

The summer before he entered high school, Murphy decided to go live with his father in Williamstown. That meant changing schools, and Murphy thought it was the perfect time to change his staid “good boy” image.

“That’s when I wanted to grow my hair long,” he said. “I wanted to dye it. I wanted to be different. I just thought if I could get away from the trumpet-playing, straight-A student, that would be the time to do it. I just wanted to be bad. I was a rebel, and I wanted to do what I wanted to do.”

Before school started, Murphy dyed his hair blond. At school, he immediately “found the bad kids,” he said. “I was willing to do whatever I had to do to fit in.”

During his freshman year Murphy made friends with teens who were drawn to heavy metal and punk rock music. He started listening to music by Marilyn Manson – a 1990s rocker with an anti-Christian message.

Murphy said the music taught him to spurn religion and introduced him to the fundamentals of Satanism.

He began questioning his long-held religious beliefs. His family prayed that Murphy would abandon his new-found Satanist beliefs. The more his mother talked to Murphy about Jesus Christ, the more her son moved in the opposite direction.

“I lost all regard and respect for authority, religion and myself,” he said.

Murphy started drinking, smoking marijuana and taking pills. He didn’t know what half of the pills were – he downed anything he could get his hands on.

One night he attended a Manson concert in Louisville with a friend and was caught up in the frenzy of the anti-Christian message. He believes evil spirits entered him that night.

He went to school the next day still wearing the same black clothes and black make-up that he had worn the night before. It was a turning point in his life. He immersed himself in books and music that promoted Satanism. He started to cut himself as part of Satanic rituals.

He failed ninth grade and only went to school two months the next year.

“I decided I was either going to be expelled or I was going to quit,” he said, so he quit.

Today Murphy’s closely cropped reddish-brown hair crowns a boyish face that widens to a broad smile. Back then, his entire persona was dark and brooding. His hair was black; his make-up was black; his clothes were black.

“I hated life, but I never wanted to kill myself,” he said.

He emulated the bands he listened to, and he wrote lyrics with anti-Christian messages. He started taking psychedelic drugs, which fueled feelings of paranoia and depression.

Murphy said one psychedelic trip turned frightful. A riot of beautiful colors turned red and black – the colors of Satan. His heart started racing. Murphy said his fellow partiers looked like zombies – dead people without hearts or souls. He believes he saw demons hovering above him in a semi-circle and beyond them were angels.

“I heard a voice, and I heard the voice say, ‘If you’ll just call on Jesus right now, it’ll all go away’.”

Murphy didn’t heed the voice. He was at a point that he didn’t think he could turn back. “I just felt if I can’t live for God, I could live for Satan,” he said. “It was no longer a theology of Satan, which means ‘I’m god.’ It was ‘Satan is my lord’.”

He often cut himself and performed Satanic rituals at a makeshift altar. He surrounded himself with Satanic symbols.

“I would ask Satan to fill my body with demons,” he said.

His father took him to a psychiatrist who told him he was suffering from schizophrenia. He went into drug rehab but just got out with better drug connections, he said.

At one point, Murphy bought an album that had a picture of a church burning on its cover and lyrics about burning churches. He listened to the music constantly.

On Halloween night 1998 after drinking whiskey and smoking marijuana, Murphy and some buddies decided they were going to burn a church. Two other churches had been burned about that time in Grant County, and Murphy was primed to light the next fire.

They drove to a gas station, filled up a gasoline can, and then went to search for a church. They stopped at a little white church on a hill in Williamstown. They poured gasoline around the cement foundation and lit a match to the Fairview Christian Church.

Murphy could hear something in him saying it was wrong. He even felt sorry for the older church members who wouldn’t have anywhere to go on Sunday morning.

“It was like I was being pulled between two worlds,” he said. “I thought this was what I had to do. But it was like the real you said ‘What are you doing? This isn’t you.’ It was a spiritual battle. The devil and angels were battling for me.”

Less than a week later, the police arrested Murphy after finding a pentagram he had been wearing around his neck at the scene of the fire.

He was taken to a detention facility in Elizabethtown. While there, a jailer talked to Murphy about turning his life to Jesus Christ, who Christians believe died for their sins.

“He looked at me, and he saw the mess I was in,” Murphy said. “He had the weirdest smile on his face like he had peace. He asked me what I had done. I told him I had tried to burn down a church. He didn’t change his expression. He still had that smile. He said ‘You know Jesus will forgive you if you ask him’.”

Murphy and the jailer became friends, and Murphy started going to religious services in the jail.

Murphy decided one day he was ready to ask for forgiveness. He told his cellmate that he was going to get saved and asked him if he didn’t want to become a Christian also. The cellmate agreed. Murphy said he led the two in prayer.

“I said ‘Jesus I’ve done everything there is to do wrong, and I’m sorry for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins.’ I said ‘I believe you died on the cross and rose again on the third day.’ I said ‘I accept you into my heart as my lord and savior. I don’t have much to give you, but if you want to, you can have me’.”

Murphy, 17, was convicted as an adult of arson and sentenced to five years in jail. He spent time in seven different detention facilities and ended up at the Boone County Work Camp for non-violent inmates.

The jail time at the work camp proved to be a productive period for Murphy. He painted an extensive mural that depicted 100 years of American history. He also started to preach and learned to play gospel music from another inmate.

“I wanted to be a rock star for Jesus,” he said.

While at the work camp, Murphy prayed for a wife and Brenda – an old friend – started visiting and corresponding. Two months after he walked out of jail in 2002, he married Brenda.

Murphy returned to the church where he had been raised, but eventually he and his bride started attending his mother’s church, Community Pentecostal Church in Independence. He was ordained as a minister in 2004.

The couple is raising three children – Katelynn, 6 months, Jayda, 2, and Mallory, 7, who is Brenda’s child from another relationship.

Murphy works as a machinist and spends much of his time at church. He and Brenda have been involved with the youth ministry at Community Pentecostal, as well as preaching at the new church in Cincinnati. He released his first gospel CD in October 2005 with the help of a generous donor.

Murphy also spends time at the Campbell County Juvenile Detention Center, talking to youth and preaching. He encourages the youth not to give up hope and to turn toward God.

Murphy said he is glad he was locked up for so long because it gave him time to reflect and to change. He even thanked the judge recently who sentenced him.

"I do appreciate the fact that I got that time, and I always look at that time as a blessing not a curse," he said.

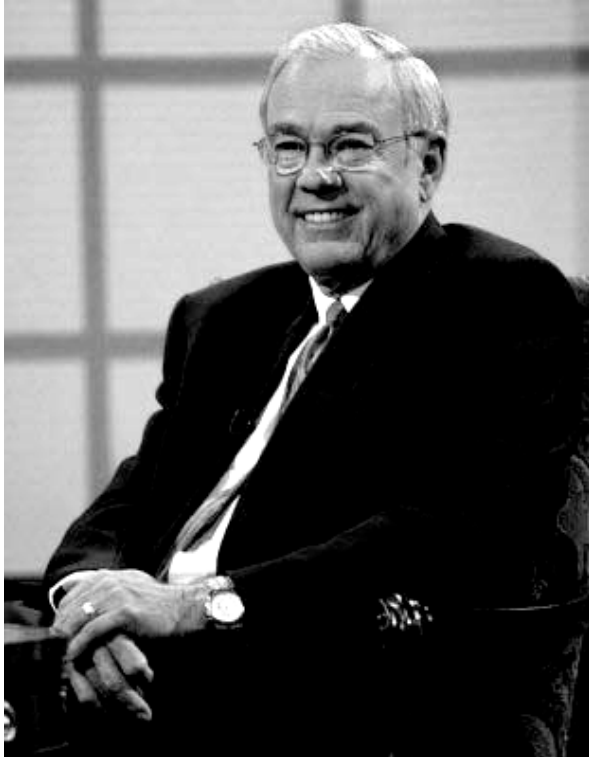
Murphy couldn't be happier with his life now. His family has a new home in Crittenden and he works hard, but feels as if he has been blessed in many ways.

