



DAVID PERRY | dperry@herald-leader.com

Amid the smoke and fireworks, fans overran the field and mobbed Kentucky players after the Cats' upset of LSU.

KENTUCKY 43, LSU 37 (30T)

THIS 1'S
A TOPPER

UK stuns No. 1 Tigers in 3rd overtime



JOHN CLAY
HERALD-LEADER
SPORTS
COLUMNIST

When it was over, finally over, when Braxton Kelley had dropped Charles Scott short of the first-down marker, and the field filled with patrons, again, and the scoreboard flashed Kentucky 43, LSU 37, there was only one thing left to debate: Was Kentucky's thrilling, gut-wrenching, amazing three-overtime comeback win over top-ranked LSU at Commonwealth Stadium the greatest victory in the history of Kentucky football? Maybe. But about one thing there is no debate: It was the greatest feeling in Kentucky football history.

See CLAY, A20

ONLINE Slide show and video from the game and the celebration

INSIDE City | Region: Big victory brings mayhem in the streets — Page B1
Mark Story: What a difference a year makes in LSU game — Sports, C1

SPECIAL REPORT

A Kentucky mother's struggle through drug court

A NEW DAWN?

A prisoner to pills, she's sentenced to treatment — not time



MAY 2004

PHOTOS BY DAVID STEPHENSON | dstephenson@herald-leader.com

As she recovers from a night of using prescription drugs in her Lexington home, Dawn Nicole Smith is oblivious to the antics of her sons Tonio, left, and David.

ABOUT DAWN'S STORY

Chapter one of six: At 21, Dawn Nicole Smith has three kids she adores, a marriage that's deteriorating and a gut-wrenching addiction to painkillers. In March 2004, she entered Fayette County Drug Court for forging prescriptions. Since then, with her and the court's permission, reporter Mary Meehan and photographer David Stephenson have followed her struggle to stay clean.

Almost everyone knows someone touched by substance abuse. In Kentucky alone, 375,000 need treatment. Because of stagnant funding, only one in 12 will get help. Yet substance abuse causes 120,000 U.S. deaths a year and costs billions of dollars. It is a factor in at least half the domestic violence, child abuse and property crimes committed. To cope, Kentucky has invested \$56 million in drug courts, which will serve every county by year-end. Non-violent addicts receive intensive supervision and avoid prison if they stay off drugs. Considered the best solution to an intractable problem, drug court works for two of every five people in the program in Fayette County. Will Dawn be one of those? Or will she remain a prisoner to pills? Her success will depend on something a court can't order: hope.

On Kentucky.com: Watch and listen as Dawn explains how she got hooked.

By Mary Meehan, Herald-Leader Staff Writer | **"I messed up," reads the plea in careful, girlish script. "I used. I don't know why or what's wrong with me. ... I thought I didn't have a problem, that I could just quit. But I'm wrong. How can all those other people just quit? ... What if I can't get better? I don't want to be this way anymore. ... I want to be normal again."**



JUNE 2004

Like all drug court participants, Dawn appears frequently before a judge. Judge Sheila Isaac is compassionate but firm when rules are broken.

Dawn Nicole Smith is desperate to get clean when writing this letter in May 2004, pleading with her Fayette County Drug Court caseworker, Elton Terry, for help.

She's praying that if she admits to taking drugs before a drug test shows she has, the judge will take pity and not send her to jail for a year. That's her sentence for stealing a prescription pad to obtain 540 pain pills in 53 days.

She's been using almost daily for two years. If too many hours pass without a pill, her body revolts. Her hands shake. Her insides cramp. Her head aches. Sitting up, tracking a conversation or watching television takes almost unfathomable energy and focus.

"It just feels like I'm fighting myself," she says. "My mind is tired. I've asked the Lord to help me not to do those pills no more."

