

Reuter graduates from drug court

By **Todd Marver**
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Alex Reuter graduated from the Washington/Perry County Pathway to Recovery drug court program on Thursday, June 8 at the Washington County Judicial Center.

Reuter said his giving back project was the final step to get to where he's at now. He said he had many ideas, but certain things happened and his original idea fell through.

"What do you do to give back, especially to a community that I've done nothing but take from and take advantage of? There's a million ideas you could come up with. Some easier than others and some you don't want to do," he said.

Reuter said the reason he was able to get to this point is because of the first responders and police department. He said for his giving back project he gave time to help out the police department in any way he could.

"My journey in this started a long time ago, but I got to this program because my fun took my life. The first responders gave it back to me. I took decals off of the cop cars. That sounds easy, but it's not easy at all. I helped with a benefit, which turned out fantastic. I was there just to offer help and I ended up flipping pancakes. I was the pancake man. That was fun," he said.

Reuter said with the passing of his grandmother, there were clothes he could've held onto and kept in a bag in a closet, but he donated some of them goodwill.

"Someone needs them somewhere and I think she would've liked that as well," he said. "I also donated a couple tables and a dresser that we were just getting rid of. I donated some money to the police department as well because that's why I'm here."

Reuter said he can continue giving back.

"If you guys need anything, you've got my email and phone number. I'm not far at all. I can't believe I made it. I proved myself wrong because I didn't think I was going to be able to do it. It isn't easy and there is a lot of giving up things and a lot of putting things back into what you want. It takes work. Nothing good comes easy. I started from the bottom, now I'm here," he said.

Reuter was in the drug court program for a little over two years. Resident Circuit Judge Dan Emge said that for the first couple months he didn't know if Reuter was going to make it or not.

"You started out with a lot of violations out of dishonesty. That's to be expected. What I was concerned about from the beginning was your lack of maturity. You've changed completely," he said. "I remember when we were trying to get you to get a job because we wanted you to have something to do in life. You were very hesitant and you applied all over the place. We don't know if you were responding to the calls

or the feedback from the employers or not. All we know is you were submitting applications. You applied to five jobs a week for months."

Emge said that Reuter finally got a job at a tire shop in Breese, and now Reuter is working full time at a coal mine.

"You're making decent money. You're busy, can pay your own bills and support yourself financially. That's exactly what we're looking for. That immaturity somewhere along the line turned around and you turned into a mature man at this point that is prepared to support yourself financially and provide for a future family hopefully at some point for the rest of your life," he said.

Emge said this is just the beginning of the line for Reuter in his recovery.

"You have to keep using the tools you've learned for the past two years for many years to come, maybe the rest of your life. You've got to stay on that. Don't let that slip. Whatever you do in life, your family, friends, relationships, employment, keep your recovery first and foremost. I want to congratulate you for your efforts in drug court and we wish you the best and come back and see us," he said.

Public Defender Dennis Hatch said drug court started because meth, fentanyl and cocaine was reoccurring with all the people that were addicted. He said they would go back into prison and come out and reoffend and go back in, and the Illinois courts, prosecutors and defense attorneys said there is a better way to do this.

"Almost everybody in drug court has been arrested multiple times because this was the last step. Either get yourself straightened out or you're going to go right back in there. As the judge told us all, you don't get a whole lot out there. It's easier to be in prison because you don't have to deal with anything. What all of us are trying to do in here whether it's our group, the judge, counselors and police who have to deal with this all the time, they're trying to get people help. They've got to do their job because they're afraid someone else might get injured or pass away because of the fentanyl," he said.

Hatch said the biggest thing is that Reuter was sitting there. He said these days with the fentanyl that's everywhere, that doesn't always happen.

"I congratulate you for that. He got there because of the support of our group, the judge, family members and other people here," he said.

Hatch said he always tries to find a song to play during graduation. This time it was 'Lean on Me.' He said they went through some songs and he never knows which one to do, and he finally changed his mind and picked 'Lean On Me' because of Reuter.

"He has really developed a lot. I knew Alex before. We've had a lot of conversations when he was at his worst. He has changed his



Judge Dan Emge presents Alex Reuter, right, with his graduation certificate. Photo by Todd Marver

whole life. What I've learned about him and this group here, they rely on each other. They've always helped other people get rides. What I want to try to do with this song is to keep that together, not only with them, but the police and you folks," he said.

Former Nashville Police officer Kim Neuner, who appeared at the graduation by video, said she was excited about Reuter graduating. She said she has asked people about Reuter quite often.

"I can't express how proud I am of you for graduating and I always had faith in you. I know how much you care about your friends and I know how much you hated seeing your friends go down that bad path and some of your friends not making it. I knew deep down you wanted to be better. I'm so proud of you for actually doing it. I always knew you could. I'm glad that I was able to be here on video. I was just asking your dad two weeks ago when I was home how you were doing. I think about you often. The road ahead is not going to be easy. Keep working hard and I know you can do it," she said.

Program officer Heather Beninati said on Reuter's first day, he ran up to her and asked her questions about how she would work with him on drug tests.