"God's just good," he said.

*My life has been very rough  
Hatred has followed me and made me tough  
I wanted for new, but all I found was old neglect as a child  
I was thrown out in the cold; I began to freeze.  
I shut life down.  
I rebelled against, new I had found.  
Through this ordeal I refused to shed a tear.  
Even though hatred and pain had already risen to fear.  
Then one day out of the blue came this voice in my head sayin  
"Stop lookin down, Raise you head high."  
I let go of my guild, my sorrow and pain.  
Finally I came to realize there was a desperate  
NEED FOR CHANCE  
A SECOND CHANCE*

# PAUL PATTON

By John C.K. Fisher



*Photo courtesy of KET*

It was a crime, they thought, of economic necessity: four teenagers driving around Huntington, W.Va., in a car with old tires prone to go flat.

“We were running around in Huntington, finding cars where the trunks weren’t locked,” one of them recalled. “We just wanted to use the tires as spares. My friends had old cars with old tires that went flat.”

The boys were too successful. They swiped enough tires to fill their trunk and then some. When they got lost trying to get out of town, they drove across the path of a police officer. He wondered about the trunk bulging with tires and stopped the car.

One of those arrested on that evening in the fall of 1954 was a 17-year-old from Louisa, Ky. Paul Patton learned from his encounter with the law. When he was elected governor in 1995, he helped transform Kentucky’s juvenile justice system.

Patton is 69, retired from the political scene and living in Pikeville. He was the first Kentucky governor elected to consecutive terms – in 1995 and 1999 – after the state’s constitution was amended to remove the one-term limit.

He said during a recent telephone interview that his arrest in 1954 changed him.

---

## PAUL PATTON

<b>Age:</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Occupation:</b>	<b>Former Kentucky Governor</b>
<b>Residence:</b>	<b>Pikeville</b>
<b>Education:</b>	<b>College Graduate</b>
<b>Delinquency History:</b>	<b>Detained as a youth for involvement in tire thefts; released to custody of his parents.</b>

---

“We got caught and spent a couple of days in detention,” Patton said. “Two of the boys paid fines for theft. Me and the other boy were released to the custody of our parents.”

Patton said he was glad that his case was handled in juvenile court and that he didn’t receive an adult record. He said the lectures that he received from his parents, Ward and Irene Patton, and an uncle, Bill Patton, plus the time he spent in juvenile detention, convinced him that a life of crime was not the best plan for his future. Although the incident never became a campaign issue, Patton said he was sorry for his youthful misdeed.

“It was an eye-opener for me; it was an awakener for me,” Patton said.

“My parents thought I was ruined, and my uncle gave me a lecture I never forgot. He said, ‘You pay for the things that you do over time. Let this be a lesson for you. And you better learn from somebody else’s experiences, because you can’t live long enough to learn them all by yourself’.”

Patton said he was fortunate to receive a second chance, fortunate that his juvenile record did not become a permanent blemish on his life. And now, as Kentucky marks the 100th year of its juvenile justice system, he said he is proud of the work that the Juvenile Justice Cabinet did under his tenure to open a regional system of juvenile detention centers.

Under the old system, each county had its own juvenile detention programs with various amounts of counseling or educational opportunities. Patton’s administration took that burden away from counties and set up regional juvenile centers that offer education, exercise, and group and individual counseling.

Patton was on hand for the opening of the Northern Kentucky Regional Juvenile Detention Center in Newport in August 1999. The Northern Kentucky center cost \$4.3 million, serves 15 counties and houses 52 youth. The facility opened with a staff of 48 and was the third regional center in Kentucky, after centers opened in Breathitt and McCracken counties. The state eventually reached its goal of nine juvenile justice detention centers. In addition, Jefferson County operates its own juvenile detention center apart from the state system, said John Hodgkin, a spokesman for the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice.

Before the Northern Kentucky center opened, Kenton County was under pressure from a federal lawsuit filed by the Children’s Law Center of Northern Kentucky – and its founder and executive director, Kim Brooks Tandy – to close or improve its juvenile jail. The Children’s Law Center said Kenton County had no educational programs for the youth, many of them held within sight and sound of adult inmates. The lawsuit said Kenton County was violating juvenile rights under both state and federal laws.

Kenton County Deputy Judge-Executive R. Scott Kimmich in 1999 told Ralph Kelly, then the commissioner of the Kentucky Juvenile Justice Cabinet, that his county was anxious to convert its 24-bed juvenile jail to an adult jail section. Kelly told Kimmich just what he wanted to hear: “The day we open is the day you should close (the Kenton juvenile jail),” Kelly told Kimmich, according to an article in *The Kentucky Post*.



Patton said he was aware of the problem with juvenile justice facilities before he took office in 1995, having studied the problem while he served as judge-executive of Pike County.

Patton said the juvenile facility there was so bad that he contracted with nearby Floyd County to house youthful offenders. He said he understood that juvenile jails were a financial burden on counties.

Hodgkin, the spokesman for the state Juvenile Justice Department, said counties paid for housing juveniles charged with crimes before their convictions. After their convictions and their commitment to the state, the state paid for the juveniles' care, Hodgkin said.

"I knew the system was inadequate. I knew it had to be a state responsibility," Patton said.

With the help of Kelly and other professionals, the Patton administration devised a plan to relieve the counties of the financial and physical burdens of housing, educating and counseling juveniles. He said he set aside \$30 million for juvenile justice facilities during his first year in office and left the system with a \$110 million budget eight years later.

"We had a good relationship with the legislature; we had common goals and I explained the need," Patton said. "It (the juvenile justice budget) gradually increased year by year. It wasn't a huge bite any one year. We implemented the program over eight years."

Hodgkin said then- Gov. Brereton Jones and federal officials reached an agreement just before Patton took office to improve youth treatment centers in Kentucky. The agreement made it easier for Patton to push his initiative to build nine regional juvenile detention centers, Hodgkin said.

"I would give him (Gov. Patton) and Commissioner Ralph Kelly credit," for improving the juvenile justice system in Kentucky, Hodgkin said.

Patton said he had two central goals in his juvenile justice program – to help the children who needed education, counseling and rehabilitation; and to protect people from youths who could physically harm them.

"It was a pretty comprehensive program," Patton said. "It included humane detention and protection of society from juveniles who may have been a threat. It was one of the major accomplishments of my administration, and I am proud of it."

Patton said Kentucky went from having one of the worst juvenile detention systems in the country to having one of the best during the course of eight years. He said former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno complimented Kentucky's progress.

The former governor said he believes that juveniles should retain their separate court system and housing facilities. He said rehabilitation should be a hallmark of the juvenile justice system.

“All of our children are subject to make mistakes. But one or two mistakes should not relegate them to a state of crime or poverty for the rest of their lives,” Patton said.

“I believe all juveniles still have a chance to realize their responsibilities and should be given the opportunity and assets required to let them grow up and mature.”

Patton said he believes so strongly that juveniles should be treated differently than adults in the criminal justice system that in July 2003 he commuted the death penalty sentence of Kevin Stanford, who had been convicted of killing a store clerk in 1981, when Stanford was 17.

“Children can commit heinous crimes; that’s what attracts the public’s attention,” Patton said. “But I supported the abolition of the death penalty for children, and I commuted the sentence.”

He said his arrest as a juvenile helped him understand what today’s youth are facing.

“People should give the juveniles they don’t know the same understanding as they would juveniles in their family who are 16 or 17,” Patton said. “Give them the same understanding that the juveniles aren’t mature, and I think they would come away with a different perspective.”

Patton isn’t saying that some juveniles should not be incarcerated for the crimes they commit. “Juveniles need to be reminded that they will be punished for their actions against society,” Patton said. “There is a need for that.”

And while he said he didn’t like disappointing his parents with his arrest as a juvenile more than 50 years ago, the former governor said being stopped by police shaped his character.

“In the end, it wasn’t the worst thing,” Patton said with a chuckle. “I realized I had to pay because I violated the rules of society. I went to college and did fairly well. And I think we left a good juvenile justice system in Kentucky. I am proud of it.”

