

WHY IT'S STILL A BAD IDEA TO LEGALIZE MARIJUANA



A couple of western states have recently legalized marijuana, and some have predicted that the tax revenue from sales, accompanied by increasing public support, will lead more states to follow suit.

Given these developments, the *Rescuer* sat down with a pair of former marijuana addicts to get their opinions on legalization. One is our assistant house manager, Mike Edrington, a formerly homeless man who graduated from the New Life program four years ago. Mike shared his story of overcoming addiction in the January 2011 *Rescuer*. Daniel Swiney, who shares his story of marijuana addiction in this edition of the *Rescuer*, gave his take on legalizing marijuana as well.

Mike noted that when "spice," or synthetic marijuana, was briefly sold legally in Utah a few years ago, many homeless people smoked it more regularly. It was a simple matter of easy access. So banning a drug does reduce the amount it is used, he said. And while many argue that marijuana has fewer negative health and social ramifications than alcohol, it doesn't mean it is harmless.

"There would just be a lot more people driving when they shouldn't be and causing accidents and problems," Mike said. "It wouldn't be good for people and driving."

Daniel, who smoked pot up until the very day he entered the Rescue Mission's New Life Program, added that there is a lack of desire and an accompanying indifference that comes with marijuana consumption.

"It's like you're stuck on stupid," Daniel said. "It definitely dumbed me down, took away my ambition, my drive, my natural human curiosity. I was a much worse worker. After I smoked pot, I would go from a productive, hardworking person to a lazy person not wanting to work anymore."

Based off the experience of the streets, if marijuana is legalized, more people will use it, simply because it is legal. And those people will be less productive and potentially more dangerous to others. Mike and Daniel's experience leads them to believe that the negative impacts of marijuana use greatly outweigh whatever positives might come from legalization.

For Mike, Daniel and countless other men and women who have come through the Rescue Mission, a life of addiction and homelessness began with smoking marijuana. The Rescue Mission firmly believes that because of issues like these, God knows best when He tells us not to be controlled by alcohol or other drugs, but to be filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18).

AUGUST 2014 - CHAPEL AND KITCHEN SERVING SCHEDULE

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Mt Olympus Presbyterian	2 Bible Baptist Kitchen: South Valley Community Church
3 Grace City Church	4 Road to Freedom Biker Mission	5 Calvary Chapel of Salt Lake Kitchen: Intermountain Baptist Youth	6 South Mountain Community Church - Chapel and Kitchen	7 Salt Lake Christian Center Kitchen: Korean Presbyterian Church	8 Hilltop United Methodist Church	9 Berean Bible
10 Calvary Chapel Salt Lake - Chapel and Kitchen	11 Intermountain Baptist	12 Unity Baptist	13 Northern Utah Mennonite Kitchen: Southeast Youth Group	14 Millcreek Baptist	15 Discovery Christian	16 Southside Church of Christ - Chapel and Kitchen
17 Alpine Church	18 Sandy Ridge Community Church	19 K2 - The Church	20 Capital Church	21 Wasatch Christian Kitchen: Capital Church	22 Midvalley Bible	23 Evangelical Free Church of Salt Lake
24 Grace Community Bible 31 Capital Church	25 Living Waters Christian Fellowship	26 Canyons Church Kitchen: First Baptist Tooele	27 First Methodist	28 Tooele Christian Fellowship	29 Gateway Community Church	30 Capital Church

RESCUER

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The Monthly Newsletter of the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake



RescueSaltLake.org

DANIEL SWINEY: A Former Criminal Is Finally Released

In May of 2013, I spent three days riding my bike back and forth in front of the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake.

I was homeless, addicted to marijuana and was tired of dealing drugs to make money. Still, something was holding me back from walking into the one place that I knew could help me.

I grew up with my grandmother in St. Petersburg, Florida. My mother was a marijuana addict and had given me to my father's mom when I was two. My father is a career criminal and has been locked up for most of my life. I have only seen him a handful of times.

My grandmother was part of a religion called Armstrongism, which is otherwise known as the Worldwide Church of God. While the church includes some Christian teachings, I also learned many misconceptions about who God is and what He is like. In school, people made fun of me because I was part of a "weird" religion.

Beginning a Life of Crime

Since I didn't have many friends, I started connecting with kids who smoked cigarettes and skipped school in junior high. Soon I was cutting class regularly and began breaking into homes with my friends to steal loose change or cash. We really didn't need the money; we just did it for sport. We became a band of juvenile delinquents.

Eventually, I was arrested and sent to a juvenile correctional program. When I got out, my friends were in their late teens or early 20s and we set up a burglary ring. There were about ten guys who would go around and break into people's homes or small businesses and take cash, guns, jewelry or other small, sellable items.

