

NOVEMBER 2022



Heartland Adult Education Happenings

HARDIN—LARUE—BRECKINRIDGE—HART—GRAYSON



Chris Reed, Director

*What's
Happening
in the
Heartland?*

Director's Corner

In this issue, Dana Wolfe interviewed a most amazing young woman who tells a story that needs to be heard. It was an honor for Hardin/LaRue Adult Education to be a small part of that transformative story.

The journeys undertaken by our learners are anything but easy. As adults, they have a myriad of challenges and responsibilities that vie for their attention, and it becomes all too easy to push their own education to the background. But, these students have the continual support of the instructors and staff within all our Consortium Centers. Whether it's a last minute tutoring session to prepare for an official test, walking a student through challenging processes on the phone, teaching the quadratic formula by Zoom, offering them a Pop Tart while they wait for assessment scores, or a hundred other daily occurrences, the people who work here do far more than just work here.

Similarly, the community at large has been generous in their support of these learners and we are continuing to foster those relationships.

In a month of giving thanks, I am grateful for those who work tirelessly to help these students reach the goals they have set for themselves.



Pam Kraan

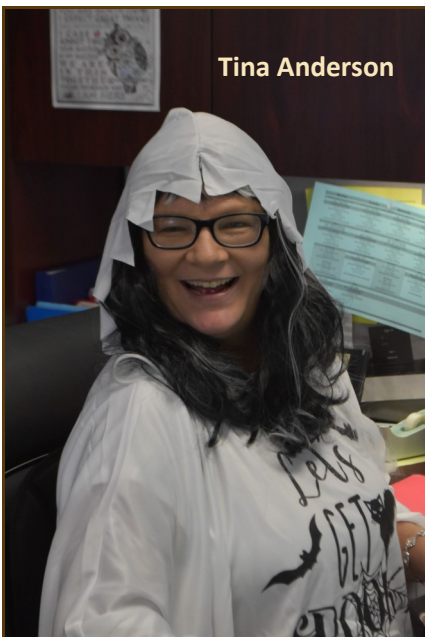


Joyce Vercellino, Gary Bohannon, and Pam Kraan



SPOOKTACULAR!

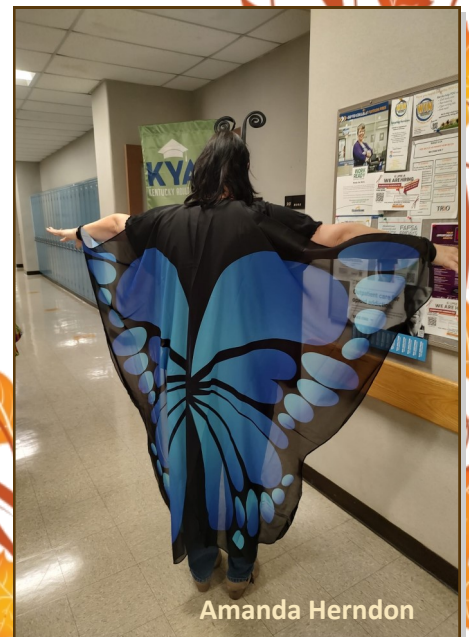
We participated in ECTC's Spooktacular Trick or Treat event on October 27th. Instructor Pam Kraan was a huge hit as our Adult Education T-Rex. She danced and gave high fives to brave youngsters (and some not so young!) Many of our staff dressed up and all had a great time!



Tina Anderson



dana wolfe



Amanda Herndon



Stem to Stern

dana wolfe

College and Career Navigator

Unselfish Prayers: The Samantha Myers Story



Though Samantha Myers earned her GED through our office, it was before I started my position, so my first encounter with her was just a few months ago as she nervously awaited her first time to address the attendees at the Hardin County Interagency meeting. She smiled at me and I gave her one back in encouragement, but her discomfort in waiting was apparent. When she finally got up to speak, she was a little less than self-assured, but her story cut through anything listeners might have initially thought about the mechanics of her presentation. She started hesitantly, but then she stopped speaking from her head and instead let her words shine through her heart and her experiences..... and MAGIC happened.

Since that day, Sam has been a featured speaker at our GED graduation and, on October 18, 2022, she was one of only three former students to represent adult learners in the Commonwealth of Kentucky at the KYAE's My Story Reimagined Summit held in Lexington, Kentucky. Her former hesitancy and nervousness were gone and, instead, a confident, poised, eager, and self-confident woman arose to tell her story to all who would listen. Her goal was to help others heal by allowing them entrance to the story of a child, a teenager, and a woman who rose like a shining phoenix out of the ashes of the addiction cycle that nearly ended her. This day, she rose above all that brought her here, but the story starts long before the pinnacle at this Summit. Her honesty in the following story is sometimes very difficult to read, but she asked me to leave nothing out in the hopes that her story reaches the one person who may need to hear it.

After hearing her story, I realized we ALL need to listen.

Continued on Page 4

"I feel like my life started in 2020 when I woke up in a drunk tank. It was the most peaceful feeling I ever had," Samantha started. Everything in her life to that point had led to the moment where she felt she had nothing left to lose; she was desperate enough to realize that she had hit the very bottom and there was nowhere to go but up. It was a journey of self-discovery and healing that she welcomed and was finally ready to undertake.