# ART RITCHINGS

By Lisa Aug



Asking for help isn't easy for military veterans. It can be hard to ask for help even with the government benefits they've earned for their honorable service. Veterans who are homeless, who suffer from substance abuse, who may be mentally ill, pose a special challenge to those trying to help them.

But such veterans find particular empathy in Art Ritchings. A veteran who now administers benefits programs for Kentucky veterans, he understands the obstacles thrown up by a hard life. He was once a kid in trouble, a kid who ended up in Kentucky's juvenile court system.

"If it weren't for a judge who gave me a chance," Ritchings said, "I don't know where I would be."

Ritchings grew up in Shively, outside of Louisville, the oldest of five children. At age 12, he was in juvenile court on charges of chronic truancy, fighting and breaking-and-entering (the last by association, he said.) His mother, a single parent, told the judge Ritchings was wild and out of control, and the judge sent him to the Jefferson County Group Home on West Jefferson. That was in 1975.

---

## ART RITCHINGS

<b>Age:</b>	42
<b>Occupation:</b>	Regional Administrator in Louisville for the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs
<b>Residence:</b>	Louisville
<b>Education:</b>	Served 10-1/2 years in the U.S. Navy as a Gunners Mate and Master at Arms, where he received his GED. He attended the University of Louisville and is approximately four semesters short of his degree.
<b>Delinquency History:</b>	Between ages of 11 and 17 appeared four times in juvenile court in Jefferson County on charges of chronic truancy, vandalism, fighting, breaking-and-entering and car theft. He spent one year in the Jefferson County Group Home, twice was put on probation and the final time chose military service over jail time.

---

There Ritchings caught his first break. He met a counselor named Mike. “I don’t remember his last name – it was something Greek, that started with a C. He was a big guy, 6 feet three inches tall, 260 pounds, Jimmy Dean fingers, and intense dark eyes.

“He knew I was a scared punk kid who ruled my family but nothing outside of it. I was running with a bad crowd, and I was the runt. Mike talked to me about standing up for myself and the difference between a leader and a follower.”

Mike made a deep impression on Ritchings. Unfortunately, it didn’t last.

“I was there a year. I wish the story ended there.”

Ritchings went from the group home to Bishop David High School. A smart kid who found school easy, he was on track for success at a school that sent virtually all of its graduates to college and lucrative careers.

Then he ran into one of his old buddies. “I got mixed up in the old stuff again.”

He moved up into drugs: marijuana, speed, Quaaludes, rush (a mix of formaldehyde and other chemicals and a precursor to huffing) and other pharmaceuticals – whatever he and his buddies could get.

This time, however, he had a plan.

“I had seen what happened to the guys I ran with,” Ritchings said. “I had learned that they look at you real hard when your grades drop. I’d never been dumb about school. So I did all the reading in advance and really impressed the brothers and the monks. I knew the way to keep adults off you is to give them what they want. You set yourself up for B’s and A’s, and they never suspect you.

“I was a manipulative piece of shit.”

But his French teacher, Father Patrick, had his number. After two years, his days of getting away with the drugs, fighting, cutting classes and track practice ended when he threw a rock through a school window. Father Patrick turned him in because “he always knew what I was up to.” Bishop David expelled him and barred him from every Catholic school in Jefferson County.

“My junior year I went to Western High School and went to hell in a hand basket.”

Western had gangs and security guards, not the protected environment of Bishop David. And Ritchings entered with a reputation – “I was looked at like shit because I got kicked out of a school that basically guaranteed you a career making \$100,000 a year.

“There was lots of peer pressure and a lot more scrutiny,” he said. “Grades were not a problem, but I struggled to stay in the system.” He held up his fists. “I always thought that these were the answer.

“What I needed was another Mike.”



What he got instead were two more court appearances for fighting, truancy and vandalism. And a stepfather who tried to turn him around. “Mom got remarried, to the man I think of as my father. But by then I’d gone too far.”

He was put on probation, checking in with a child youth counselor with Jefferson County. But high caseloads and turnover meant he rarely saw the same counselor twice and never had a chance to bond with one.

Then his past rose up and hit him.

“I ran into Mike again outside the courtroom. I ran up to him to give him a hug, and he smacked me upside the head.”

Mike became Ritchings’ unofficial mentor. He stuck around, explaining the system, dropping by unexpectedly and grilling Ritchings on school, his siblings, and his parents. “He made me realize they were helping me but I wasn’t accepting the help I was given.”

Mike and Ritchings’ stepfather both told him the only way to make it out of any trouble was to stop blaming the system.

“Mike had taught me something I never forgot – that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. But I didn’t apply it right away.”

Ritchings quit the drugs, and the fighting, and the vandalism. But one night he slipped. He stole a car from a woman he worked for, wrecked it and abandoned it. Stupidly, he kept the car keys in his pocket, and his stepfather found them.

“That was the last straw.”

His stepfather had the police arrest Ritchings. They handcuffed him and took him to juvenile detention. Four days later, he was in court in front of a judge he’d seen three times before.

What Ritchings didn’t know was that the judge, Mike, and Ritchings’ parents had already discussed what was going to happen. The hearing came off as choreographed.

“When I tried to talk in court, Dad kept me quiet and Mom told the judge ‘he’s thinking about joining the military.’” That was a surprise to Ritchings.

“The judge said ‘that’s a great idea, that’s exactly what you need. Here’s your choice – join the military for three years or go to (the Kentucky State Reformatory at) LaGrange for three years.’ I thought I couldn’t do that.”

The judge made it clear this was Ritchings’ last chance. And it was that chance that made the difference.

“My only option was to go somewhere to better my life or go somewhere I’d never get better. They’d given me plenty of rope, but now I was at the end of it.”

The judge gave him 30 days to decide, but it took him only a week. Mike called and asked not what he had decided but which service he had selected.

Ritchings, then 17 and a high-school dropout, joined the Navy in June 1981. “I thought, the military has restrictions on your life, but you get to travel.” But because he believed the service had been forced on him, he arrived at basic training cursing everyone – the court, Mike, his parents.

After eight weeks of basic training, Ritchings had grown an inch taller and added 30 pounds of muscle to his frame. But the biggest change he felt was the way others treated him.

“I saw the way people looked up to me, in a whole different light,” he said. “I liked the respect I got just because I had the uniform on, but I got the same respect even in street clothes. My grandfather took me to his VFW post, and Mike was there. The look in his eyes was just great ... certainly better than getting smacked in the head.”

He left the Navy in 1984, after three years. But he wasn’t ready for the world he found. He got a job cutting timber in Oregon. Six weeks later, the company was shut down for cutting illegally.

“I became homeless,” Ritchings said. “Could not find a job anywhere. But I would not call my parents for money.”

He walked to California, found a job as a “lumper,” unloading cargo at a warehouse, sleeping under a highway overpass, bathing at truck stops.

“But I couldn’t go back to a life of crime. No way. I had lots of opportunities to sell drugs, but I just couldn’t do it. It would have been easy, but I was not in that frame of mind any more.

“Another lesson it took me a long time to learn was that if you don’t earn it, you don’t appreciate it. Selling drugs is not earning it. Instead of going back to that life, I chose another path.”

Walking the railroad tracks toward home, he made it to Marysville, Calif., north of Sacramento. He spotted a sign on the E Street Mission: “Rescue.” He fell down the embankment and injured himself, but he crawled to the door of the mission. Miss Marguerite – tiny and 84 years old – brought him in. While he healed, they talked, and she told him he needed to return to the military.

Back in the Navy by 1986, Ritchings earned his high school equivalency degree (passing in the 92nd percentile) and took college courses by correspondence (again trying to complete his coursework ahead of time). He advanced from the rank of gunner’s mate to master at arms. He left the Navy in 1991 because of a broken kneecap.

“I came back home and I didn’t mess around this time.” He worked at Krispy Kreme, enrolled at the University of Louisville and drove cabs to give him more time for school. He dropped out in 1993 when his parents got sick.

