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## Juvenile correctional student gets second chance at education

By LINDA MARTZ

News Journal

LOUDONVILLE -- Roderick, 18, was released from Mohican Juvenile Correctional Facility this week with a Ohio General Educational Development diploma in hand.

His new life has begun, and will soon continue at Central State University thanks to a scholarship.

Mohican staff members said they think Roderick is a smart, articulate young man with considerable promise.

He wants to earn a criminal justice degree then return to Mohican -- this time as an Ohio Department of Youth Services corrections officer, to influence teens who took wrong turns and landed there.

Roderick knows all about it. This is a lifestyle and experience that must remain in his past.

"I've been through it. I'll be able to help a lot of kids, just because they can't get by me," he said.

Despite missing school regularly as a sophomore, Roderick tested near the very end of his senior year at Mohican. He scored so well on GED pretests, he needed no remedial classes before taking the actual test. He scored 562 points on his GED test -- well past the 450 needed to pass.

"He did real well with it," guidance counselor Susan Hopple said.

Roderick said somehow he always managed to maintain high grades in high school, even while spending more time in the streets than in class.

"I don't know how," he said. "(I was out there) acting the fool."

Roderick said he had a drive to excel, but wasn't putting that to positive use. He started to sell drugs.

"My grandfather was hard-headed. My uncle got locked up when I was 10. My stepfather, he was abusive. The only acceptance I had was the streets -- and I always felt I had to prove myself," he said.

When he first came into the juvenile corrections system, Roderick admitted he was still selfish.

"I was hard-headed. Somewhere within myself, I had a change of heart and a change of mind," he said. "I had to get past the rowdy attitude and the I-don't-care attitude. Then I had to get past the blame-other-people attitude."

He said he purposely plans to attend a college far away from his old life.

"I need to go to college away from where I live," he said.

He told Mohican staff members he plans not to return to live in his hometown until he can afford to live in the suburbs.

Officials at Mohican Juvenile Correctional Facility promised Roderick that if he makes good on his plans to earn the degree, he'll be invited back four years from now -- as commencement speaker.

"You've got it in you, just study," a staff member urged.

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