"There was a certain time you couldn't make it because you work and you were all nervous about it. Up until today, you were still nervous about it. I don't think you're ever going to lose that kind of mentality of moving forward and looking up. I'm so proud of you. Good luck," she said.

Chris Mathis, ComWell counselor, said it has never been dull or boring when they were counseling, but there wasn't a lot of drama with it either.

"For the most part with me, he's been straightforward and compliant. He's been teachable. He's been willing to listen to what I have to say. Even if I could tell he didn't agree with me, he would still

listen to what I had to say and at least take it to heart," he said.

Mathis said there were a lot of interesting times with Reuter's writing assignments he had to do.

"The judge gave him a sanction of having to write a report that was three pages. He had turned three pages in and when the judge counted the words, there were 54 words on three pages with block letters. There have been some interesting things with him," he said.

Mathis said Reuter is very insightful and intelligent when he chooses to use it and to be.

"When I first came to the agency about a year ago, I adopted the guys onto my caseload from the drug court. He made the transition very easy for me. I really appreciate that and hope the best for him and I'll never forget our counseling sessions," he said.

Crystal May, assistant state's attorney, said her involvement with Reuter has been less than everybody involved and less than most of the state's attorney's office as well. She said everything she's seeing, she's seeing from a distance, but what she noticed recently is that Reuter finally learned the value of "you."

"I hope that for your sake and your family's sake, you can keep that. That's what I've seen grow the most and I hope that sticks," she said.

Probation supervisor Beth Cassidy said she's glad Reuter was able to show everybody he could do this. She said she's sure there are doubters out there and she's proud of Reuter.

"It has been an honor to work with you for a couple years. You've done some pretty cool things while you've been here. One being this job you've got. This is a job and a career. This is a game changer. That has to feel good. I'm glad you got that. Your giving back project was amazing and helping people who have helped you in the past," she said.



GDB CEO Sanjeev Bagaria speaks at an event at GDB on June 12. Photo by Todd Marver

GDB celebrates state passing legislation for easier access to return paint

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GDB celebrated Illinois passing legislation that allows consumers to have easier access to return paint at an event at its Nashville facility on Monday, June 12.

"Now with Illinois passing this legislation, I think it is the best thing that has happened for our state. We're looking forward to it," GDB CEO Sanjeev Bagaria said. "Today, 25% of the population has the ability to return leftover paint."

Bagaria explained what GDB does in paint recycling. He said GDB takes raw materials, which are used in paint recycling.

"Any company that makes raw material to manufacture paint, you will always have something that is not up to spec. Any material that has old age or is discontinued, you have two options. You can reuse, recycle or it will go for disposal," he said.

As far as paint manufacturers, Bagaria said GDB has several plants in the US and should there be any product that is not conforming to the

buying customers, GDB will fill those.

"There are times when a brand is discontinued or if there is any type of business change, we take those products," he said.

Bagaria said there are retailers who have very liberal return policies where you can return the can if you're not satisfied. He said they get sold for a low price, but not everything gets sold in the stores, and GDB sells this to Walmart.

"The leftover paints at Walmart stores get to our distribution centers. We have millions of gallons in the US of leftover paint. This paint that could be put to good use ends up in landfill. In America, 80 million gallons of paint if they do not have a good solution may end up in landfill," he said.

Bagaria said one gallon of paint if it goes into landfill has the potential to contaminate water for 50 people throughout the year.

"Imagine when 70 to 80 million gallons of paint goes to landfill. We have handled more than 1.2 billion pounds of paint and raw materials since our inception," he said.

The facts about insulation and home efficiency

Insulation can go a long way toward making a home more comfortable. Insulation reduces the transfer of heat from indoors and outdoors so homes stay more comfortable in both the winter and summer. Insulation also can block exterior noise. A properly insulated home is a must, particularly in the wake of rising energy costs. Insulation will help a home be more energy efficient.

Insulation is easily taken for granted. The following are some facts about insulation and home efficiency that illustrate how much homeowners can benefit from upgrading their insulation.

- Insulation is made from a variety of materials, including fiberglass, wool, cellulose, and spray foam.
- Unless damaged, insulation lasts for the life of the building. Some settling of insulation may occur, particularly with loose-fill type insulation, and gaps can be filled in.
- During the Middle Ages, walls of homes were stuffed with straw and mud to help keep out the cold. It is one of the first documented types of insulation.
- According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, insulation saves more than 600 times more

energy each year than compact fluorescent lights, Energy Star Appliances, and Energy Star windows combined.

- For every Btu consumed in the production of insulation each year, 12 Btus are saved by the use of insulation, says A+ Insulation of Kansas City.
- An insulating material's resistance to heat flow is measured in terms of its thermal resistance, or R-value. The higher the R-value, the greater the insulating effectiveness. An insulation contractor can let a homeowner know how much insulation and what R-value is recommended for his or her climate.
- Manufacturers continue to experiment with insulation materials. Environmentally friendly options include recycled cotton denim, paper or plant cellulose, and sheep's wool.
- Large pieces of insulation are called batts. Traditionally they are made from pink fiberglass, which is extremely fine woven glass. It's important to realize fiberglass insulation can release small particles or fibers in the air when disturbed, so respiratory protection and gloves should be used when handling to reduce risk of irritation.

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