“I had to take care of my parents after everything I put them through.”

But by 2003, he was part owner of the cab company and the 20-hour days were wearing him down. A veterans employment counselor encouraged him to apply for a job with the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, which hired him as a regional administrator.

“I think one strength he brings to the job is that he doesn’t judge others,” said Ritchings’ supervisor, retired Army 1st Sgt. Pam Luce, the benefits branch manager for the department. “Art works with some of the neediest veterans – those who are mentally ill, addicted, very bad off. He can sit down with them and be respectful and get them to open up in a way a lot of others can’t. He doesn’t judge them, and they know it.”

“It’s easier for me to deal with them,” Ritchings said. And when he reviews veterans’ benefit claims and appeals, “I know who is bullshitting and who is really trying – don’t try to play me.”

Luce said she didn’t know about Ritchings’ juvenile record when she hired him, but it wouldn’t have made a difference if she had. “It was so long ago, and he had good service (in the military.) A lot of people who have bad childhoods enter the service and learn discipline and how to motivate themselves.”

Luce also noted that recent research has found that a large percentage of veterans who are homeless and have post-traumatic stress disorder come from backgrounds of abuse, neglect and trauma. It makes sense, she said, because the military can be an attractive option for teenagers looking to get out of a bad situation.

Shortly after starting his job with the Department of Veteran Affairs, Ritchings took on more duties as a coordinator for homeless veterans.

“There’s always somebody out there who needs a chance, who is worse off than you,” he said. “Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care. So I always

take the underdogs' side. You have to be aware, have to be wary, but always take their side."

Today he occasionally takes calls from Louisville Metro police who have in custody a homeless veteran they don't want to charge. Ritchings will pick up the veteran and take him to a shelter.

"I'll always work with the homeless – get them a place to live, a good job." He recalled one homeless veteran who had earned two bronze stars and a purple heart in Vietnam. Ritchings had gotten to know a human resources manager and asked if he would be willing to give job preference to veterans. The manager said he would consider homeless veterans who listed Ritchings as a reference. The Vietnam veteran today has a river pilot job paying \$72,000 per year.

Ritchings has forged his own success to the point that he's able to help others make theirs, but he knows how close he came to never knowing any of it.

"If not for Mike and the others," he said, "I'd have been in prison – no doubt in my mind."

## *2<sup>nd</sup> Chance*

*When I was young I did some stupid stuff  
but now I'm paying for it and I'm locked up.  
When other people were young they regret pulling the pistol from their pants,  
and now they're sittin in jail wishin they had a Second Chance.  
When I get out everything will be cool,  
I will make amends and go back to school.  
When I get outta school, I'll get a job  
and try to help the people who are getting robbed.  
I will go to church every Sunday  
and every night I'll pray.  
I will go to schools and talk to kids  
and try to stop them from doing the things I did.*



# JENNIFER SHAFFER (VASSEUR)

By Debra Ann Vance



*3 years 11 months*

While most girls want a party, clothes or makeup for their 13th birthday, Jennifer Shaffer's only wish was for an alarm clock. She believed the blaring sounds of a clock would awaken her and end the sexual abuse from her stepfather.

"I wanted to be able to get myself up in the morning because when he woke me up, he would touch me and abuse me," said Jennifer, who said the abuse started when she was 7. "A lot of things happened in the morning. He always wore a bath robe with no clothes underneath. He did that pretty much every day."

Jennifer, who grew up in Murray with a younger and older brother, received her birthday wish – a white clock radio with big black numbers. The alarm clock did prevent the abuse in the morning, but Jennifer's stepfather began to abuse her at other times. As she grew older, the physical contact was limited, but the stepfather continued to expose himself.

When Jennifer was 15, she ran away from home and from the abuse. When the police picked her up, she told them about the abuse because she didn't want to go home.

Police told Jennifer's mother that her husband would have to find another place to stay while they investigated, but the mother said she wanted her husband to stay and her daughter to leave. Jennifer's mother said she didn't believe her daughter.

---

## JENNIFER SHAFFER (VASSEUR)

Age:	27
Occupation:	Recruiting Manager, Ernst and Young, Cincinnati, OH
Residence:	Lives in Anderson Township, OH
Education:	BA, Speech Communications, Northern Kentucky University
Juvenile Court History:	Runaway, placed in foster care system

---

Jennifer was angry, hurt and afraid. She lived with a family friend for about a week. Then she entered the Kentucky foster care system. Her life spiraled downward as she began experimenting with drugs and sex.

Jennifer's stepfather eventually pleaded guilty to sex abuse. He was sentenced to probation for five years, ordered to attend sex offender school and to pay 20 percent of Jennifer's college tuition. The prosecutor agreed to the sentence because the social worker did not think Jennifer should testify during a long trial.

Jennifer didn't feel victorious. Her mother remained with her husband, and Jennifer remained in the foster care system. She was moved from one placement to another. For a period, she lived in the Kentucky Baptist Home for Children.

"My sophomore year, I went to five different schools," Jennifer recalled. "Basically, everywhere I went, I ran away. The first 15 years of my life were the most miserable time I could ever have had. I don't think anything will ever be as bad. It was so miserable, my whole childhood."

Jennifer's life began to change at 16 when she was placed in the home of Brenda and David Lichtenberg of Paducah. They prepared her for life. The Lichtenbergs told her she was going to have to learn how to take care of herself. She had to get a job. They constantly talked to her about going to college.

Lichtenberg is a graduate of the Naval Academy while Mrs. Lichtenberg is a graduate of Murray State University.

"They provided me a nice home, introduced me to nice people," Jennifer said. "For the first time in my life, I had people who really cared about me."

The Lichtenbergs treated Jennifer as if she were one of their three biological children, Mrs. Lichtenberg said. They preached the same sermon to each child – saving money, getting an education, disciplining herself.

Mrs. Lichtenberg said Jennifer was quiet and shy when she came to live with them. "She seemed like such a little girl. You could tell that she'd been hurt."

At Lone Oak High School, Jennifer met friends who had a great time without using drugs. They were all bound for college.

"I just remember thinking I wanted to live the kind of life they were living," Jennifer said. "I stopped doing drugs. I stopped being promiscuous. I really wanted to do something with my life."

She worked at a fast food restaurant and saved money to purchase a used Ford Taurus. She paid \$4,000 in cash for the 1990 baby blue car.

At 18, Jennifer moved out.

“We are proud of her,” Mrs. Lichtenberg said. “We really are. She’s accomplished a lot. She knew what she wanted to do and what she needed to do and she had the determination and wherewithal to do it. We’re real proud of her because she has done well. She has accomplished her goals. It hadn’t been easy for her.”

When Jennifer decided to move out, she also chose to stay under the care of the state until she was 21. She knew the state would help pay for her college until she turned 21, she said.

She also had to take classes taught by her social worker, Ron Campbell, an independent living coordinator who works at the Chaffee Independence Program in Mayfield. Students who are committed to the state must take life skills classes. They learn how to write checks, how to cook and clean. Basically, Campbell prepares them to live on their own.

Campbell said Jennifer was shy but determined. He showed her how to prepare a budget. He also helped her fill out the paperwork for college. With Campbell’s help, Jennifer enrolled at Northern Kentucky University. She chose NKU because she wanted to move as far from Murray and Paducah without leaving the state. She didn’t know anyone in Northern Kentucky.

During her freshman year, Jennifer began looking for a support group for women who had been sexually abused. When she learned NKU didn’t have such a group, she talked to a campus counselor who specialized in that field. The two of them put out fliers about the support group. Soon after, the sessions started.

Jennifer, who had been in counseling for the abuse since she was 16, and about five other women met every other week for four years. “That’s the best way to heal – to hear other people’s stories and to realize that you are not alone,” Jennifer said. “I think that was a huge piece of recovery. When you talk about it, it makes it a lot better.”

Her career at Northern Kentucky University played another important role in her life. On the second day of college, she met the man who became her husband. “He was the only other person up that early in the morning. I walked by and made a comment about his shirt.”