See Page A16



MOSTLY SUNNY

Chance of precipitation less than 20%. **Weather, B6**

72
HIGH

50
LOW

INDEX

Vol. 25, No. 284
© 2007

A la Carte H
Arts + Life E
Books E5
City | Region B

Classifieds F, G
Crossword, Jumble E11
Lottery B3
Movies E10

Obituaries B4
Opinions | Ideas D
Sports C
Travel E4

HOW TO REACH US

Delivery: 1-800-999-8881
Classified: 233-7878 or 1-800-933-7355

‘That one pill got me’

After her first pill, Dawn felt ‘weird and wonderful.’ It was the beginning of a downward spiral in an already tough life.



JUNE 2004

PHOTOS BY DAVID STEPHENSON | dstephenson@herald-leader.com

Going to her home on Lexington's Maryland Avenue after a shift at McDonald's violates Dawn's work release from jail. But she wants to see her children and check on her husband, Tony. The two have been arguing lately.

From Page A1

She's tired because it's not just her life, but her family's, hanging in the balance. Dawn, 22, already has three sons, from her six-year marriage to Tony Smith. She's convinced herself she's shielded them from the worst of her addiction, one of the many lies she tells herself to get through the day. Tonio, 5, acts as if it's his job to make his mama better; David, 3, is an ever-watchful boy with a head of wild curls, and baby Kobe, 2, copes with the family chaos by careening between fits of anger and tears.

These dark-haired boys — her “heart,” Dawn calls them — cling to her even when she's too high to feel the gentle rise of their chests as they nestle close in sleep.

She smiles a face-splitting grin, a rare instance of joy, at a mention of them. As she talks about them, she leans her head to the right, taking one strand of her long, dirty hair and twirling it around the inside of her ear, a calming tic she's had since she was a kid.

The drugs exaggerate in their lives the imperfect affection found in all families. But the children love her, as only kids can. And she loves them, as much as she is able.

THAT FIRST PILL

Dawn's goals, even when she was a kid, were never ambitious. She thought, once, about becoming a veterinarian, but she never finished high school. Now she longs for much more basic things: a house with the heat on, food for her kids, 24 hours without taking a pill.

Growing up in Crab Orchard and Lexington, she saw others turn to alcohol, then crack and sometimes pills. Even as Dawn begins drug court, her stepfather, Larry Raines, is on probation for forging a prescription for the painkiller Percocet in the name of Brenda Raines, his wife and Dawn's mom. Brenda is on probation for writing bad checks to support a crack habit that, she says, once cost her \$1,000 in a day. Dawn says she doesn't know anyone who has, long-term, quit using drugs or alcohol.

Dawn was wild in middle school. For running with a fast crowd and drinking, she was sent away to a group home.

The drugs started after her babies were born.

She was dragging, exhausted from working, taking care of the boys and worrying about paying the rent and having food in the house. Someone she worked with at McDonald's said she had something that could help. Dawn waited

until she got home to take that first oblong pain pill — a Lortab. As she sat on the couch in the dark with a battered old television on, a hazy sense of peace settled into her bones.

It was like a missing piece of herself slipped into place.

“It just made me feel soooooo relaxed,” she says, smiling at the memory, even after all the trouble that pill set into motion. “It's like people do crack, that one hit gets them. That one pill got me.”

The warm release was followed by a burst of energy. She felt like she could actually do things better, take care of the kids, clean the house. “Weird and wonderful,” Dawn says, dreamily, of that first time. “Weird and wonderful.”

When she was offered drug court as an alternative to prison, she didn't really think about going day after day without pills. Such a life was unimaginable.

“I just thought it would keep me out of trouble,” Dawn says.

Participants in drug court, which soon will be available in all of Kentucky's 120 counties, have committed non-violent crimes — usually in support of their drug or alcohol habit. Few come in committed wholeheartedly to staying clean, says Terry, who oversees about 40 drug court participants at any given time. He grew up

Continued on Page A17

DAWN'S STORY SO FAR

April 1982: Dawn Nicole Harris is born.

1998: She marries Latonye L. “Tony” Smith.

May 12, 1999: Son Tonio Smith is born.

Nov. 12, 2000: Son David Smith is born.

Oct. 26, 2001: Son Kobe Smith is born.

February 2003: Dawn steals a prescription pad from a University of Kentucky dentist's office.

September-November 2003: Dawn writes fraudulent prescriptions for 540 pills.

