

“Twelve; is there life after rehab and recovery?”

Documentary to play at Oklahoma City libraries

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A riveting documentary about the lives of young addicts will play across the Oklahoma City metro area in the next week. The documentary deals with the harsh reality of substance abuse and addiction from initial usage to rehab and beyond. The documentary; “Twelve: is there life after rehab in recovery?” is a film offering a candid look at the progression and drug use of young people.

“We chose the name ‘Twelve’ because that is the average age that these young people started using drugs and alcohol,” said ‘Twelve’ co-producer Jack Sinclair. “It is often the initial age of experimentation in young people.” Sinclair adds that the addiction process is the same whether it is drugs or alcohol that people are using.

The family dynamics of experimentation are also a factor. “It is [drugs and alcohol] very often in the home and accessible to young people,” said Lynda Toney Bahr who co-produced the documentary. “The family dynamics are also a factor as to whether or not a child feels like they matter and feels a part of the family. Those feelings can lead one to self medicating and with what was an experiment yesterday is now an addiction.” Bahr also said that factors in the family dynamics of addiction are also denial, controlling, enabling, secrecy as well as hereditary factors related to addictive behaviors.

Here are some of the real statements that came from those young Oklahomans who were interviewed in the documentary, “Twelve.” *“I loved being drunk the first time because of all the feelings of insecurity I had; When I had a drink I didn’t have to feel anymore; It was ‘medicative’ drinking, That was my way out; I didn’t care anymore; I was angry and resentful; I wanted to die.”*

These true statements represent the painful reality of what many young people have had to, and continue to struggle with, while in the grips of this devastating, life threatening illness. That disease is the disease of alcoholism and drug addiction and many teens today; even pre-teens, experiment and struggle with these addictions.

"In the United States, approximately three-fourths of all deaths among persons aged 10--24 years result from only four causes: motor-vehicle crashes, other unintentional injuries, homicide, and suicide. Results from the 1999 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey demonstrate that numerous high school students engage in behaviors that increase their likelihood of death from these four causes...[including alcohol and illicit drug use]" *Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), Centers for Disease Control, Risk Youth Behavior Surveillance.*

Within the next week, the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Library System is showing this significant film ‘Twelve,’ at no charge to the public. The dates, times and locations are: Downtown, Oct. 1, 6:30 pm; Belle Isle, Oct. 4, 2:00 pm; Choctaw, Oct. 6, 6 pm and Bethany, Oct 8, 6:30 pm. A special showing will be held on Oct. 3rd at 9:55 am for Bishop McGuinness students, parents and teachers. McGuinness (not an open, public event) has implemented the documentary into their student wellness program teaching curriculum.

Parents may not realize just how available illicit drugs are to their children. They may not realize how young children are when they begin to experiment with alcohol and drugs. Statistics can be sobering, and can alert parents to the need to communicate with their children about the dangers of substance abuse and help them develop strategies to cope with peer pressure. There are programs to help such as ‘A Chance to Change’ and ‘Oklahoma Outreach,’ which are two organizations geared to helping young people and their families. “We absolutely see success with these programs,” adds Bahr. “The seed is planted and they know, ‘when I am ready, I don’t have to die from alcoholism or drug addiction.’”

“That is the message,” adds Sinclair, who was motivated to work on this project after the death of his cousin; a death which was directly related to the disease of addiction.

To come from where these young people were to where they are now is absolutely amazing. Coming into recovery, even as a young person, it is possible. One of the participants quoted, “There is a huge opportunity to do great things in sobriety.” Sinclair added, “To my knowledge these kids are still doing great living a productive life in recovery.” One of those 20 people interviewed for the documentary has been sober over 25 years now. He started drinking and using at a young age and ‘got sober’ at age 17.

The producers of “12” would like to especially thank the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Library System and Bishop McGuinness High School for providing the venues for viewers to have an opportunity to see this important, educational documentary. Additional thanks also to all who have donated their time, their money (especially the Vickers family) and a special thanks to Oklahoma City’s own award winning director, Mr. Fritz Kirsch.

Any person, from counselors to active or recovering addicts to friends and family, are encouraged to attend. A panel of cast members will be available for Q & A after each showing. The documentary will play unedited and there is some objectionable language. The producers are also raising funds for additional teaching materials needed for use in schools across Oklahoma.

For more information about this documentary, visit www.12recovery.org or call (405) 842-2334. For more information about helpful organizations in Oklahoma City for teens, please visit www.oklahomaoutreach.com or www.achancetochange.org.