Ironically, while Jennifer had chosen NKU to get away from her previous life, the student she met that day was also from Paducah. Daniel Vasseur was wearing a University of Evansville shirt when she saw him. She told him, “I have a friend who goes to school there,” referring to a young man she had dated. “Out of nowhere he said, ‘You are Jennifer.’ Then he introduced himself and said he was from Paducah.”

He recognized her because he had attended Paducah Tilghman High School, one of the five schools Jennifer went to during her junior year. Jennifer had attended Tilghman for three months, but she didn’t remember Vasseur.

They dated for six years before marrying in 2003. When he proposed, Vasseur wore the same shirt that he had on when he first met Jennifer. "He said 'even though you were thinking of someone else, it did make you talk to me'," Jennifer said.

She graduated with a bachelor's degree in communication from Northern Kentucky University. She is working on a master's degree in human resource development at Xavier University. She expects to graduate in May 2007.

In time, Jennifer also became involved with foster care issues.

She was a consultant for Necco, a therapeutic foster care agency. Through Necco, Jennifer co-founded the Kentucky Organization for Foster Youth, a support and advocacy group for youth in the foster care system.

The organization's main objective is to address concerns of youth in foster care. Jennifer traveled throughout Kentucky conducting trainings that focused on how youth should move forward and what they can do to become the best person possible.

Through the organization, Jennifer has talked to young people and at seminars all over the country, sharing her story of how she made it through.

Her message depended on the audience. When she spoke to young people, she told them they could do anything they wanted in spite of their circumstances. She told them, "You can't use what you've been through as a crutch through your entire life. You just have to move forward. If you want to go college or go to work, you must be the best person you can be."

When she spoke to adults, foster parents and court workers, she delivered a message of thanks.

"They do mean more than they realize," Jennifer said of foster parents and caseworkers. "I treated some of them really bad. In hindsight, I really do appreciate that they stuck with me and picked me up in whatever part of town I was found in. Looking back, I really do appreciate them."

Jennifer's said it wasn't always easy getting up in front of an audience and talking about her life. But her only goals were to help and to inspire.

"It's hard to express how you can do it," she said. "I don't think I'm any more unique than anybody else. I just think I wanted it. I'm living a life right now that my family has never lived. People who don't know my past are always saying, 'You must come from a great background, or you must have had great parents.' Wow, if they only knew."

She has worked for many agencies and organizations on issues to help children in the system. Her work ranged from working with legislators to creating training programs for case workers and foster care providers.

She has worked with other agencies, including the Michael Jordan Institute at University of North Carolina. At the institute, she developed a training program for interdependent living.

Her successes have come, according to Campbell, her former social worker, because she wanted them and because she wanted to give back to the community.

“Everyone has choices that they make in life,” Campbell said. “I just believe she has made a lot of the right choices. She wanted and expected more out of herself than a lot of people do. Just because you come from a bad situation doesn’t mean that’s the way your life has to be.”

He said Jennifer had the ingredients to be successful in life: education, employment and a positive, significant adult in her life.

Jennifer doesn’t go to seminars or conferences anymore, but she gladly assists anyone who asks for her help. She is happy and busy with her job, her husband and her daughter, Morgan Jade, who was born in 2005.

“When I had her, it just made my life complete,” she said. “I was so glad that I had a girl. I will give her that relationship that I so long desired with my own mother. Her life will be so different from mine. I am always kissing her and telling her that I love her.”

Jennifer hasn’t seen her mother in 12 years. She remains married to the man who abused Jennifer. Jennifer hasn’t seen her brothers in nearly 10 years. She remains close to an uncle and cousin who supported her.

Jennifer said she doesn’t dwell on the past.

“It’s more of a mental thing. I just always think forward. I don’t think, ‘Oh I can’t do this because this happened to me, or my life is horrible because I don’t have this or that.’ I just try to make everything positive. I still have bad days. You can’t blame your whole life on what happened as a kid. You have to go forward.”

Though she thinks forward, Jennifer does keep some of the past with her. The alarm clock she received on her 13th birthday is in the guest bedroom of her Anderson Township home.

“Every once in a while, I look at it and kind of smile,” Jennifer said. “It keeps me humble. I look at it and I say, ‘that’s where I came from.’”

Her story inspires even Campbell, who knows it so well.

“Jennifer is such a good-hearted person,” said Campbell, Jennifer’s social worker who remains a friend. “She’s done numerous things with the state and with the system. She’s given back as well. She’s living the American dream.

“Whenever I get discouraged, she’s someone I can look to and say, ‘Hey, maybe we will have another youth who is successful like Jennifer’.”

# R.G. WILLIAMS

By John C.K. Fisher



While some children dream of being a pilot, ship captain or race car driver, R.G. Williams had a more modest goal growing up in Louisville.

"I always wanted to be a bus driver," said Williams, 29, who still lives in Louisville.

Williams, the second youngest of 10 children, grew up in a low-income, public housing complex during the 1980s.

He didn't see many airplanes as a youth. He couldn't imagine being the captain of a ship because ocean liners weren't a part of his world. And race cars? Being an hour's drive from Indianapolis was about as close as Williams got to cars built for races, speed and glamour.

But buses? Williams had admired Transit Authority of River City buses since he was 5 years old and began boarding them for school. He liked the power of the machines, the bells, radio and "whoosh" of the doors opening and closing.

He said he also admired the drivers, who were friendly and chatted with the riders. He said he liked the way drivers picked up people for work, for church and for recreation. He said he saw how the drivers were respected and became a part of people's lives.

---

## R.G. WILLIAMS

Age:	29
Occupation:	Bus Driver
Residence:	Louisville
Education:	Junior at the University of Louisville
Delinquency History:	Convicted as a juvenile in the theft of a public city bus; received probated sentence

---

At 13, Williams had driven nothing more spectacular than a bicycle. But he couldn't contain himself. He had to drive a bus. He had to know how it felt to be in control of that huge machine.

So he devised a plan to board a TARC bus, drive it across town and live his dream ... even if it would mean a trip to juvenile detention, a \$200 fine, a lecture from his parents and so much publicity that news shows, his family and friends, and his current employer, the Transit Authority of River City – still talk about the event, more than 15 years later.

Williams said he is glad that his case was handled in juvenile court instead of adult court. And since 2006 is the 100th anniversary of the juvenile justice system in Kentucky, Williams said the commonwealth needs to maintain its separate justice systems for juveniles and adults.

Williams, who is completing his undergraduate degree in public administration at the University of Louisville, said he hopes speaking about his youthful indiscretion will help another teen avoid some of his mistakes.

“Catch them while they are young, while there is hope,” Williams said.

And in Williams' case, the younger, the better.

He said he was about 10 when he thought about driving a bus. He said he often sat in the front of the bus and asked the drivers how to start the bus, how to use the microphones, how to open the doors and shut them.

The drivers were quick to answer his questions. They enjoyed speaking to a boy who memorized their routes and knew their names.

By the time he was 13, Williams knew the route of the bus he wanted to “borrow” – the 19 from south Louisville. But Williams wasn't just going to jump on a bus, start it and crash.

He took a year to devise his plan. He went to a consignment shop and bought a pair of pants and shirt to match the Navy blue uniforms that TARC bus drivers wore. He searched different stores and carefully found an aluminum badge that, at a glance, could be mistaken for the badge that TARC drivers put on their coat pockets. He also found a black cap to complete his outfit.

When to do it? And where?

Williams, a student at Jesse Stuart Middle School, decided to take the bus after school one day in September 1990, but he wanted to beat rush hour.

TARC at the time had a bus garage at 29th Street and Broadway. He went to the station, looked around and found an empty bus.

Williams said he didn't need a key to start the bus – he wouldn't explain how buses are started – but he knew how to get the bus going after he adjusted the seat and his mirrors.

He said he climbed in, shut the doors, started the bus, made a left turn and headed down Broadway Street. On the way out of the garage, however, he aroused suspicion because he clipped a maintenance truck.