Nov. 11, 2003: She's arrested for prescription-pad theft.

January 2004: Dawn is indicted on six counts of obtaining pills fraudulently and one count of theft of prescription pad.

March 25, 2004: After pleading guilty, Dawn enters drug court.

Kentucky.com

- Read Dawn's complete letter to her caseworker explaining why she wants to quit abusing drugs.
- Read Larry Raines' guilty plea.
- Want more information about drug court? See a list of local contacts throughout Kentucky.
- How was this series reported? Read about it on the Behind the Headlines and Final Frame blogs.
- Comment on this story.



MAY 2004

Caseworker Elton Terry, left, is among those encouraging Dawn when she attends a drug court graduation for others, whose success stories are highlighted and used as motivation.



JUNE 2004 DAVID STEPHENSON | dstephenson@herald-leader.com

Dawn is one of about 800 people in Kentucky's drug courts when she enters the program; now there are more than 1,700. At the start, she is thinking more about staying out of jail than getting clean.

From Page A16

watching his mother struggle with addiction, and he knows the hold it can have on people.

The hope, he says, is that the strict regime of drug court gives addicts enough clean time "that something kicks in and they want to change their lifestyle."

Some drug court participants, like Dawn, are poor. Others are at the bottom of a long economic slide. But for all, creating a clean and sober life means changing almost everything: how and with whom they spend time, where they live. For many, the program means learning skills most people take for granted: how to hold down a job, how to show up on time, how to cope with daily frustrations without a drug or drink to push those feelings away.

But, ultimately, success or failure depends on some things no program can create — hope that things really can change, and faith in yourself to make it happen.

For Dawn, that has yet to emerge.

PAWNING TOYS FOR PILLS

Drugs have been central to her life for too long for her to have an easy escape. One pill quickly became two, then three, then four. Too many would unleash a torrent of histamine into her system and make her crazy-itchy. She has scars on her feet where she scrubbed herself raw with a foot brush to end the maddening tingle. She once tore apart a pain patch like the ones they give to terminal cancer patients so she could suck out the sedating gel and get just a little higher a little quicker.

Within six months of that first pill, that "weird and wonderful" feeling was gone. Once she started using, her family was evicted from the tidy Middlesboro apartment where they had lived for four years, and where the boys all had beds.

Soon, she, Tony and the boys were living in a bare, one-bedroom apartment in Lexington.

Not using wasn't really an option. "It got to where I was feeling all groggy and tired and didn't even want to get out of bed if I didn't have a stupid pill." All day, every day, was centered on pills. Getting pills, taking pills, figuring out where to get more pills.

When she was curled up on the couch unable to function, Tonio would get a Tylenol or whatever pill he could find, and bring it to her. Peering out from under silky, straight, black bangs, he'd say, "Here, Mommy, here's one of your pills," hoping, as little boys will, that he could do something, anything, to make things better.

Even in a haze, Dawn knew that was wrong. Yet, compelled by the physical craving and emotional pain, she kept doing things she said she'd never do.

She pawned her sons' GameBoy, their DVD player and a big box full of their movies. Maybe \$200 worth of stuff. She got less than \$10.

She always planned to get that stuff back with her next paycheck. But it always went to pills.

She snapped at the kids if she didn't get her "alone time," time to do drugs. Frustrated, she once spanked the oldest, Tonio, so hard it left a red mark on his bottom.

One time, she came to in the morning after a night of destructive thunderstorms. For a few panicked moments she couldn't find Kobe, who had slipped out into the back yard.

She started going to the emergency room to supplement what she could get on the street, using her signature move, what she calls her "sweet-little-innocent thing." Hanging her head, long, mousy brown hair blocking her face, she cries with increasingly measured hysteria and begs for relief. Sealing the deal, when necessary, involves briefly looking up to lock pleading eyes with the doctor.

"It's easy," she says, a rare confidence warming her pale, round face. On this she is something of an expert. "Say your back hurts, say your ribs hurt, say something hurts that they can't see, and you'll get some medicine."

It worked, often.

The time it didn't was what landed her in drug court. She went to a dentist at the University of Kentucky. She wanted painkillers. The answer was no.