It all began with a socialization of an alcoholic father and a mother who had challenges of her own. She lived in a home with various relatives, most of whom, Sam says, were addicts. Alcohol, pain pills, crack – all were early, and forming, memories for her. In 2010, when Sam was only 18 years old, and she was given pain pills – 120 Lortabs every month – for a foot disease. After two years of consistently refilling the prescription, her Mother called and told the doctor that Sam was abusing the medication. In response, the doctor refused to refill her prescription. This isn't where the problem started, but it's where it took a turn that would end up shaping her entire life.

"I was so desperate to get more pills that I took extraordinary measures that I'm not proud of. It's important for people to know the lengths to which addicts will go," Sam said quietly. "I went to the dentist and complained of terrible tooth pain. I asked them to pull the tooth and, after they did, they prescribed 20 pain pills." Sam said she had seven teeth pulled just to get access to those 20 pills each time. It wasn't long, however, before her name landed on the Casper database that keeps track of how many pain pills are prescribed to a person. "I was red-flagged," Sam said, "and I couldn't get any more pills anywhere. They had my number."



But that didn't stop her. She started doing street drugs including meth and, within three months, she said she lost absolutely everything, including her children. "I sold everything I owned. Worse, I bought Christmas presents for my kids and then sold them before – or after – they got them." She took a deep breath and continued, "I stole everything that wasn't nailed down and it didn't matter who it was. I even drained my Papaw's bank account -- a man who tried his best to help me, but I didn't care when I was in that state." It didn't end there. Sam looked at me with big, soulful eyes and with a catch in her throat, she added, "And men. Men were the easiest. They would give me what I wanted if I did the same. And, I did....over and over again." I asked if she was sure she wanted me to write about that and without hesitation, she said, "Don't you dare leave that out. They need to know how devastating this is and that's part of the story. I had no shame, just the desire to get more drugs at any cost."

With more bravery than I have ever witnessed, she continued. "I was in three or four treatment facilities and went to jail for theft by deception. Bad checks, stealing -- I did it all without hesitation to feed my addiction. I got married, but that's when I added drinking to the mix. I drank every day and, more than once, would wake up on the floor with blood on my face from fist-fighting with my husband." Her voice cracked and she quietly added, "My children saw things no child should ever see." It was at this point that the State stepped in and placed an EPO that said she could no longer be around her husband. If they even came near to one another, they would both go to jail. But, in a pattern of self-abuse and in defiance of the State's order, Sam kept seeing her husband. During this time, she gave birth to her youngest child and when the baby was seven weeks old, Sam dropped her off at her husband's mother's house and didn't look back. It would be almost four years before she would see her child again. In December of 2017, Sam and her husband were on the run and both were using IV drugs. "For three years, I didn't do anything but get high. If I wasn't locked up, I was high."

In what should have been a life-changing moment, Sam was pistol whipped by a drug dealer from whom she stole. Her nose and the bones in her face were broken, but she didn't go to the hospital as she was wanted by the State and couldn't risk giving her name. A friend took her in and helped her help her with her injuries, but he was also addicted, so the pattern of drug abuse continued unabated.

In 2019, during incarceration and a brief time of forced sobriety, Sam earned her GED. She thought there was "...no way I could get a GED. But Diane [former Director] convinced me to at least try. I started and finished in just a couple of weeks! It was the most important accomplishment in my life and I'm the first one in my family to do it." Fast forwarding to a directly related outcome, Sam will graduate in May of 2023 with an Associate's Degree in Human Services.

But, the story continues. In 2020, after earning her GED, Sam fell back into the throes of addiction, this time – heroin. "I was living in a trailer park with a man I barely knew and on May 24th, I overdosed and Narcan was administered to save my life." Her Mother called the police and Sam was locked up for her own protection. The next morning, she woke up in the drunk tank mentioned at the onset of this story. She was bruised, her hair was pulled out, she was bleeding, and she was "more peaceful than I had ever been. I woke up and I had nothing left physically or spiritually. I was completely empty." In May of 2022, she divorced, but the scars left are still healing.

From here, the story of the real Sam starts to emerge. She received meaningful treatment and was eventually allowed to see her two older children. "I worked hard to stay sober, even with challenges. For example, I worked at a gas station and had to walk out of that job because men were hitting on me and offering drugs for attention." She moved in with her Mother and found the Commitment House.

After her own recovery, Sam was hired by the company and started moving up within the organization, first as a third shift Tech who was responsible for watching clients as they slept to a first shift position. "By December of 2021, I went to court and got my two oldest children back and got to see my youngest." As if her heart would break from the memory, Sam continued, "She knew I was her Mama. She ran across the parking lot and I couldn't do anything but cry from the happiness I found with her in my arms. I was overwhelmed with joy." The relationship is still growing slowly and they are "...taking it day by day." Sam is sure that it won't be long before she will have full custody of all her children.

