WARREN COUNTY TRAINING HELPS THOSE ON ROAD TO SOBRIETY WITH NEW CAREER CHOICE

To say Josh S. had a tumultuous childhood is a major understatement. His was a broken home from infancy, in and out of foster care, exposed to drugs and alcohol as a young child. He was on a path to prison or worse by the time he started using at age 13.

Josh, of Glens Falls, was in a rehabilitation center by the time he was 17, and has dealt with numerous relapses and arrests in the years since.

“I had exposure to drugs my whole life. I couldn’t escape that lifestyle,” he explained.

Now 33, he is optimistic he is on the road to sobriety. As part of that journey, he enrolled in a new training that was offered at Warren County Career Center to become a Certified Recovery Peer Advocate (CRPA), to give back to those who are fighting the demons he has fought. Josh was one of 10 people who recently completed the two-week training.

The goal is for Josh, and others in the class, to be trained to use their experiences, trials and tribulations, to help others overcome their substance use issues. And should they complete the training and an exam, they can become employed as paid CRPAs, a position that is now Medicaid-reimbursable for employers.

“I know this is where I should be going, what I should be doing,” he said. “You’re helping people, doing something good. It’s been an amazing learning experience.”

The course’s instructor, Katrina Fox, has been teaching CRPA classes around the Capital District for more than two years. The training can be an integral part of guiding recovery for those taking the class and teaching it, she explained.

“Not only does it equip them to go out and help others, but it aids in their recovery as well to have someone walk side-by-side with them through it,” Fox said.

Liza Ochsendorf, Warren County Director of Workforce Development, said her agency is planning another CRPA training in the spring.

“Mental health and substance use challenges unfortunately aren’t going away in our community and we need more trained professionals who can assist our local healthcare and human service agencies. In many cases, it is more beneficial to have a professional with lived experience so they can better relate to their clients or patients and what they’re going through. This two-week training is extremely thorough and therefore also therapeutic to the trainees. It literally turns their pain into purpose. We are excited to continue offering this opportunity in partnership with Healthy Capital District and Katrina (Fox)," Ochsendorf said.

Those seeking more information on the program can call Warren County Career Center at 518-743-0925 or email ochsendorfl@warrencountyny.gov.