"I just jetted down Broadway Street," Williams said.

Someone tried to stop him and tell him about the truck, Williams said, but by then he was off. He said he felt a rush as he drove toward downtown. He saw passengers that wanted him to stop, but he had decided he wasn't going to carry his impersonation that far.

"I wasn't going to pick anyone up," Williams said.

Along the way, Williams spotted one of his friends from junior high school. He said the boy's mouth popped open when Williams stopped, opened the door and waved.

"I had told him the week before that I was going to take a bus on a spin, drive it around the block and park it," Williams said.

By then, Williams had been driving for more than 15 minutes. TARC authorities were calling him on the radio, asking him to identify himself.

He didn't pick up the microphone, and he kept driving. TARC officials called police to help them stop the bus and its unidentified driver.

Williams – who had never even driven a car at this point – said he kept police and TARC on the run for the next two hours by following the 19 route and not panicking. He said he was careful not to hit any vehicles and stopped at each red traffic light.

Finally, a police cruiser pulled in front of him in downtown Louisville and Williams had to decide – push the cruiser out of the way with the bus or give up?

He gave up. He said he had accomplished his goal; he had driven a bus. He said he didn't want to steal a bus or get someone hurt.

"The police officer said, 'What are you doing on this bus?' and I said, 'Officer, I'm the driver'."



Williams said he was taken to juvenile detention, where he had to wait until his parents came to get him. He said he was charged with joyriding. His parents had to pay \$200 to repair the maintenance truck he hit on his way out of the bus garage.

He said he was surprised that TARC authorities weren't more upset with him.

"They told me they were impressed with the way that I drove," Williams said. "They said to come back in 10 years and see about a job."

Indeed, Williams, who graduated from high school at the age of 16 and served in the military, has been a TARC bus driver for the past four years.

However, Williams said he received less than a hero's welcome from his parents, Lola Moore and Charles Williams.

"I was expecting to get the beating of my life," Williams said. However, the lectures from his parents had a more lasting effect.

"They told me to change my ways," Williams said. "My father said that I let him down. That stayed with me more than any punishment they could have given me."

Williams said that his parents separated when he was about 6 and that he was disappointed in himself for bringing them together for his appearance in juvenile detention. He said he preferred praise from them when he did well in school.

And he decided to take to heart his mother's advice the day of his arrest. He said that his mother told him that his situation could always be worse and to never take his good fortune for granted. She also told him to help others who weren't as fortunate as he was.

"My mother had this saying, 'The people that you meet are never more than one blessing ahead of you or more than one blessing behind you'." Williams said.

His mother, Lola Moore, died in 1996. Williams promised her that he would not only lead a good life himself but also help others.

He wants to go to law school after he completes his degree from the University of Louisville. He said the recent shootings in Louisville have convinced him that he wants to help change what he believes is a lack of hope among many youth.

"I think I want to be a civil rights lawyer," Williams said. "I'm all for juvenile justice. It is so important that we stand for something. There is so much potential for this community. I am a product of this community, and I can be an example that you can be anything and that you can succeed."

The fact that Williams has recovered from his scrape with the law and been successful in his life doesn't surprise Harry Rothgerber, the first assistant Commonwealth attorney for Jefferson County.

Rothgerber, 58, was a public defender when he represented Williams in court for swiping the TARC bus more than 15 years ago. He said Williams was an intelligent youngster who worked with the court system rather than fight it.

"A lot of kids had no chance because of their various life experiences. Robert was different. He had a goal. And in addition to being goal-driven, he was smart," Rothgerber recalls.

"He knew he wasn't going to beat the system. Once he figured that out, he went with the system and used it to get out."

Rothgerber said Williams received social and vocational counseling that he used to achieve his goal of graduating high school, going to college and becoming a bus driver. He said Williams decided to invest in his own future and make the best out of his life.

"He has succeeded in staying out of trouble and being an asset to the community," Rothgerber said.

Williams says he wants to go to law school after he completes his degree from the University of Louisville. He said recent shootings in Louisville have convinced him that he wants to help change what he believes is a lack of hope among many youth.

# JENNIFER ZACCHEUS

By Debra Ann Vance



When Jennifer Zaccheus was 7, she was charged with vandalism and breaking and entering. She and some boys broke into an apartment on a military base, broke out windows, knocked holes in walls and poured white paint everywhere, including on the hardwood floors.

"We vandalized it pretty bad," Jennifer recalled.

The next year she set fire to a shed and was charged with arson. Jennifer was an only child and an Army brat. She lived with her mother, Brenda Zaccheus and stepfather, Dennis Narramore. Army officials told Mrs. Zaccheus that if her daughter got into more trouble, Mrs. Zaccheus could be kicked out of the service. Jennifer continued to get in trouble, but mostly in school. Mrs. Zaccheus remained in the military and retired after 21 years, but she believed a change in environment – from city life to the country – would help Jennifer.

The family moved from North Carolina to Falmouth when Jennifer was 12. But Mrs. Zaccheus' plan didn't work. Jennifer started using marijuana while a student at Pendleton County Middle School. On her first day of school at Pendleton County High School, someone called Jennifer a racist name. Jennifer didn't understand the slur, but she beat up the girl anyway. She received in-school suspension, and there she met other troubled students.

---

## JENNIFER ZACCHEUS

**Age:** 22

**Occupation:** Legal Secretary

**Residence:** Newport

**Education:** Graduate, Pendleton County High School, (junior at NKU, majoring in English).

**Delinquency History:** breaking and entering, vandalism, arson, out-of-control teen; ward of the state; various drug and alcohol charges

---

Her marijuana use escalated. Then she started dating older men who were into drugs. She tried cocaine, crank and pain pills. Her drug of choice was OxyContin. She drank a pint of whiskey for lunch and more when she got home from school. She started staying out all night, coming home at 6 a.m. Her parents nailed shut the windows in her bedroom in an effort to keep her from sneaking out at night. But Jennifer got bold and went out the front door, yelling and arguing with her mother and stepfather about how she was going to do whatever she wanted. She was barely a teenager, yet she was addicted to alcohol and drugs. Her life was out of control, but she didn't think she had a problem.

Jennifer's mother and stepfather argued constantly about what to do with her. Mrs. Zaccheus filed out of control charges against her daughter. On Jennifer's court date, she and her mother got into a fight on the courthouse steps because Jennifer refused to go inside. Jennifer was loud, cursing at her mother. The two then physically fought.

"I was so disrespectful to my mother," Jennifer recalled.

When they finally made it to the courtroom, the judge ordered Jennifer to undergo a psychological evaluation and to return home. Mrs. Zaccheus explained to the judge that her daughter had been evaluated, and she didn't want her to come home. After conferring with the judge, Mrs. Zaccheus decided to give up custody of her daughter and turn her over to the state.

"It was absolutely horrible to give custody of your child to someone else. It's like you admit defeat," said Mrs. Zaccheus, now 43. "It really hurt. But I needed help. I wanted somebody to help my baby. I couldn't control her. If I didn't turn her over to the state, I believe she would have killed herself."

At 13, Jennifer was sent to the Mt. Sterling Shelter for Juveniles. It was the first of many state placements. She always found trouble. Mrs. Zaccheus said her daughter was always angry, and no one knew why. One doctor said she had attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and prescribed Ritalin. Another said she was bipolar. Yet another blamed her temper on the fact that her father left when Jennifer was a toddler. Jennifer said she just didn't fit in.

"I had such a wall up," Jennifer says. "I didn't let anybody in – what a lonely life."

While in state custody, Jennifer fought state workers or fellow classmates in the system. She didn't follow the rules or the plans set out for her. She refused to participate in counseling sessions. When she did earn time to go home, it was only for a short while. She always resorted to fighting, using drugs or drinking alcohol, and she soon ended up back in a group home or detention center. She had not only a social worker but also a probation officer.