That made her angry.

In her opinion, the dentist was stupid enough to leave the prescription pad in a drawer where she could get it, and she was smart enough to take it.

So she wrote prescriptions, 100 pills here, 90 pills there, and had a little side business. If she paid \$40 for a prescription, she'd sell some of the tablets for \$7 each to make at least enough money to cover the next pills. She had at least one person helping her: her mom, Brenda. They already had learned tricks for doctoring legitimate

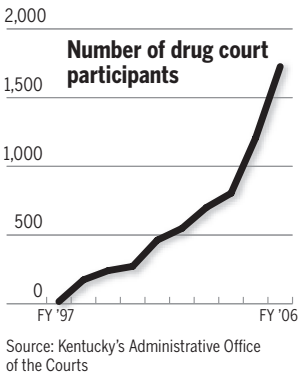
The 'carrot' is help; the 'stick' is jail

DRUG COURTS OFFER ADDICTS A CHANCE, BUT IT TAKES WORK

PARTICIPANTS

More enter drug court

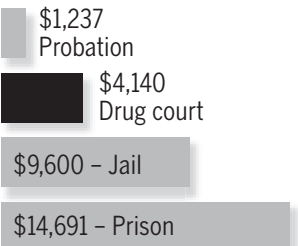
During the past decade, the number of participants in Kentucky's drug courts has grown from 16 to more than 1,726. By the end of 2007, drug courts will serve every Kentucky county.



COSTS

Kentucky's criminal justice options

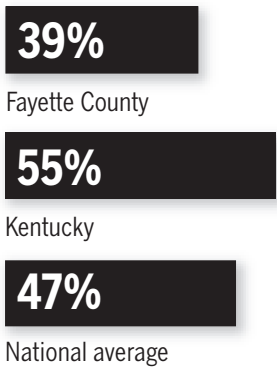
Average cost per person per year



SUCCESS RATES

How many stay clean?

Percentage of drug court participants who complete the program



BY THE NUMBERS

20 percent

Rearrest rate on drug-related charges among Kentucky drug court participants

57 percent

Rearrest rate on drug-related charges among those not in Kentucky drug court programs

40 percent

Non-graduating participants who considered Kentucky drug court a positive experience

SOURCES: U.S. Government Accountability Office, University of Kentucky Center for Drug and Alcohol Research

ONLINE



For more information: Find your area's drug court contacts.

Start to finish: Read about the stages of drug court, from admission to after-care.

By Mary Meehan

mmeehan1@herald-leader.com

Fourteen years ago, Kentucky had no drug courts.

By the end of this year, drug courts will serve all 120 Kentucky counties.

The growth represents an investment of \$56 million in state and federal funds. It's a recognition that to address drug crimes, the system must address the disease of addiction.

"You can't punish away an ailment. It's that simple. Why should we punish people for what is clearly a brain disease?" said Doug Marlowe, director of law and ethics research at the Treatment Research Institute at the University of Pennsylvania.

With the legislature supporting drug court expansion and with Fayette County's drug court known as a national model, "Kentucky is ahead of the game," said West Huddleston, executive director of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

But dealing with addicts is a difficult game to win.

Since the first drug court was created in Miami 20 years ago, nearly 2,000 have been set up across the country. Drug courts combine intensive supervision, random drug tests, group counseling sessions and frequent appearances before a judge to help participants deal with addiction and avoid prison. Extensive research has found that drug courts are the most effective means of dealing with addicted criminals.

To be sent to drug court, participants must have been recommended by a judge and interviewed by drug court staff.

Nationally, drug court participants have an average rate of success — meaning they are able to stay off drugs and alcohol and graduate from the program — of 47 percent, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress.

Across Kentucky, the success rate is about 55 percent, and in Fayette County, 39 percent.

Judge Mary Noble, who founded Fayette County's drug court a decade ago, said that when deciding whether drug courts work, you must consider the depth of despair and dysfunction that brings addicts into the justice system.

