

NEWS

DRUG REHAB

Better with every chance

STEPHANIE DOUGLAS

STAFF WRITER

Getting off drugs isn't easy. But with lots of care and support, one young man is trying his best to reclaim his life. At 20, Gordon (not his real name) has been doing drugs for a number of years, and while he's proud of the work he's done and how far he's come, he's still working at getting better.

Right now, Gordon is employed full time, living back at home and working on his relationship with himself and his family. Gordon said he knows his parents care about him, but sometimes their love is a double-edged sword that he hasn't always been able to deal with. Gordon started drinking when he was about eight years old because there was always alcohol around his house. Mostly he drank to deal with the fighting between his parents and with his father's anger that was loud and violent.

When he was still in elementary school, Gordon said, "I got introduced to weed — I'd put cologne on so they couldn't smell it and wouldn't go home until I wasn't ripped out of my tree." Then he started using other drugs. He couldn't communicate his feelings around his situation and drugs and alcohol helped numb him enough to function. When he was in Grade 11, he started working, and the money he made paid for his habit, and the more he used, the more he needed. "My first reaction was — how am I going to deal with this," he said.

Although he was working at the time, he wasn't making enough to support his need, and that's when he "went to dea-

lin' and stealin' and rippin' people off," he admitted. Things turned sour for him just before he turned 19, and his parents kicked him out of house. So he "couch-surfed at friends and did lots and lots of coke — and was depressed."

"I was doing an eight-ball and a half of coke, that's seven-and-a-half grams of coke," Gordon said, or in other words, a \$220-a-day habit. It was at this point, Gordon's dad called RCMP Const. Bryson Hill for help. His dad showed up where Gordon was staying and asked if he wanted help. "It was the first time he had talked to me in a while. I said, yes, I want help," Gordon said.

With help from Hill, Gordon's dad arranged for him to go to Vision Quest, a treatment and recovery program in Vancouver. Wasting no time, his dad drove him to a friend's boat so they could get to the Mainland quicker. Gordon was surprised, he said, that "my uncles and aunts and grandparents showed up to say goodbye." When he said goodbye to his dad that day, Gordon said, "It's the first time I ever saw my dad cry."

When Gordon arrived in Horseshoe Bay, he was met by Jim O'Rourke, president of Vision Quest. He thought he would be at the home only a couple of weeks, but the minimum stay is 90 days. Coming off the drugs, all he wanted to do was sleep and eat. "I didn't want to do anything," he said, but he had to, because AA meetings are mandatory, as are house chores, because everyone in the home has to take responsibility for himself and has to pitch in.

Continued page A22

NEWS

DRUG REHAB

From page A8

"I never really thought what it would be like coming down off [coke] — I didn't realize. Oh man, it was hard," Gordon said. He remembers that it was well over a month of feeling sick every day before he felt he was starting to kick the habit and could "think of other things than just doing drugs," he said.

"To feel — it's awesome. Before, I was numb. Someone close to me died and I couldn't feel it. Now I get emotional, sad, I hurt. Before, nothing — I was just a ghost, a zombie. Now I feel human, alive. Before, all I felt was dead," described Gordon of his life before getting off drugs.

Being in a safe place like Vision Quest made a world of difference in his life, Gordon said. "I've learned how to cope. I used to bottle my emotions. Last year I lost a number of friends and family members, and before, I would have bottled up those feelings. I've learned to let it out, that it's OK to cry. I've learned that holding everything inside makes you weak," he said.

"Jim [O'Rourke, president of Vision Quest] made me realize what it means to become a man rather than a child," Gordon said. Each man in the home treatment centre has to do his share of cooking, cleaning, working and getting to meetings,

he said. "Jim always made sure the food was healthy and good. He cares about each and every one of us. [The other men in the home] made me feel wanted and helped me out a lot," Gordon said. Through his experience at Vision Quest, Gordon said he was taught and continues to learn to talk to others with respect and non-violence.

Gordon is honest that his recovery hasn't been smooth sailing. He said the first couple of time he came back home, it wasn't long before he got back into drugs. The first time he came home, he started doing heroin. He called for help and went back to Vision Quest. He's gone back twice. This last time he came back home he'd already managed to stay clean and sober for over three months.

Gordon believes he is still learning how to cope with his family issues and how to learn better and healthier ways of dealing with anger and conflict other than with drugs. Most of all, he said, if it hadn't been for O'Rourke and Vision Quest or his dad calling Const. Hill and asking for help, his life would be very different right now.

Gordon said he knows that he might fall back and might relapse even though he doesn't intend to. He also said he knows that as long as he keeps trying to do better, get better and take responsibility that there are people who will help him

FINDING HELP

It's not always easy knowing when the bottom has dropped out of a person's world or when they need help the most. Gordon, a young man fighting drug addictions, said he didn't realize how bad he was or how much trouble he was in until his father took intervention actions and asked RCMP Const. Bryson Hill for help. Hill, who works mainly with drug-related issues, said finding people help is often the most cost-effective way of dealing with their issues and one of the better ways of keeping the community safe. A big issue on

community. Here are some resources and numbers to call if you or a loved one needs help with drugs.

Addictions Services: 604-885-8678

Mental Health Services: 604-885-6101

Family Violence Information: 1-800-563-0808

Youth Against Violence Line: 1-800-680-4264

Crisis Line (for emotional crisis): 1-866-661-3311

Alcohol and Drug Referral Service: 1-800-661441

VISION QUEST RECOVERY SOCIETY PROGRAMS:

Hope House: Treatment facility

in the Lower Mainland: 1-604-537-4401

Satori House: Detoxification centre

in the Lower Mainland: 1-604-537-4401