"I would purposely get in trouble so they would have to restrain me, and (I could) get a shot of Thorazine," Jennifer said. "I wanted the feeling; I wanted to be high. I enjoyed the padded room. If they didn't get my medicine, I knocked on the floor all night long. I didn't think I had a problem with drugs. I thought I had parents that didn't care. I hated the world and I hated

everybody. My mom tried to do family counseling, but I refused. I felt like she chose a man over her daughter. I didn't like the fact that she turned me over to the state."

Her stay at Mt. Sterling was supposed to last 30 days. She had a week to go when she hit a staff member in the head with a stapler. She was then sent to the Children's Psychiatric Hospital in Covington, where she stabbed a girl with a fork.

She was sent to the rehabilitation and psychiatric ward in Jeffersonville. She was there for nine months and was supposed to be going through a four-phase program. She never completed phase one. She was diagnosed as bipolar. She ended up trading her pills for others, such as Valium.

When her grandmother died, Jennifer couldn't attend her funeral because state workers said she wasn't stable. Then she stayed for three months at Holly Hill Children's Services in California and attended Campbell County High School. But she got busted for trafficking speed and marijuana. One of the girls she knew overdosed on speed. "She told officials I was one of her suppliers," Jennifer said. She was expelled and went back to Pendleton High School. She was in trouble within a month. She smoked marijuana on the way to school. "I was trying to make up for lost time. I partied harder than I ever did," Jennifer said. Within three months, she was locked up again. She was sent to the Campbell Regional Juvenile Detention Center.

"They didn't know what to do with me. A lot of places wouldn't take me because of my violence." But no matter where Jennifer went, she kept up with her schoolwork. She wanted to make sure she graduated with her class. She graduated from Pendleton County High School in 2002.

A few times, Jennifer made up her mind that she wanted to stay sober, but she relapsed. She made the mistake of hanging around with old friends. She stole from her mother and from her friends at school. She would get money from her classmates with the promise of bringing them drugs. She kept their money and purchased drugs for herself.

In the spring 2001, several events changed Jennifer's life. First, her boyfriend passed out on train tracks and was killed when a train ran over him. She used his death as an excuse to get high. She went on a binge. Once she overdosed, and OxyContin had to be pumped out of her stomach.

Jennifer was also charged with alcohol intoxication. She was cited for criminal mischief when she threw bottles of alcohol out of the car window. On her 16th birthday, her probation officer locked her up to protect her. She went to back to the Campbell detention center.

"That was the worst detox ever," Jennifer said. "I literally felt like I was going to die. I was sick. I was so miserable. I didn't want to look at myself in the mirror. I didn't like what I had become. I wanted to start over. I hurt so many people in the process. I had to make amends."

Now, 22, Jennifer credits the system with saving her life. She is thankful that her mother cared enough about her to get help. "If I hadn't been involved in the system I would either be dead or doing time. I hated it while I was in it. But looking back, it was the best thing that could have happened to me. The system saved my life."

At one of her placements, Jennifer met a man who helped her turn her life around. While she stayed at the Maplewood Children's Home in Boone County, Jennifer went with other residents to AA meetings in Newport. A man who had been sober for 30 years ran the meetings. While Jennifer didn't listen to counselors, she respected him. "You couldn't fake it with him. He always kept it real."

When Jennifer got into trouble and had to leave Maplewood for the Campbell detention center, she asked if the center could hold AA meetings. At Jennifer's request, the man who ran the sessions in Newport began holding AA meetings at the detention facility.

The man passed away this summer. But Jennifer has the many letters that he wrote to her. She said his words gave her hope.

"He promised me over and over that life is worth having ... that it gets better," Jennifer said. "He promised that I would feel better, so much better when I was sober."

The man also introduced Jennifer to God. Jennifer said she never was a religious person, but that has all changed.

"I believe God has a plan for everybody. I had to go through what I did to help others."

Jennifer has been clean for five years. She is now a junior at Northern Kentucky University majoring in criminal justice and English. She wants to become a lawyer. She works as a legal secretary at a law firm in Covington.

Jennifer also volunteers at Kenton County and Campbell County Juvenile Drug Courts, serving as a mentor to young people in the court system. Jennifer also has provided education about alcohol and drug abuse to teens in the detention center.

Gary Taylor, a former superintendent of the Campbell County detention center, met Jennifer when she came to the detention center as a troubled teen.

"I've seen a big change in Jennifer over the years," Taylor said. "She has pretty much made the decision to change her life around. Jennifer, at this point, has been at my house, and she's involved with my family in different ways as a friend to my daughter. That wouldn't have happened had she not made that big turnaround. She turned out to be a lovely young lady, and she is willing to give back to the community."

She attends AA meetings regularly and serves as secretary for her house meetings. Once a week, she spends time with a friend who is wheelchair bound, taking him shopping or out to

eat. She is an AA sponsor and plays on an AA softball team. She always makes time for those who need someone to talk to.

“I’ve seen a lot of people make changes, but Jennifer definitely stands out,” Taylor said. “She took what people gave her and had the motivation to do something in life. I’ve seen her work with other kids, and she’s very willing to put herself out there.”

Jennifer apologized to her mother for all the pain she had caused. She said she wanted to be a better daughter. Instead of saying “here we go again,” Mrs. Zaccheus embraced her daughter and they cried together.

Mrs. Zaccheus’ only wish was for Jennifer to visit her once a week. Mrs. Zaccheus and her husband live in Williamstown. Every Sunday, Jennifer makes the drive to spend the day with her mother. They have dinner and then sit and talk for hours.



“It’s so wonderful. It’s the highlight of my week,” Mrs. Zaccheus said. “My prayers were answered. I have my baby back. I am so proud of my daughter. She’s turned out to be such a wonderful person.”

Some people  
live mixed up lifes..  
Yours dont have  
to be... change now...

*Second Chance*

*If I was to get a second chance.*

*Which is going to come soon.*

*I'm telling you, I'm really changing my ways my way of living my way of doing*

*My whole look at life.*

*When I am given a second chance I'm not going to hurt my self or anyone else*

*By selling dope, smoking weed. Standing the streets all hours of the night.*

*I'm done with having that hustlin life high. It's really time to say good-bye.*

*Because there's always a end whether its dead, jail, or being robbed. I am*

*Young and receivin a second chance not everybody is. So I'm going to do*

*Something with mine. I'm going to continue to go to school when I am set free*

*Again and these doors open. I'm still going to dream big only bigger now the*

*Legal way with a real career. Not hurting my self on the path there. Show God I*

*Know the true meaning of living his will rather than self-will. I am going to*

*Be a better daughter, a better sister, a better aunt, and a better friend. When the*

*Day comes and I am given that second chance I can truly say the world is*

*Going to see my advance.*



Say No  
To Drugs

Is not  
everything...  
It comes  
and goes.