Addiction "is an insidious physical and physical disease that absolutely takes ahold of a person. It's demonic in what it does," said Noble, whose father struggled with alcoholism after returning from World War II, but stayed sober in the last 17 years of his life. To sustain their habits, addicts and alcoholics will steal, sacrifice their health and neglect their families.

All segments of society

Drugs affect all kinds of families.

"Drugs have no barrier," said Danielle Sanders-Jackson, program supervisor for Fayette County Drug Court. "Here, we've seen it all. Lawyers. Judges. Nurses. ... Black. White. Hispanic. Poor. Rich."

But many of those in drug court have additional challenges, such as poverty and a lack of job skills.

"These people are not necessarily people who've ever had a regular job. Now, all of the sudden, they have to be up and out in the morning. They have to be somewhere. They have to do groups. ... They have to go to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. They have to do a lot of things

they've never had to do before," said T.K. Logan, professor at the University of Kentucky's Center on Drug and Alcohol Research.

In part, drug courts are seen as a solution because the success of the alternatives is so dismal. Studies show that of addicted criminals who don't get treatment, 95 percent relapse within three years after their release, Marlowe said. Half of those will be jailed after being convicted of another crime.

Crime fueled by substance abuse is too pervasive to ignore, he said. About half of all violence and domestic abuse, 70 percent of child abuse and neglect, and 50 percent to 75 percent of theft and property crimes involve substance abuse, he said.

Drug courts are the latest effort to change those numbers. Society's previous efforts included hopes for rehabilitation in the 1950s and the "three-strikes-you're-out" judicial philosophy of the 1990s that mandated minimum prison sentences. Those requirements soon led to overcrowded prisons.

Judicial experts started viewing drug courts as a solution when a wave of research showed how drugs change the brain and pointed to addiction as a disease. In a rare moment, addiction experts and justice advocates

found common ground.

Simply sending a drug-addicted criminal for treatment doesn't work, Marlowe said. More than half just don't show up. Of the remaining participants, 40 percent to 80 percent drop out before 90 days, the minimum amount of time researchers think is needed for treatment to take effect.

What makes drug courts effective, he said, is the "stick" of a jail sentence hanging over an addict's head, coupled with the "carrot" of counseling and treatment. The addict can be ordered by a judge to act for his own benefit until internal change compels him to want to do it himself.

Not a perfect option

Still, not everyone is a fan of the program, including Ray Larson, the Fayette County commonwealth's attorney.

He said drug courts have essentially created an expensive, unnecessary bureaucracy that duplicates other services. Before drug court, he said, Fayette County had drug-testing programs, and probation and parole officers could refer addicts who needed treatment to appropriate programs.

Plus, he contends some drug traffickers and potentially violent felons work their way into the program just to avoid prison time.

Although access to drug treatment is improving, Noble said, many parts of Kentucky might not have the recovery services or the manpower to monitor drug court participants.

And, UK's Logan said, drug courts aren't designed to handle the complications of domestic or sexual abuse commonly found in addicted women. A lack of affordable child care also makes the program difficult for mothers.

Noble, who is now on the Kentucky Supreme Court, said she realizes that imprisoning someone who isn't making an effort makes space in the program for someone who might.

"You have to learn to live with not being able to help some people," she said.

A limited few get the limited resources

Who gets state-funded drug treatment first

1. Intravenous-drug users who are pregnant
2. Other pregnant women
3. Other intravenous-drug users
4. Those infected with HIV or hepatitis B or C
5. Those in drug court

Need help with substance abuse? Call the state hotline at 1-800-374-9146 or (502) 564-4456.

centers, in Henderson. They eventually will serve 1,000 people statewide. "That is the biggest influx of recovery beds ever," Hascal said. "It will make a dent," she said, "but it is really just a drop in the bucket."

Because of the nature of the disease of addiction, there is often a very small window when someone is willing to seek help. Many people who seek treatment and are turned away don't try again, she said. "A lot of people die," she said.

MARY MEEHAN

“I don’t want them to feel like I abandoned them,” Dawn says of her kids while driving to jail, high on Lortab, chain-smoking, sucking down a Mountain Dew and listening to Christian radio.

From Page A17

prescriptions — how easy it is to change a 10 to 100, or to take information from a prescription for a non-narcotic and copy it to a forged one for painkillers to make it look real.