My part was to sell the stuff they stole. I was good at finding



Daniel Swiney enjoys the trees and shade in the backyard of the Terri Timmerman Freedom House. Daniel has been sober for 14 months, has a good job and a new relationship with God.

buyers and our little crime ring was making quite a bit of money. I bought a full set of gold teeth inlays over my four top teeth and my six bottom teeth. I fancied myself to be a real gangster.

Of course, it was only a matter of time before we got caught. When we were finally arrested, I was charged with 109 felonies, burglary, accessory before the fact, dealing in stolen property - the list went on and on. Apparently, the police had known about our burglary ring for four months prior to the arrests and had been gathering evidence against us the whole time.

please see "Daniel" on Page 3

Connect with us

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AS A WAY TO FIGHT POVERTY



I recently read a National Public Radio (NPR) report about extreme poverty that really hit home. The report examined how people in Ohio were employing a unique approach to decrease extreme poverty. The workers at the Community Action Commission of Erie, Huron and Richland Counties in Ohio had noticed that most of their clients were living in broken homes. Often, there was a single mother with dad drifting in and out.

And when dad did come by, it would often lead to a shouting match between the parents. The one constant, it seemed, was that the people they were trying to help were dysfunctional parents, mostly because they had grown up in dysfunctional homes and knew nothing else.

The NPR report noted that “research shows that chronic conflict between parents — even if they live apart — can harm children’s mental health.” So the workers at Community Action began to study if constant parental conflicts were damaging children to the point that they were destined to remain in poverty as adults.

Instead of using traditional methods of fighting poverty, like job training, subsidized housing and education, Community Action workers began teach parenting skills and how to live as a family. They explained to mothers and fathers how their fighting impacts their kids. The simple step of not fighting in front of their kids could be a significant factor in overcoming poverty for the next generation, the workers told their clients.

Community Action suggested that fathers be involved in their children’s lives, even if they didn’t live with them. A meal once a week or even a 30-minute visit could go a long way. And workers asked that when dad did make even a token visit, there would be no guilt trip from mom.

Here’s some more from the article, including quotes from Community Action’s program manager, Jennifer Jennette:

Jennette feels strongly that family — or at the least more supportive, stable relationships even if couples aren’t together — can be life changing. And she worries that a generation raised without two parents at home doesn’t know how to create that. . . . She

says simply educating mothers and fathers about how their relationship affects their child can make a difference.

“If they’re not together, the goal is better communication,” she says. “. . . it’s not about him or me. It’s about my child, and how do we want to make [the child’s] life better?”

And if children’s lives are better — more emotionally secure, if not financially so — she hopes that can help stop the cycle of poverty for the next generation.

After reading this article, I thought about our ministry here at the Rescue Mission. I guess without saying it so bluntly, we put many of these ideas into practice. Our counselors help people rebuild relationships with the other parent of their children and we actively work to restore families. We help with anger management, forgiveness, and communication skills. And beyond counseling, we help with the pressing needs of food, clothing and household goods. Each month, over 200 family food boxes leave the Mission, and we work with area thrift stores to ensure low-income families have the items they need.

And, of course, we stress the great need for close personal connection with God and a church family. We believe that, at times, having a strong church family can be more significant than connections to a biological family. Connecting people with churches is one of the major ways we seek to end poverty, addiction and homelessness.

If you want to read the full NPR report, please visit our website. I posted a link under the Director’s Message section of the site. It’s a complex problem — poverty, childhood trauma and homelessness — and it’s always good to consider new, or refocused, solutions. Ultimately, I know that what we really need is God’s help. True change can only happen when God steps in and works in the hearts and minds of people. Please join me in praying that God would intervene in the lives of the families and individuals that seek help here at the Rescue Mission.

God bless you,

Chris D. Croswhite
Executive Director

These are not just numbers, they are lives impacted!

	June 2014	YTD 2014
Professions of Faith	27	180
Meals	13,509	78,210
Family Food Boxes	296*	1,507**
Nights of Shelter	4,022	24,777
Clothing	10,656	46,177
Day Service/Hygiene	414	2,118
	*5,920 meals	**30,140 meals

Our Stats

how your gift helps

DANIEL: Continued from Page 1

The initial offer the prosecutors gave me was 40 years in prison. That meant I wouldn’t get out until I was 60. My lawyer worked out a deal, and I was eventually sentenced to four years in prison.

A 20-year-old, white, skinny, wannabe gangster was not a good look for the Florida prison system. There were real gangsters in there and people who wanted to hurt others just for the fun of it. I was constantly watching my back and lived in fear. I tried to keep my head down and my mouth shut the entire time.