Second Chance

I will change the way I talk and the way I walk and instead of

having my head down

I will raise it up

My Grandma is sad and so am I

I don't know why I did the things I did, but now

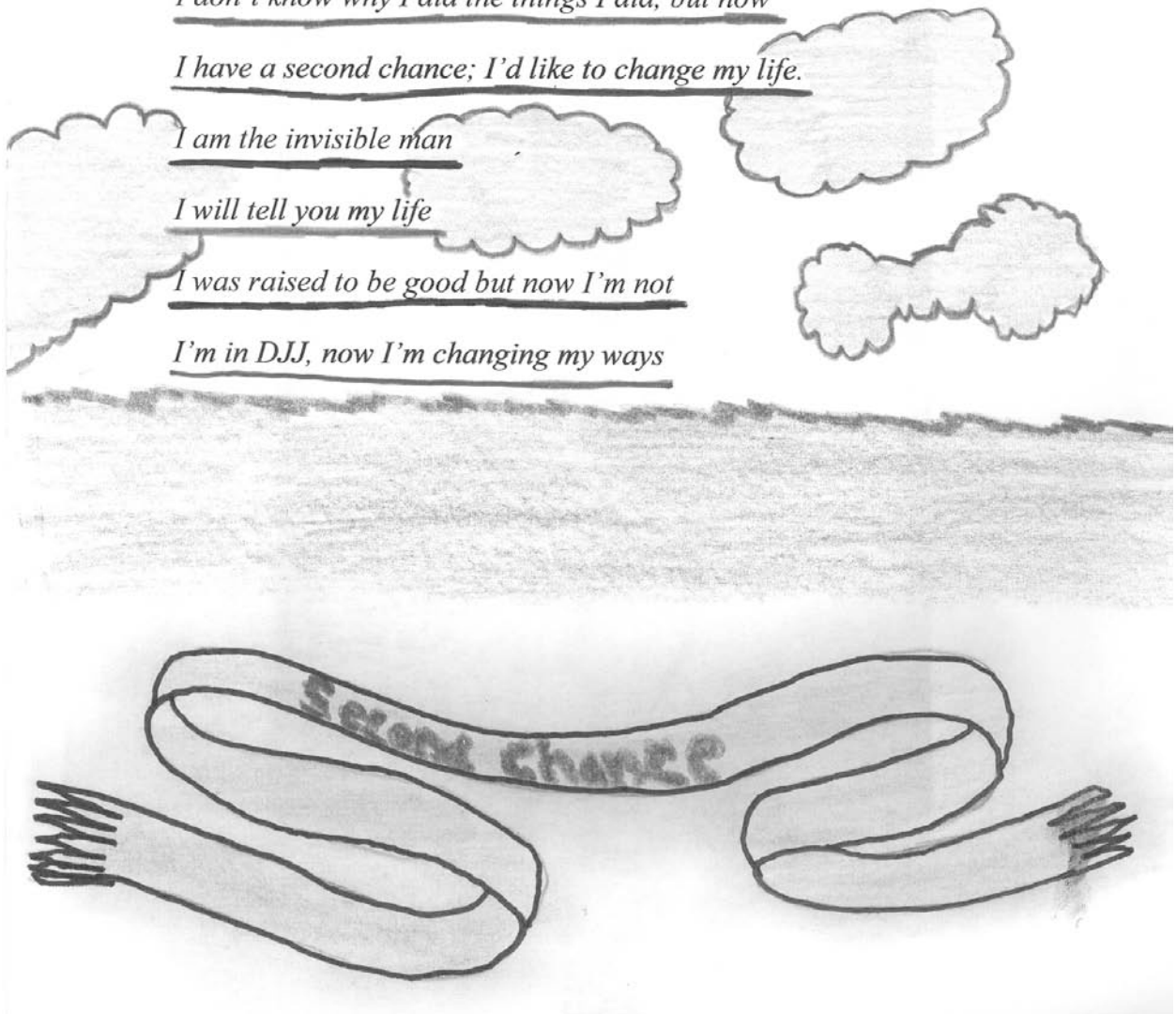
I have a second chance; I'd like to change my life.

I am the invisible man

I will tell you my life

I was raised to be good but now I'm not

I'm in DJJ, now I'm changing my ways





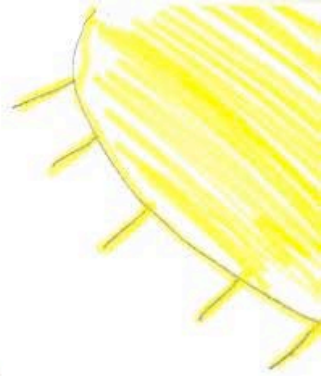
More Love No more Pain

If I get another chance  
I change my life and do things  
right, to get through  
day & Night. I never give up  
the fight of hard times  
in life. I need more love  
and no more pain, because  
one day pain will drive  
me insane. I'm going to do  
every thing in my will  
to do right when I get  
out of jail.



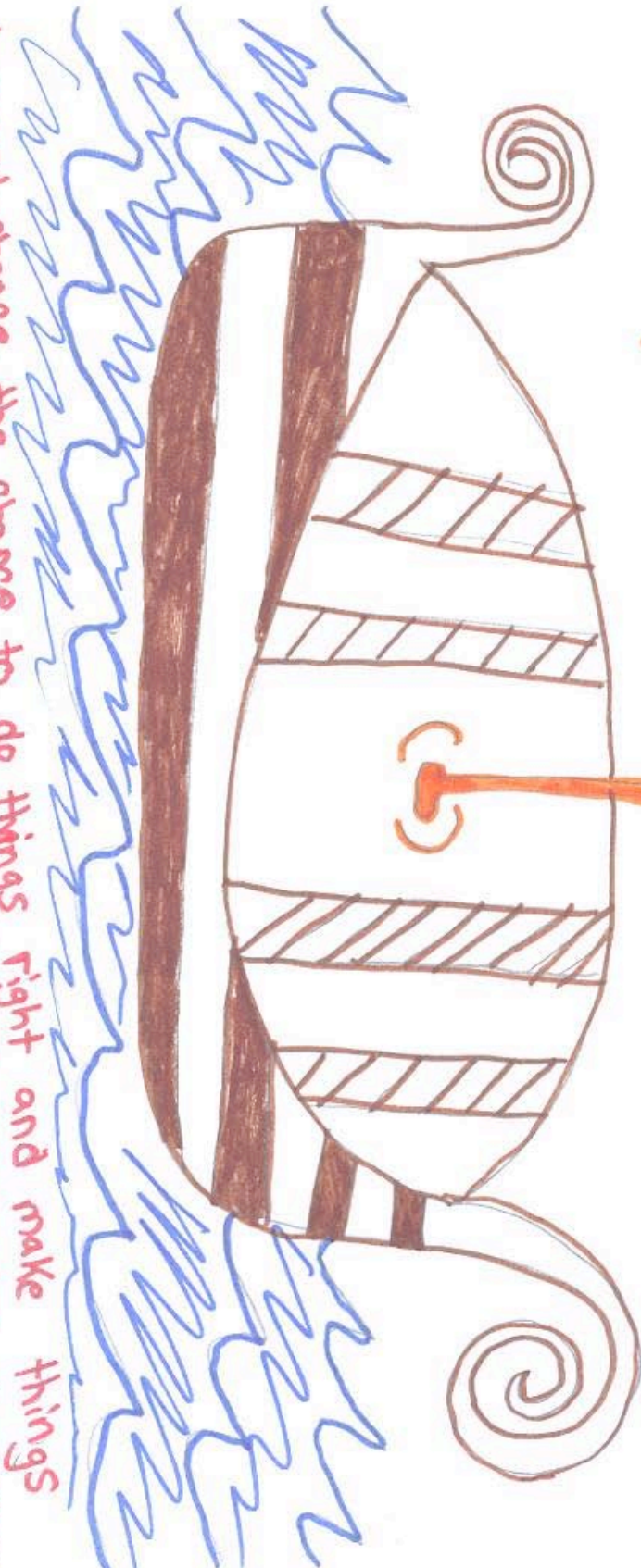
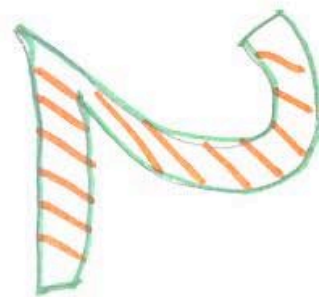
Second Chance





You can't  
change the  
wind

But you can  
always adjust  
your sail!!



A second chance, the chance to do things right and make things better in your life. A second chance to build a stronger mind to overcome and say no to the things that suck you into trouble!! The second chance to be the person you are not but want to be!! As my wish I have got a second chance. With my second chance I know I will change the



# Second Chance

If I got a second chance I  
wouldn't do drugs or steal...

I wouldn't hurt people and  
make them feel the way I made  
them feel.

If I got a second chance I  
wouldn't listen to my friends I'd  
apologize to that girl I hurt and  
finally make ~~amends~~ amends.

If I got a second chance I'd  
strive for success, and in every-  
thing that I did I'd always  
try my best.

If I got a second chance, what a  
chance it would be, to be successful  
and really make something out of me  
+ second chance... A second chance...

Please Sir that's all I really need