Recklessness set in. Dawn filled five prescriptions for 540 pills in 53 days.

A pharmacy employee called police. Dawn was arrested and was offered drug court as an alternative to jail.

But even that didn’t stop her from using as the case worked its way through the court system. In her first month in drug court, she twice went to the emergency room, exaggerating injuries to get doctors to give her pills. From November 2003, when she was arrested, to May 2004, Dawn has been in jail five times after testing positive for drugs.

APPEARING BEFORE THE JUDGE

This time, because she confessed, she’s hoping the judge will have mercy and not send her away.

She has to appear before Judge Sheila Isaac, a tiny woman who looks like a china doll but commands the courtroom like a Teamster. Dawn has been sobbing, off and on, for hours. After her name is called, she moves slowly through the room in a maroon shirt that she got when working at Wendy’s — the best job she ever had. It says “Sparkle.” Her red-rimmed eyes are wild and panicked, like someone just seconds out of a nightmare.

Behind her, on the back benches, sit the other drug court participants. They must assemble every Thursday, as required in this stage of the program. A bailiff makes them move closer and, week after week, instructs them to take off their baseball caps. The participants clap as instructed by the judge when one man gets promoted to assistant manager at a pizza parlor, and again when another gets a 25-cents-an-hour raise.

Judge Isaac’s courtroom is not a place for coddling.

“I don’t know how you live with yourself,” she says to a man as he tries to argue why he shouldn’t have to pay child support. Another, recently charged with DUI and smelling today of a yeasty combination of sweat and beer, is taken to jail. Three guys will be sent away, one to serve 18 years.

But as Dawn does her own slow trudge to the bench, the judge has a certain softness. She has read Dawn’s carefully penned plea to Terry: *“Help me. I want to be normal again.”*

Dawn doesn’t, like some, offer elaborate excuses. She just says, tearfully, that she did it.

“We appreciate your honesty,” Isaac says.

Dawn will have to serve 20 days in the Fayette County Detention Center for breaking the rules. But she’s still in the program. “We want you to see the end of the road. There is an end of the road,” Isaac says.

“It’s all about hope,” the judge says, “so hang on to that. It will see you through.”

But not today.

EXPIRED EGGS, OLD BREAD

Five minutes after court, Dawn’s down the elevator and smoking a cigarette so generic it’s called Basic, and talking about how her husband Tony, who works as an aide in a nursing home, has a check coming.

She figures since she’s going to jail anyway,



JUNE 2004

PHOTOS BY DAVID STEPHENSON | dstephenson@herald-leader.com

Dawn says it took just one pill to get her hooked on the painkiller Lortab. Now her family’s future hangs in the balance. To succeed in drug court, she must change just about everything in her life.

and she’s never fully detoxed, she might as well get high this one, very last time. She goes to three different dealers over two days before finding someone selling the painkiller Lortab. She tells herself she needs a little something to ease the pain of leaving her babies.

The morning she is to report to jail, she wakes up in a semi-stupor with her boys in a tangle like puppies on the couch. Kobe, 2, is without underwear or a diaper. The older boys are dressed in shorts, although there is a chill in the air and the gas has been cut off because the family didn’t pay the bill. The house smells like dust, cigarettes and old grease.

Smoking her first morning cigarette and swaying ever so slightly on the couch, she seems oblivious as Tonio rides a battered tricycle repeatedly over some crushed cereal on the floor. David climbs on the back of the ragged couch and jumps to a shelf on the wall. She does nothing to correct them. Eventually, slowly, she makes her sons a breakfast of eggs past their expiration date and old bread, which they pick at but don’t eat.

Hours later, she gets together some socks and underwear, an extra bra, a new box of 64 crayons and a coloring book to take with her. She’ll have to wear that itchy, green jail jumpsuit and eat bologna sandwiches. But she’ll watch TV, play solitaire and sleep.

She’ll get some rest.

When she comes back, she says, she’ll be better able to take care of herself and her boys.

