

Drug Court...from Page 1A



Tim Ryan addressed hundreds of Union County High School students at the Fine Arts Center on Wednesday, Oct. 4. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

commitment to sobriety. That was the message on Thursday, Oct. 5, as several program participants from Union and Towns counties graduated from drug court after more than two years of court-imposed personal accountability.

A special guest to the Oct. 5 graduation was Tim Ryan, known nationally as the

“Dope Man” after his A&E TV documentary on addiction that aired in the summer.

Ryan runs the “A Man in Recovery Foundation,” and is the national outreach director for Transformations Drug and Alcohol Treatment Centers.

Prior to his rise to national fame, which has included high-profile interviews on Fox News, CNN and other TV outlets, Ryan served prison

time for crimes connected to his addiction to heroin and other substances, and he even lost his son to a heroin overdose.

Since then, he has committed his life to staying sober and helping others to get treatment for and master their addictions.

He came to the North Georgia Mountains on an invitation extended by his longtime friend Jennifer Staller, who is a therapist with Cornerstone Counseling Center.

As an addiction specialist, Staller works directly with North Enotah Drug Court program participants, and she and Court Coordinator Barbara Honaker were thrilled to learn that Ryan would be visiting to speak with program participants.

“If you think you are going to walk out of here and kumbaya, things are going to be good – they won’t,” said Ryan in the graduation. “You’re going to have trials and tribulations. You could have a family member that passes away, it could be a good friend that dies from a drug overdose.

“It could be the loss of a

job. It could be a grandmother that passes away. And you need to have the coping skills and life skills to make the right choices to move forward.

“That is not picking up and using, because that’s what we’re used to doing. It’s working a program, it’s not being co-dependent on toxic people.”

Ryan asked that, while he was down here, he be allowed to speak in front of as many people as possible to spread his life story and message that there is hope after dope.

During his stay, Ryan reached more than 1,000 high school kids between Union County Schools and Towns County Schools in assemblies, and he hosted a public gathering the evening of Thursday, Oct. 5, at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center.

Ryan used both humor and the stark realities of addiction and statistics to convey a message that drug use can lead to dark situations, but that there’s always hope for better, drug-free days.

Towns County

Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw attended the drug court graduation in the Union County Courthouse, and he said he would like to see

about alternating the hosting of the North Enotah Drug Court graduation ceremonies between Towns and Union counties moving forward.



Cornerstones Counselor Jennifer Staller introducing her longtime friend Tim Ryan at drug court graduation on Thursday, Oct. 5. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

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