



## **Interview Opportunity**

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# **LOCAL ADDICTION TREATMENT PROVIDER TELLS HIS STORY DURING ADDICTION RECOVERY MONTH**

Milwaukee (Sept. 9, 2009)—September is National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month, an opportunity for men and women who have struggled with addiction to tell their stories of overcoming this chronic disease.

One of these men is Todd Campbell, Ph.D., Marquette University associate professor and executive director of the 7Cs Counseling Clinics, which provides drug and alcohol addiction treatment to low-income men and women in downtown Milwaukee. Todd, who has been in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction since 1984, can speak of the effectiveness of addiction treatment. Additionally, as a treatment provider for low-income men and women, Todd can speak of Milwaukee County's severe gap in treatment that leaves more than 82,000 people who need treatment unable to access it.

Todd is a member of the Milwaukee Addiction Treatment Initiative, a coalition of more than 80 organizations working together to close the treatment gap in Milwaukee. To arrange an interview with Todd, contact him at [todd.campbell@marquette.edu](mailto:todd.campbell@marquette.edu) or call (414) 288-5790.

### **My Story: Todd Campbell, 7Cs Counseling Clinics, Marquette University**

**I come from a good family, a solid foundation.** I had a good moral compass that was completely screwed up by drugs. I'd always been a very good student, a pretty good athlete, and a pretty good guy. As my drug use increased, I began to get away from those things and into trouble.

**My alcohol and drug use started at age 11.** Early onset is a big problem—the earlier you start to drink and use drugs, the more likely you are to develop an addiction. The science backs it up and you see it clinically: when kids are using drugs or alcohol in late-elementary school, it's very a serious red flag for future addiction. Given what we now know about adolescent development, drug and alcohol abuse has to be taken very seriously by all.

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Todd Campbell / Add One

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**From the first time I drank it was to get drunk.** Drinking escalated in junior high school to using pot, LSD and cocaine. I smoked pot every day from ages 13-22—there were literally two days that I didn't smoke, a concerted effort on my part to quit. Although I had some wonderful people in my life that wanted me to straighten out and did their best to help me—and for periods of time they were effective—the addiction had its grips firmly on my life.

**As I got older I knew my addiction was worsening.** In fact I told people at least three or four times through high school and early adulthood that I needed help, but no one knew enough to get me into treatment for *addiction*. One psychologist adhering to a pervasive attitude of the day simply told me “to grow up.” Not bad advice, but hardly a worthy intervention.

My last year using drugs, 1983, was a very fast downward spiral fueled primarily by cocaine. Indicative of the “wasted” life of addiction and the struggle, I still have a notebook that I kept during that summer. At the top of nearly every page I wrote one passage—“Things to Do Today: Stay Straight.” At the bottom of every page I wrote, “Didn't make it.” I did not know what to do.

Though we have more resources and knowledge now at our disposal, there remains this pervasive attitude to ostracize people, that a kid using drugs is simply “trouble” instead of suffering from a disease. We have to look at addiction as a chronic health issue—that these kids suffering from addiction need help.

**Rock bottom was the turning point.** At age 22, during the holidays of 1983 I was arrested for armed robbery, and I served six months in jail and four years of probation. I knew that I had disappointed many loved ones and that I reached the lowest point of my life. I was determined that this indeed was going to be the lowest and that this was the turning point. I knew that addiction was at the core of the problem and I vowed to turn my life around from that moment on. I was lucky in that my family had the resources for me to access inpatient treatment and receive the help I needed. There was no problem identifying the addiction now.

**When I was in treatment** I had many really good experiences that made me think I could in some way help others with addiction, and I saw my career path ahead of me. I did know that if I was going to be able to help anyone else I had to help myself first and foremost. I was deeply committed to my recovery.

After I completed treatment and served my jail sentence I began volunteer work with teenagers who were suffering from drug addiction, and have kept my hand in direct substance abuse treatment for over 25 years. A major part of my recovery has been my education, completing my bachelors degree, masters degree and Ph.D., and my professional work as a clinician, researcher and teacher. I have worked with many different types of people across a variety of settings and my work has naturally kept my recovery at the forefront. I've always wondered if I had a different type of job that wasn't dealing with recovery issues whether I would have made it.

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**I had my struggles along the way to recovery.** Twenty-five years ago when I got out of treatment I had a very difficult time finding support meetings and friends that understood my situation—I knew nobody in recovery. Early recovery is a particularly critical and vulnerable period and positive support networks are essential to sobriety. Over the first two years I developed two very deep and meaningful friendships that were essential to my recovery. Over the years my support network has broadened and deepened. My two brothers are in long-term recovery, my father is in recovery, my best friends are in recovery, and I have numerous friends and colleagues in recovery. Now when you come to my house on holidays it's like an ongoing 12-Step meeting. One of the great blessings of my life is that my wife of 21 years and my children (ages 19 and 18) have known me only in terms of my recovery and not my addiction.

**The fact is, addiction is a deadly disease.** I've been to too many funerals due to alcohol and other drugs, dozens. The saddest part of all is that addiction is so treatable. I have lost several very close friends to addiction. Mark was of my best friends in the whole world and one of the smartest people I ever knew. The problem is “smart” has nothing to do with addiction. Mark died from his addiction. He was a counselor, and 10 years into his recovery he made a simple, but eventually deadly decision, “I think I'm going to have a beer.” That one beer, that one decision sent him down a one-way street of rapidly increased drinking, a drunk-driving accident with injuries, back to the old lifestyle, back to the old narcotic addiction, and two years later he was dead. His life was not wasted in that he helped a lot of people, but his death was a waste—this is a treatable disease.

**Addiction is a life-time issue**—we realize that this is a relapsing, remitting disease. We know that people with addictions are going to struggle, but they need to know that we're going to stick with them. No one has a right to give up.