When the boys fuss, she reluctantly gives them one of the brown cardboard cartons filled with 16 sticks of color, although there’s nothing to draw on but a tattered notebook and the walls.

As she walks out the door, Tonio asks in a baby voice too young for his age whether she is

going to jail.

She doesn’t answer.

She sits on the step, and David begins to cry, arms around her neck. “Don’t go,” he whines, smashing into her face with his cheek. “Don’t go. I want to go.”

As his mother gets in her car, Kobe flings himself to the ground, then clings to the yard’s fence as his dad tries to peel him off.

Kobe’s wails trail her down the block.

But the drugs work. She doesn’t cry.

The tears will come tomorrow, and the next day, as she sits in jail with nothing to stop them. When drug court officials discover she’s used after being told to go to jail, the 20 days are extended to 30.

“I don’t want them to feel like I abandoned them,” she says of her kids while driving to jail, high on Lortab, chain-smoking, sucking down a Mountain Dew and listening to a Christian radio station.

She knows what it’s like to feel abandoned and unloved. She knows how that can mess you up, how it stays with you even when you’re grown.

She’ll make sure, she says, that her boys understand she’s not going to jail because of anything they did.

She’ll tell them; they’ll know how much she loves them.

She’ll tell them, but not today.

Reach Mary Meehan at (859) 231-3261 or 1-800-950-6397, Ext. 3261, or mmeehan1@herald-leader.com.

Coming Monday: Dawn looks to God for help.

Coming Wednesday: Next step: intensive treatment.

Coming Friday: Dawn gives birth, but her family falters.

Coming Saturday: The family must move to a shelter.

Coming next Sunday: Does Dawn make it?

FOUR YEARS IN THE MAKING

Writer Mary Meehan and photographer David Stephenson secured permission from Dawn Nicole Smith and the court system to spend parts of the last four years with her and her family. In addition to reviewing court records, the journalists observed Dawn in court, in jail and at home and interviewed drug experts, judges, drug court caseworkers and an extended group of people whose lives intersected with Dawn’s. To read more about how this series was done, go to the Behind the Headlines blog at Kentucky.com.

Mary Meehan, 43, has been a reporter for nearly 20 years and a writer at the Herald-Leader since 1999. She has won dozens of national, regional and state awards for her work. She is a Western Kentucky University alumna.



David Stephenson, 37, joined the Herald-Leader in 1997 and twice has won the Kentucky News Photographers Association’s Photographer of the Year Award. He was named National Press Photographers Association Region 4 Photographer of the Year in 2000 and 2002. He is a graduate of WKU.



Sharon Walsh edited this series. **Ron Garrison** was the photo editor; **Brian Simms** was the page designer; **Camille Weber** was the graphics designer; and **N.T. Ricker**, **Mary Sondergard** and **Brian Throckmorton** were the copy editors. **Lu-Ann Farrar**, news research manager, and **Linda J. Johnson**, computer-assisted reporting coordinator, provided research and assistance.



MAY 2004

Dawn prefers to keep to herself and sleep as much as she can while in the Fayette County Detention Center after a positive drug test. In some ways, jail is a break from her stressful life.



MAY 2004
Before reporting to jail after a positive drug test, Dawn spends as much time as she can with her children.
Above: David, 3, hugs and kisses his mother while playing on the porch during her last day at home.
Right: Kobe, 2, cries as his mother walks to her car. Later, Dawn will say she took three pain pills to get through the stress of leaving her kids.



Mommy has to go to jail – again



MAY 2004

Dawn's 20 days in the Fayette County Detention Center for a positive drug screen turns into 30 days because she fails another drug test after reporting to jail. Depressed, she spends much of her time sleeping. Her stepfather, Larry Raines, sometimes brings her boys to visit her, but they can see one another only through a glass partition. "Not being able to touch them is hard. It's not the same for them, and it's not the same for me," Dawn says.

PHOTOS BY DAVID STEPHENSON | dstephenson@herald-leader.com



JUNE 2004
Dawn must make weekly drug court appearances before Judge Sheila Isaac, even though Dawn is serving 30 days in jail. Dawn qualifies for work release, though, and can get out of jail to go to work at a fast-food restaurant.