

September 2016 Former Youth's Determination Pays Off



Tiffany is a beaming 23-year-old woman, but she remembers when her outlook on life wasn't so bright.

She spent most of her teen years locked behind bars. Her first stay in detention began at age 14. By age 16, she was incarcerated at the former Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility where she stayed for two years.

"I was so angry and had gone through a lot, and I didn't know how to express my emotions," Tiffany said. "There were a lot of nice staff who cared and knew how to reach me and would talk me down."

Tiffany explained that she was at a seventh grade level when she first arrived at Scioto. She wasn't able to complete her education while there, but that didn't stop her from setting a clear goal of earning her high school diploma.

Once released, Tiffany faced roadblocks. Parole staff helped her by sharing resources and vouchers to assist with practical needs. Tiffany found it hard to navigate job interviews having no work experience that she could describe when asked questions. Eventually she became involved in a summer job program that equipped her with skills and prepared her for more opportunities.

Peer pressure was also something Tiffany had to rise above. "I had to stay away from those people I had gotten into trouble with," she said.

She found inspiration at a local recreation center where she began excelling at boxing. A coach

worked with Tiffany in the ring but also emphasized the importance of self-presentation. She found that being required to speak up grew her self-confidence.

Through much discipline and hard work, Tiffany has competed multiple times in the [Cleveland Area Golden Gloves](#). She has also boxed in national championships. What's more, she committed to a credit recovery program and earned her high school diploma last year. For Tiffany, the two are tied together: "Boxing kept me focused on what I wanted in life."

Tiffany credits much of her success to her faith and surrounding herself with encouraging people. "I didn't have a lot of family support, but I had church support and people I could learn from and stay motivated by," she explained. She is a believer in "speaking the positive over the negative" and got into the habit of telling herself, "I'm strong. My past doesn't define my future. I can do this."

Today Tiffany works as an account supervisor for a cleaning company. Recently she spoke to the youth at Circleville JCF. "Keep focused on what you want out of life, and write your goals down," she told them. "Surround yourself with positive people."