

The Lakeville Journal

This article originally appeared in the January 31, 2019 edition of The Lakeville Journal.

© 2019 The Lakeville Journal Company, LLC. Hosted/Reprinted with Permission.

Film shows trauma as a cause of addiction

MILLERTON

By Patrick L. Sullivan

“Uprooting Addiction,” a documentary film by Tory Jadow and Hope Payson, played to two packed theaters at the Moviehouse in Millerton on Sunday, Jan. 27.

The screening was part of the Salisbury Forum lecture series.

Two and a half years in the making (and still not quite finished), the film grew out of social worker Payson’s work with addicts and alcoholics, concentrating on the unresolved trauma that often co-exists with physical addiction to

drugs like alcohol and heroin.

Many of Payson’s clients volunteered to appear in the film. Their experiences in recovery form the core of the film.

They talk about missing fathers and sexual abuse, unhappy families and traumatic events.

The people profiled do not all take the same path in their recovery. Some emphasize 12-step groups. Some talk about their faith. Some use a clinical approach. And many use a combination of these and other elements.

Peter Volkmann, chief of police in Chatham, N.Y., is shown as he helps an addict find recovery services.

Volkmann, a recovering alcoholic himself, said during the

question-and-answer session after the screening, “The War on Drugs is over, and we lost.”

He said he realized that as a small-town police chief with a part-time department and a modest budget, he was not going to get anywhere trying to intercept the supply of drugs.

Instead, he asked, “What can we do to reduce demand?”

He said over three years, more than 230 people had come to his office in Chatham seeking help for their addictions. With the help of his network of volunteers and his own contacts, he was able to assist them in finding treatment.

As a result, he estimated that even if these 230-plus individuals stayed clean only two

months, that is the equivalent of getting \$750,000 worth of heroin off the street.

Discussion was wide-ranging. At one point Payson was asked about available addiction services in Litchfield County.

Payson said that compared to scares about contaminated lettuce, addiction takes a back seat in the perception of the public.

“Addiction is still looked upon as a choice,” she said.

The goal, she continued, is treatment on demand — to be able to take advantage of those fleeting moments when the addict is ready for change.

And with that, “to change perceptions — to look at the pain, rather than the drug.”