Never Going Back

When I got out, I was 24 and I vowed I would never, ever go back to prison. The first thing I did was go to the orthodontist and have the gold plates removed from my teeth. My mother had remarried and she and my stepdad lived in Rock Springs, Wyoming. I reached out to her, and my mother said I could come live with them. She said there was a lot of work on the oil fields, and a young, hard-working man could make a good living. I went out to Wyoming and got a job as a roustabout on one of the largest land oil rigs in the U.S. I made good money, but there wasn’t much to do in Rock Springs, so I ended up going to the bar most nights. I would drink and smoke marijuana with friends from town. It seemed like that’s what everyone did — work hard all day and then party hard all night.

But, eventually, the marijuana and drinking drove the will to work right out of me. Instead, I just wanted to get high. I quit my job and lived in my parents’ basement with no real direction. I would work on and off, but I knew something was missing in my life. I just couldn’t figure out what it was. I felt like a washed-up former criminal that wasn’t really good for anything.

In 2009, my parents had finally had enough of my on and off again work routine, my constant mooching and my near-constant lying. They kicked me out for good. I tried a treatment program for a while, but eventually abandoned that as well. I had nothing left in Wyoming. There wasn’t a bridge that I hadn’t burned, so I headed to the nearest big city, which happened to be Salt Lake. When I arrived, it was the first time that I was truly a homeless person. I stayed in the public housing shelter for a few days and tried to figure out what to do.

I decided that the best thing would be to start selling drugs. I had never really been into “hardcore” drugs. My thing had always been marijuana, so I felt I could make some good money selling crack, meth or heroin without the risk of getting addicted myself. I made about \$200 a day selling drugs and used the money to pay for hotel rooms each night, food and my daily supply of marijuana, cigarettes and alcohol. It sounds funny, but I was barely making ends meet.

In the back of my mind, I always thought it would be fun to be a drug dealer. There was the excitement of the deal, the risk of getting caught and the money. But when I actually became a drug dealer, it was just a daily grind, like any other dead-end job. I spent 10 hours a day riding my bike around town to make different deals. Then I was always trying to find new customers and worrying about the police arresting me. There was nothing glamorous about it; it was just hard work. By the end of each day, I was exhausted and I eventually realized that selling drugs was more hassle than there was ever profit in it.

By the summer of 2013, I was done. I knew I needed to change and I knew about the Rescue Mission’s New Life Program. The only thing holding me back was my marijuana addiction. I had smoked marijuana most of my life and I really didn’t know if I could stop. When I finally decided to get off my bike and join the program on June 1, 2013, I smoked my last bit of marijuana and then walked into the Mission.

Getting On Board with God

It took about two months before I was completely on board. I had always believed in God, but I never had a relationship with Him before. I had always thought I wasn’t worth God’s time, that God only wanted “good” people and I was the complete opposite. But at the Rescue Mission, I learned more about who God really is and how even someone like me could have a relationship with Him.

Understanding that God loves me and is willing to forgive me changed my entire outlook. I realized what I had been missing all those years: I had been searching for something to fill a void in my heart that only God could fill. When I received God’s forgiveness, it freed me up to forgive others. For the first time, I was able to quash the resentment I felt toward my mom for giving me up when I was two.

I realized that my addiction boiled down to this: I used drugs, partied and stole all because I simply didn’t like the way I felt, and those things were a way to distract myself from how I was feeling or to cover up the pain.

Now, in experiencing a daily relationship with God, I enjoy the way I feel. I have good friends at my home church, K2 - The Church, including my community mentor, John Welch. John has taught me so much about reaching out to people. As a new believer, I often have the desire to share the message of Jesus with others. John has shown me that sharing faith is not about getting someone to say the Sinner’s Prayer and then walking away. If it were, it would be easy. Instead, sharing faith is about having a relationship with a person and being involved in their life for the long haul.

Today, I have been sober for 14 months and feel that I am on solid ground. I have moved into the Rescue Mission’s transitional housing facility, the Terri Timmerman Freedom House, and am enjoying some expanded freedoms and responsibilities. I am overseeing a small landscaping business this summer and even get a company vehicle to drive.

As a single man with no kids, I feel like I have a lot to offer in service to God, not to earn His favor, but out of love for what He has done for me. I would like your prayers that God would lead me in knowing how I can best serve Him moving forward. I thank the Rescue Mission for all it has done for me and I thank all of you, the Mission’s supporters, for helping to create a place where lost people like me can find hope and a new life.

We still see panhandlers out on Salt Lake’s streets. Remember, you can give panhandlers our new Help Card instead of cash. Pick up a stack at the Rescue Mission or print them yourself at RescueSaltLake.org.

