

## **CROSSROADS PROGRAM, FORMER PARTICIPANT WIN AWARDS**

Apollo 13 was termed "The Successful Failure" because it didn't meet its assigned mission of landing on the moon, but instead NASA was able guide three astronauts from the brink of disaster in outer space safely home.

The Summit County Juvenile Court's Crossroads Program can draw a parallel. A young lady in the program, Amber Johnson, left Crossroads without achieving all of the assigned incentives necessary to graduate from the program. In fact, Amber was hardly one of its many success stories. Despite several attempts to direct her away from the substance abuse which brought her to the Court and the Crossroads Program in the first place, the lure of alcohol continued to haunt her. She failed three tests and left the program without fulfilling her obligations.

But it's not how you start, it's how you finish. Amber is now a high school graduate and she is attending Stark State College, pursuing a degree in Human Social Services. She achieved sobriety for three years on December 5, 2010. She hopes to become a drug and alcohol counselor or a Juvenile Probation Officer and return to the Crossroads Program in that capacity.

Because of the work the Crossroads Program does on behalf of youth like Amber and because Amber put to use the tools the program taught her, both were honored on December 2<sup>nd</sup> in Dublin Ohio with Community Recognition Awards. The awards banquet was sponsored by the Ohio Juvenile Court Judges Association and the Ohio Department of Youth Services as part of the Judges' Association' winter conference.

The Crossroads Program is an intensive probation program offered at the Court that serves the community in the capacity of a combined drug court and mental health court. Statistics have shown as high as 83% of youth involved in substance programming to have a companion mental health illness, referred to as a co-occurring disorder. Crossroads provides intensive probation supervision, combined with specialized case management to these youth who have such disorders. The Crossroads program is recognized as a national model for specialty courts.

"It is stories like Amber's that encourage the Court to continue to help our Crossroads participants, even when it doesn't appear at first the lessons have taken hold," said Juvenile Court Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio. "Amber was able to call on those lessons when it mattered most, and that is to her everlasting credit."

A welcome blend of maturity and reality turned Amber around. She admits that. She also strongly credits the Crossroads Program for assisting in the turnaround. She says that the program established a foundation on which to build a clean and sober lifestyle and the lessons and methods she learned while in Crossroads, while not fully embraced at the time, took hold and provided a blueprint to follow as she achieved sobriety.

"Crossroads gave me so many things that I didn't know I wanted at that time," says Amber. "It taught me how to live a normal life. When I realized I was ready for it, I discovered that Crossroads gave me everything I needed to move forward."

Apollo 13 overcame daunting odds to reach new heights. The Summit County Juvenile Court's Crossroads Program - and Amber Johnson - can relate.

**END**