In December In 2021, she became a Program Manager for the Commitment House and was responsible for running the women's facility. This year, this talented young woman moved up again becoming the Outreach Coordinator for the same organization, where she talks to anyone who will listen to help guide them to treatment. She speaks to organizations, judges, jails – anyone and anywhere her story may resonate and affect change.

In three months, from July to October 2022, Sam brought 114 people to treatment from all across the state. That's 114 lives potentially changed – and the ripple effect on others is untold.



“Only two percent of IV drug users maintain sobriety – only two percent come back from it. What mercy did for me was a miracle and only by the Grace of God can I live and breathe to do the things I now do. I prayed over and over for help, but it wasn’t until I fell on my knees with nothing left to bargain with that I gave it all over to Him. Finally, I learned how to pray unselfish prayers and they were answered.”

Returning to *the My Story Reimagined* Summit held on October 21st, Sam told her story to a room that was so silent that you could hear the tears drop. Her brutal honesty made many of us catch our breath and our hearts, at that very moment, belonged to her. After eloquently and honestly participating in a question and answer panel of former GED students, I watched Sam talking to a stranger in the bathroom and by the time they walked out the door together, the woman had asked Sam to come speak to their organization. I saw Sam give the woman her phone number and she told her, “Call me any time you need support. I promise I will never forget your name.”

The name we should not forget is hers – Samantha Myers. Her rise was born of a tragic life that claimed many who weren’t as strong – and Sam almost wasn’t. Instead of running from the horrors that circumstances and her own decisions created, this warrior uses them to convince others that change is possible and that there is light on the other side if you only reach out and take her hand. She has plans for the rest of her life and each and every one of those plans centered not on herself, but on helping others find the healing grace and support that she felt like she was given.

The moral of Sam’s story, and the life she’s lived, is that each of us is full of possibilities regardless of the challenging circumstances that seem insurmountable. She is living proof that we are only one decision away from drastically changing our lives. And, if you are like Sam, we all stand one choice away from creating a ripple effect of good works that will affect many, many more.



I would like to thank Sam for allowing me the honor of telling her story. It took considerable courage to let the world into her life, but that is exactly the nature of Sam Myers. ~~~ dana





STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Tina Anderson



This staff spotlight has been a long time in coming.

Getting Data Specialist Tina Anderson to sit down and talk about herself is like herding cats. At any given moment, she may be on the phone helping someone understand their scores, emailing a contact to help a student solve a problem, and making a nervous new student here in the Center feel at ease — and she can do this all at once. More often than not, her ability to speed-multitask allows students a shorter wait time, and more importantly, it allows them to feel like their time is respected. She is an endless advocate for those who walk up to her desk and her commitment to helping them reach their goals is unquestionable and on display for all to witness.

Almost every day, there is a half-finished plate of lunch that may or may not be eaten hours later. That's because when the phone rings or a student comes in, Tina immediately cuts her lunch time to serve them and she does it without question, without hesitation, and without complaint. To this woman, who wears her generous heart on her sleeve, it's never a question-- it's just assumed that the students come first. It's what makes Tina.....Tina.



Tina continually goes above and beyond what is expected of her position. She will support a student, but she will also push them with a tough, but good-natured, tone that often convinces them to complete the task at hand. At the same time, her big personality and even bigger laugh have both diffused difficult situations and comforted those who were the recipients of her support. Both the students and staff love her—with good reason.

Tina could not, would not, write this article for herself. She would say that all of this is just her job, but those of us lucky enough to work with her know better. In a month where we are celebrating all that we are grateful for, Tina's name must be added to that list in big, bold strokes.



CLASS OF

2022

Congratulations

Heartland Adult Education Consortium

Graduation

December 9, 2022

7:00 PM

ECTC, RPC Building, Room 210 and 212



We are increasing our social media presence. Please like, comment, and most importantly, SHARE so we can reach as many people as possible.

**Visit
Us!**



[instagram.com/heartlandadulthood/](https://www.instagram.com/heartlandadulthood/)



twitter.com/KYAE_Heartland



[tiktok.com/@kentuckygedheartland](https://www.tiktok.com/@kentuckygedheartland)

Heartland

Adult Education

Consortium Locations

Hardin/LaRue

(270) 769-8866
ECTC Campus
600 College Street Rd.
OTB 300, Room 310
Elizabethtown
(Classes also In Radcliff)

Breckinridge

(270) 756-1730
116 Old Highway 60
Hardinsburg

Grayson

270.259.9038
125 E. White Oak Street
Leitchfield

Hart

(270) 524-1267
230 Interstate Plaza Rd.
Munfordville



Connect with Us!

[https://www.facebook.com/
HardinLaRueAdultEducation](https://www.facebook.com/HardinLaRueAdultEducation)

Check out our Facebook page for community resources, Job Fairs, employment opportunities, announcements, and plenty of encouragement! Please like the page and share any posts you think may be helpful for someone else. The more shares, the more people we may be able to help!

Please visit and like our other Consortium Facebook sites.

♥ **Grayson County Adult Education**

♥ **Hart County Adult Education**

♥ **Breckinridge County Adult Education**

