

**Elliot Kolkovich**  
Summit County Prosecutor



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## **PROSECUTOR KOLKOVICH AND JUDGE OLDFIELD CELEBRATE TURNING POINT PROGRAM GRADUATES**



AKRON, OH – Today, Summit County Prosecutor Elliot Kolkovich and Summit County Court of Common Pleas Judge Joy Malek Oldfield celebrated the graduation of nine participants of Summit County Turning Point, a special court for substance-dependent felony offenders who are seeking rehabilitation based on eligibility. The graduates this quarter include Tracy Affolter, Sean Ahern, Dustin Balthis, Kimberly Cassidy,

Michael Farmer, Neil Keyes, Ashley Mears, Sone Rassavong, and Melissa Sipe. Turning Point's program fosters community and accountability among participants to ensure successful reentry into society.

The mission of the Summit County Turning Point Program is to improve the overall quality of life in our community by providing effective court-supervision and enhanced treatment services for substance-dependent felony offenders. The program aims to change participants' behaviors and reduce their risk to the community.

The Summit County Turning Point Program features four phases that participants must progress through to graduate, each of which can take a varying number of weeks to progress through based on participant engagement and achievement. The program itself emphasizes community as a critical aid in achieving and maintaining sobriety, and staff aim to help participants establish and maintain those connections during their time in the program.

**"These graduates, through hard work and determination, have proved that they can be compliant and engaged members of society, and I commend them on their efforts,"** said Prosecutor Kolkovich. **"The Prosecutor's Office is proud to support Turning Point and is thankful to Judge Oldfield for her work helping participants find community and stability."**

**"I'm so proud of our graduates. And I'm proud our court offers support and structure to folks who are working so hard to regain stability and sobriety. Many of the arresting officers (from Akron Police Department and Medina County Sheriff's Department) came in person or offered letters of support to the individuals they originally arrested, and I'm grateful for their time. This collaboration is truly the hallmark of our program,"** said Judge Oldfield.

As part of the graduation process, participants complete a Mission Statement and Community Plan for themselves moving forward. The following quotes have been pulled from the graduates' statements.

**"It's been a hard journey but I'm so grateful for Turning Point and my recovery,"** said Tracy Affolter. **"It has gave me my life back. Addiction took a lot from me but I have worked so hard to get it all back."**

**"Today I know what I have to do to stay sober and clean from everything. My oldest and youngest sons are very proud of me. I've decided to live my life now with sober friends,"** said Sean Ahern.

**"I never thought that being arrested would be the best thing that ever happened to me. I got accepted into Turning Point, and with the help of the Turning Point Team, I was finally able to get sober,"** said Dustin Balthis. **"I was able to get my CDL, and obtained a good job. I have repaired my relationship with my family, and have earned back their trust. I am finally happy with the life that I have today."**

**"To everyone who has impacted my life in this program. I would not be here without every single one of you. I pray blessings upon you Judge Oldfield and the Turning Point Program. May you all be blessed beyond measure,"** said Kimberly Cassidy.

**"Today I have no warrants, I have a home and I have my family back. My children look up to me, my girlfriend is now my fiancé, and we are getting married next year and my mom and dad are proud of me now. Most importantly, I am proud of myself for accomplishing this stuff that I knew I could do, wanted to do and was able to do,"** said Michael Farmer.

**"Because of this program I will be able to further my education and reach my ambitious career goals,"** said Neil Keyes. **"I will continue to work on personal and professional relationships and make myself available to the next addict who still suffers from the hopeless state of mind."**

**“It felt impossible. I finally got caught, went to jail, and was sent to IBH, where I completely changed my life. I made sober friends, and had people who supported me,”** said Ashley Mears.

**“This program offered a lifeline, a beacon of hope in the midst of the darkness,”** said Sone Rassavong, **“The support I received from the dedicated staff was invaluable. They provided me with the tools and resources I needed to begin my journey towards recovery.”**

**“Today I have a great life. I have a great job, and I have earned back the love and respect of my family, friends, and peers. I have developed new friendships that I never thought possible. I have a home group, a sponsor, and attend church regularly. All that was made possible by the loving and dedicated people at Turning Point and IBH,”** said Melissa Sipe.

Turning Point ensures participant success through frequent engagement with all interveners involved in the case, including the judge, prosecutor, defense counsel, addiction support specialists, educational and vocational experts and many others. Judge Oldfield, Prosecutor Kolkovich and the entire Turning Point team work to cultivate a space of acceptance and growth, making sure participants feel welcomed and supported in their journey. Since October 2020, 491 defendants have participated in the Turning Point program.

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