

PUBLIC PROMISE PROVES IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP

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WINTER HAVEN -- Seven years before Katherine "Terri" Courtney was slain, she swore on public television she wouldn't use drugs again.

"I don't want to be like that," Courtney said during a 1983 Orlando news show called "You're not Alone." The show featured students in a rehab program called LIFE -- Life Is For Everyone.

"Now I have a natural high. I can laugh and I can giggle. I like that. I won't go back to it at all," said Courtney, who had been in rehab about six months.

Wearing a blouse, suit jacket and skirt, the 17-year-old told others not to get started on drugs: "It's not worth it. It's bad for you."

She said she started using drugs and alcohol because of peer pressure. Shortly afterward, she progressed to crystal meth, morphine, mushrooms and acid.

"I knew I was hurting my body, but it didn't bother me," she said. "I had to get a high before I went to school. I had to start my day off like that. I used to think that if I got drunk or smoked pot it would bring out my personality."

Courtney said drugs made her lose her memory, and her grades dropped from Bs to Fs. She often would drive while stoned.

"I'd get real scared and paranoid thinking, 'What if I get in a wreck?'" Courtney said. "But I'd get so high it didn't matter to me."

Courtney said she used to blame her drug use on not having a real father. Her father moved to Australia when she was 3. Her stepfather divorced her mother when she was about 11.

"I blame myself," Courtney said on the show. "I'm the one who took my hand and put it to my mouth."

Courtney stayed in the rehab program until she was 19, then graduated from Winter Haven High School. About a year later, she was back on drugs.

Series/ Drug Bust: Why We're Losing the War

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