

... Giving Back to the Court That Helped Her is How One Graduate is Taking Her Sobriety and Running with It ...

Growing up, Tanya Swain refrained from drinking because her dad was an alcoholic. But that changed when she was 35 years old and was diagnosed with breast cancer.

In 2012, Tanya was issued her first DUI. At that time, she did not think she had a problem. She thought that the DUI was just an instance of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Then in 2013, Tanya was issued her second DUI and everything changed. Tanya admits she did not take her first one seriously enough.

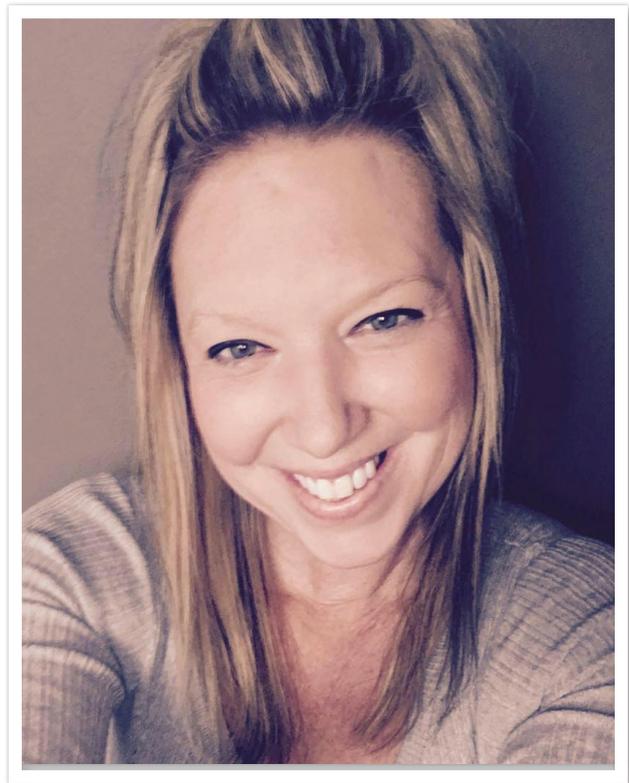
“At that moment, the moment that I was pulled over, I knew I had a problem,” admitted the mother of two. “I was about to lose all my life, basically.”

Tanya was in Southgate when she got her second DUI, and her case was the first that was allowed to be released to the 23rd District Court Sobriety Court in Taylor. She had to fight for this — at first the judge would not allow it, but eventually he did.

“I was a little different than most when I came into the program, my attitude was different, I think because I’m older,” Tanya explained. “I knew I was an alcoholic, but I was grateful because I would not have a license if Southgate would not have released me to go to Taylor.”

What helped Tanya the most during her program (between 2013–2015) was participating in therapy and being able to get to the core reason of what led her down this path. She knew breast cancer may have been the trigger, but she also knew she needed to learn how to cope soberly.

Judge Geno Salomone, of the 23rd District Court, was a big help to Tanya; she described him as “a miracle worker.” Tanya admired Judge Salomone’s patience, understanding, and his ability to really listen to people.



Sobriety Court Graduate Tanya Swain

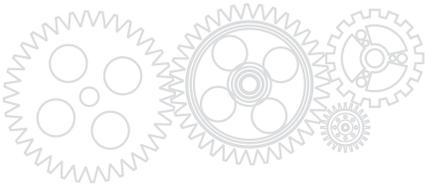
“He has no problem being kind, but also no problem setting you where you need to be,” Tanya remarked.

Tanya emphasizes to other graduates: “You need to stop being angry, you need to be grateful. Where would you be if it weren’t for this program? You would not have half of the opportunities to live a normal life again.”

“You need to stop being angry, you need to be grateful. Where would you be if it weren’t for this program? You would not have half of the opportunities to live a normal life again.”

— Tanya Swain





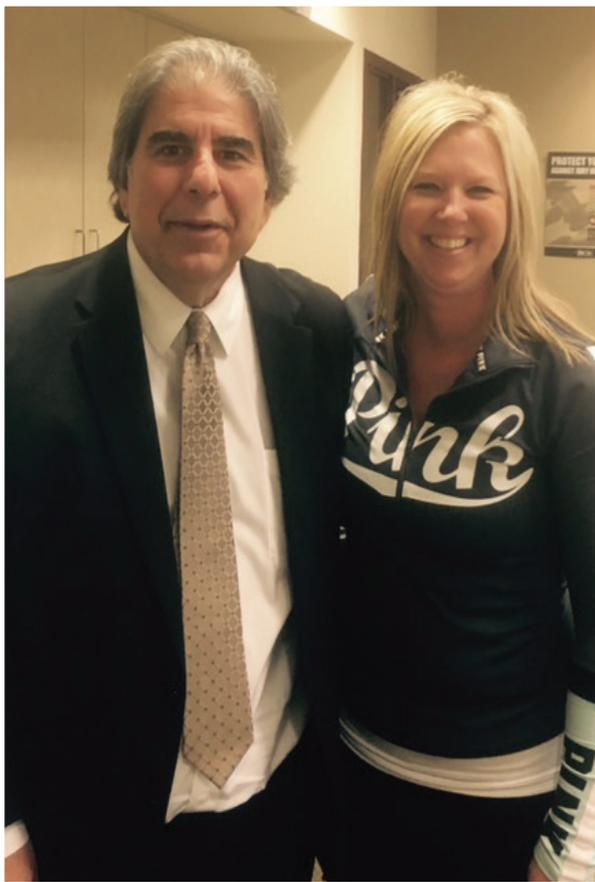
Geno Salomone

Tanya has stayed sober since she left the program, and is still very involved with the court. She even took the initiative to start an alumni association that meets once a month.

“You have to remember you have to give back, if you can inspire one other person to stay sober then I think it’s well worth your time,” Tanya said.

“The most rewarding experience for me is graduation. Every graduation means somebody has changed their life, probably forever.”

— Judge Salomone



Sobriety Court Graduate Tanya Swain and Judge Salomone

Judge Geno Salomone was elected in 2000 to preside over the 23rd District Court in Taylor.

Just two years later, he added a problem-solving court to his docket and since then it has taken off as a regional sobriety court. His court is able to help people from district courts in the surrounding area who do not have a local sobriety court.

The sobriety court has graduate 151 people, to date. The success rate for alcoholics is 75 percent and 46 percent for drug addicts. These percentages continue to improve over time.

“The most rewarding experience for me is graduation. Every graduation means somebody has changed their life, probably forever,” Judge Salomone remarked about the sobriety court.

One prime example of a successful graduate is Tanya Swain.

Judge Salomone described Tanya as “an asset to the program.” Not only did she have a positive attitude combined with impressive motivation throughout the program, he shared, but Tanya also continues to give back to the court by running an alumni association — something Judge Salomone had always hoped would get started.

“The program is not just about sobriety and being clean from drugs, that is obviously of primary importance, but once you have those things we want you to be able to go out and live a good life,” said Judge Salomone. “You have to have a license, you have to have a job, you have to be a good parent, and you have to learn how to do all of those things.”