

Drug court signals end to addiction

Darren Peterson says Calgary's Drug Treatment Court did what he failed to do so many times — kick an addiction that ruined his life.

"Addiction, crime and jail was a cycle for many years," said Peterson, who spent 15 years behind bars for crimes fuelled by drugs.

"Quitting was easy, but I could never stay quit — I didn't get it at 20, I didn't get it at 30 and I didn't at 40."

On Tuesday, he was one of two former drug addicts at a

provincial announcement of \$516,000 for the initiative.

Peterson said he was trapped before graduating from the program last spring.

"I was unemployed, I was hopeless, useless and desperate," he said, detailing how it changed his life.

"I got a job, a bank account, a driver's licence and I even got a Visa that actually had my name on it."

He graduated from the program in May 2010.

Lasting about 18 months,

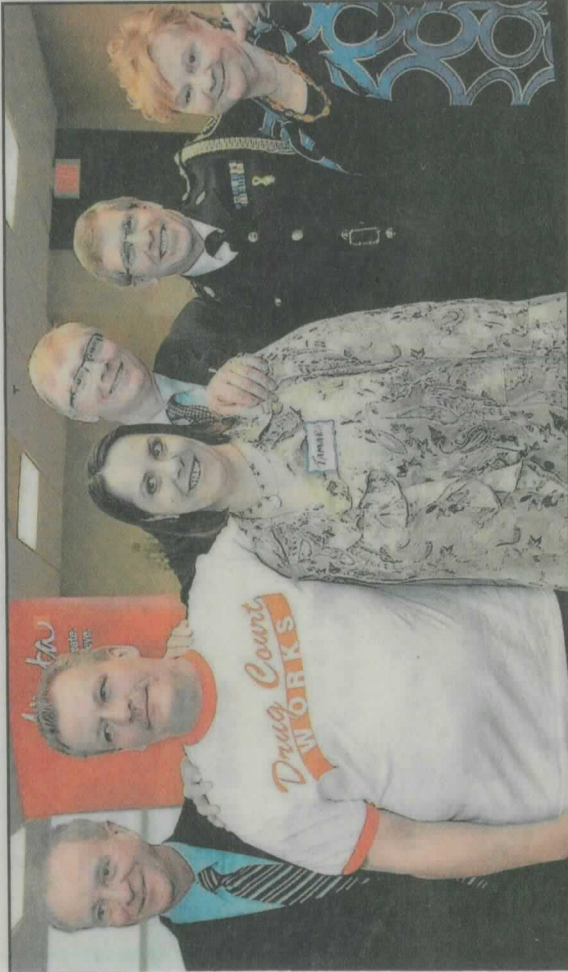
offenders must appear each week before a judge, undergo regular drug testing and get residential treatment.

Graduate Tamara Boven camp said it saved her life.

"Today I am 506 days clean and I'm working at the same treatment centre I went to a client support worker," she said.

Judge James Ogle, who presides over the court, said the initiative is about crime reduction and saving lives.

— Nadia Moharrir



STUART DRYDEN/CALGARY SUN

Their drug cycle has been broken. James Ogle, presiding judge of the drug court, Darren Peterson and Tamara Bovenkamp, graduates of the Calgary Drug Treatment Court, Justice Minister and Attorney General Verlyn Olson, Calgary police Chief Rick Hanson and Alberta Provincial Court Chief Judge Gail Vickery gather for a photo after funding of \$516,000 was announced for the initiative Tuesday in Calgary.