

**Document 21 of 29.**

Copyright 1988 Bergen Record Corp.  
The Record

November 23, 1988; WEDNESDAY; ALL EDITIONS

**SECTION:** SPORTS; Pg. F01

**LENGTH:** 888 words

**HEADLINE:** WAKING UP FROM THE NIGHTMARE OF DRUGS

**BYLINE:** Mike Celizic

**DATELINE:** RIVER EDGE

**BODY:**

As he was receiving his trophy for finishing second in New Jersey's state high school wrestling championships, █████ Goodman, then a senior at Paramus High School, knew what he wanted in life. Within hours, he had it.

"As soon as we got home, I went straight to New York," said Goodman, a compact young man with bright eyes and a winning smile. "I bought some pot and went to a party. I got drunk and I got high.

"It hit me at the party," Goodman said more than two years after the fact. "I had wrestled in the state finals that day." And then he was as high as a B-1 bomber in a roomful of people who couldn't care less about anything but getting high and partying.

"I knew my life was getting messed up," Goodman said. "I didn't know it was the **drugs.**"

Goodman was sitting on a couch in a counseling room at **KIDS of Bergen County**, a private rehabilitation center nestled among a community of warehouses near Riverside Square Mall. Next to him sat his mother, Irma. On a chair nearby sat his father, Sidney, an engineer.

It was a special gathering for the Goodman family. Later that day (last Friday), █████ would be accepted as a staff counselor for **KIDS of**

**Bergen County.** The program has kept him off **drugs** since Dec. 28, 1985.

Six days ahead waited a celebration that Irma and Sidney despaired of ever having, the family's first Thanksgiving gathering in three years.

They will have that meal Thursday. They won't be giving thanks only for turkey and dressing.

Most of time that [REDACTED] Goodman was undergoing intensive therapy he was not allowed to live at home. For much longer than that, the Goodmans lived what Sidney called a nightmare, the nightmare of **drugs**.

"It's the first year of having my family back in the home," said Irma. And she smiled.

It was a bittersweet smile, for while the Goodman's have [REDACTED] back, his older brother, their only other child, is still lost to the same curse of **drugs**.

Dr. Miller Newton, the founder of **KIDS of Bergen County**, said that one of every three high school students gets drunk at least once a week.

He has 132 kids, most of them children of the middle class, in his program. They range in age from 12 to early 20s.

[REDACTED] Goodman first got high at the age of 14 in the eighth grade when a friend gave him marijuana. It made him feel good. From time to time, he smoked more. "I started doing **drugs** regularly in the ninth grade," he said. "I said, I can handle it." That's undoubtedly what Dwight Gooden and Lawrence Taylor said, too. **Drugs** don't care what your name is. If you think you can handle them, you're a fool.

It's bad enough for adults. For kids, it's terrifying. For teen-agers, **drugs** become a way to deal with the everyday stresses of growing up. When they should be learning how to cope with their life and emotions, they're getting high instead.

When they finally get into a rehab program, they find they do not have the emotional tools to deal with life. So, they go back to **drugs**.

That's what happened to [REDACTED]'s brother, his parents said.

**KIDS of Bergen County** uses an Alcoholics Anonymous approach to first get the young people off **drugs** and then teach them to cope without them. For 510 days, [REDACTED] Goodman spent all day, every day at the KIDS center in individual and group therapy. Every night he went home with someone who had graduated from the first of five phases of the program.

He was not allowed to go to his own home until he admitted his problem

and came to grips with it.

Newton said it's not unusual for people to continue to achieve athletically in the early stages of **drug** abuse. Eventually, however, it all comes crashing down.

█████ said he promised to stay sober during wrestling season, but each year it got harder and he strayed more often.

In the off-season, by the time he was a junior, **drugs** were at the center of his life. "We'd leave school at lunch and go to a kid's garage and get high," he said.

As a senior, he was offered a wrestling scholarship at Old Dominion University, but was so busy getting stoned he didn't bother to visit the school to get it.

He enrolled at Southern Connecticut instead, made the wrestling team, but soon quit.

"I was in physical pain the whole time," he said. "Either I was going to quit one thing or another, and I wasn't going to quit **drugs**."

Quitting the team was the final red flag to his parents. Through some spy work, Sidney Goodman found out his son planned to quit school after the first semester to pursue a career as a cocaine addict.

"It seemed like the life," █████ said.

His parents had other ideas. During Christmas break, Sidney Goodman tricked his son into going to the **KIDS of Bergen County** center.

"I was going to run," █████ said. "But I signed in. Somewhere deep down, I wanted to please my parents."

That was Dec. 28, 1985. Since then, █████ Goodman has missed three years of college while he was getting better.

He's living at home now and attends Bergen Community College. He's working as a peer counselor. He wants to become an assistant wrestling coach.

He's got a long way to go, but he's made a strong start. Thursday, for the first time since 1985, he'll celebrate Thanksgiving at home.

**GRAPHIC: COLOR PHOTO - M. KATHLEEN KELLY / THE RECORD -** █████ Goodman, left, will finally be home for the holidays this year with his parents Irma and Sidney.

**GRAPHIC: COLOR PHOTO - MILLER NEWTON, Architect of KIDS  
approach**

**LOAD-DATE: April 23, 1996**

---