

" I was sick and tired of being sick and tired."



"It's finally over. I can finally breathe again."

These are the words Tyler DiChichio thought to himself the day he went to the foster home for the last time to bring his son, Tyler Jr., home.

Someday, he will explain to his little boy, the extensive efforts he put forth to completely change his life, gain sobriety and have reunification day forever etched in his memory. "I always wanted to have a child," Tyler stated. "God blessed me with a beautiful, healthy son, and the ball's in my court, and I had to just take control of it."

Over a decade ago, Tyler suffered one of three car accidents which shattered his elbow. He was prescribed Oxycodone for the pain. This led to seeking cheaper drugs such as Heroin and Percocet to purchase on the street. "At one point, I had a 300 dollar a day habit," Tyler explained.

With the support of family members, Tyler entered detox twice along with other programs. Relapses continued. He was not working, and his weight escalated to 280 pounds in part from the multiple psychotropic medications he was prescribed. "At one point, I had five prescriptions," he stated. "I almost felt like a test dummy for prescriptions."

Methadone maintenance was Tyler's choice of treatment when he did attempt to remain sober. While in a program, he met a woman who would later become Tyler's mother. "We were being support systems for each other," is how he described their relationship.

They both began substance misuse again. Tyler indicated he had "no clue" of the pregnancy and when Tyler Jr. was born, DCF became involved. A difficult decision was made to place Tyler Jr. into foster care.

Tyler was intent on not only helping himself, but Tyler's mother. "I risked my health trying to help her," he stated. At one point, he went to find her only to have a gun pointed at him. "I'll blow your head off," a drug dealer threatened him, and he left.

Tyler continued efforts to remain sober. He was prescribed Suboxone which "altered" his taste buds and Methadone which made his mouth dry, "messed up" his teeth and resulted in pain throughout his body yet he still went each day, often waiting three hours at a time, for his daily Methadone clinic visits.



"Addiction ends in weird ways," Tyler stated. He contracted COVID-19, was very sick and could not make it to the clinic. That was the turning point in his life. "I'm doing this my own way," he stated.

"I was sick and tired of being sick and tired."

He has been sober ever since.

Tyler admits that he was overwhelmed by the requirements DCF placed upon him in order to reunify. "I was like the top CEO of a company," he stated when looking back at all the meetings and programs he was expected to participate in along with the court orders.



DCF connected him with behavioral health supports as well as a parenting coach. Given a difficult work history, he was also enrolled in a program called Platform to Employment.

Tyler began working up to 63 hours each week at Dunkin' Donuts - taking the night shift so he could be available for his daytime treatment and other meetings.

As consistent visits with Tyler Jr. occurred, he developed a relationship with the foster parents. "They were kind," as he describes them with exchanges of pictures and videos of Tyler Jr. occurring.

"DCF helped me get back to a normal life," Tyler stated. "There is no going back now."

Tyler's extended family remain his greatest support. He has a "limited circle" of friends outside of family. "I had to make a big change," Tyler stated as he knew previous friends and acquaintances would only pull him back down into substance misuse.



What is his message for others involved with DCF? "Don't give up," he emphatically stated. "Stick to a routine and stay clear from anything that will deter you from your goal."

From DCF he gained support and knows how the Agency staff sincerely wanted him to succeed. "If you mess up, tell them, he stated. "Don't think you are set up for failure, don't give up."

"Believe in yourself."

"Tyler has demonstrated a firm commitment to his son and as a result, permanency has been achieved in a timely fashion. Mr. DiChichio continues to show the Department that he is committed to the process of being a sober functional parent who is determined to provide a safe, stable, and nurturing environment for his son. I am very proud of him," stated Social Worker Natalie Farquharson of the New Britain office.

Likewise, Tyler expressed much gratitude and thanks to the following individuals who assisted him in his journey:

- Terry Kennedy LCSW - Therapist at Community Matters LLC
- Stacey Mastergeorge - Family Therapist at Wheeler Clinic
- Ana Erazo - Senior Counselor at Wheeler Clinic Reunification and Therapeutic Family Time program
- Natalie Faquharson LMSW - Social Worker at the Department of Children and Families
- Geo Weatherington - Family Engagement Supervisor at the Quality Parenting Center
- Alison Cormier - Social Worker at Community Mental Health Affiliates

Tyler now enjoys going outside to the park with his son, going for a walk each day in a stroller and experiencing each of those fun moments being Dad and son.

"He has so much energy," Tyler stated about his little boy. Well, so does his father!

Congratulation to Tyler DiChichio for all your successes!