

La Jollan turns troubled past into success

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By Erika Ostroff

Intern

At age 10, Scott H. Silverman was darting pushpins at the teacher's back and priding himself on being the class rebel.

In an attempt to curb Silverman's behavior, his parents sent him to a private school, Francis Parker. They hoped the small classroom sizes and a smaller student-to-teacher ratio would bring an end to his inappropriate behavior.

He stopped tormenting teachers, but found a new vice - alcohol and drugs. Then, some years later, he attempted suicide.

Fortunately for Silverman, he wasn't successful in ending his life. He found success in another way.

After about six years of painstaking rehabilitation, Silverman got sober and began involving himself in volunteer work. After exceeding an amassed 4,000 community service hours during a four-year period, Silverman discovered his passion for helping others.

Silverman started Second Chance Program San Diego, a human services agency that is committed to breaking the cycles of substance abuse, poverty and unemployment by offering counseling and, ultimately, inspiration.

What was once viewed as the wrong path in life proved to be nothing more than a temporary detour for Silverman.

Starting a nonprofit

Family business experience and his own struggle with drugs helped him get involved in drug and gang eradication. Intrigued by this former drug addict's new clean path in life, "druggies," alcoholics and ex-convicts approached him for help. Eventually, word of mouth led to masses to want to meet with Silverman, in hopes that he would help better their lives.

Silverman picked up a book at the library that taught him how to start his own nonprofit organization. After about six months, Silverman led several fundraisers and created a board of directors, which bore life to his organization.



Scott H. Silverman is the founder and director of Second Chance Program San Diego, which helps people with substance abuse problems find and keep jobs while also providing access to affordable housing. *Courtesy of Scott Silverman*

Second Chance and its affiliate

In 1993, Silverman founded Second Chance program. Second Chance aims to help people get and keep jobs while providing access to affordable housing. The organization has become an affiliate of Strive, a program based out of Harlem, N.Y., and geared to take people off of the streets and put them to work. Strive is a worldwide program, with 12 in the United States, and others in London, Scotland, Ireland and Israel. Attendees take part in a three-week job readiness program and a two-year follow up, which guides and prepares them for life in the workforce.

"I believe the key phrase to this program is that you need to have an address to keep a job and a job to keep an address," Silverman said. "You cannot do one without the other and you cannot survive with only one."

Silverman was recently named "CNN Hero of the Week" and has been honored by the city of San Diego with "Scott Silverman Day," which is Feb. 19. Silverman has also penned his journey in a novel, "Tell Me No, I Dare You."

For more information about Silverman, visit www.scotthsilverman.com.

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