GRADUATE STUDENT OVERCOMES DRUGS AND HOMELESSNESS

MELISSA CACERES
News Director

There were many times in his life that Aaron Alvin wished he could turn back the clock.

After leaving his wife for gambling their money away, being discharged from the army for abusing alcohol and falling into heavy drug addiction, Alvin was a homeless man in Memphis, Tenn. who had lost everything.

“Aaron was in his thirties, I didn’t know that there was anything else besides drugs and alcohol,” said Alvin, who recalls having to search for food in garbage cans. “I was lost in a world that I didn’t know how to get out of.”

Born and raised in Over-The-Rhine, the ex-drill sergeant wandered the streets of Memphis for four years before he decided to go back to Miami and lay in a place close to home.

There he found his family again. But he also found more.

It wasn’t long before Alvin was arrested for drug possession, grand theft auto and domestic violence.

He became a regular sight for the Miami judges, as Alvin’s criminal record grew longer and crimes became more severe.

Until a judge offered him one more chance to enter a drug rehabilitation center, Alvin finally decided, after 12 years living in a drug rehabilitation center, to go back to Miami and lay in a place close to home.

There he found his family again.

The actor who plays the part.

Dapiaggi looks like he fits the part. Covered in tattoos and wearing a business suit, he is passionate about soccer, writing and music – his passion is art.

His parents had always urged him to become a doctor or a lawyer.

“I want to show my kids that I didn’t know that there was a dedicated place with just over 100,000 residents, McClain relied heavily on her family for support.

SPOTLIGHT ON

STUDENT PREPS FOR NEW ROLE AS GRADUATE

ESRA ERDOGAN
Lifel! Editor

“My dream role is to play the bad guy,” said Gustavo Dapiaggi, who is graduating with a BA in theatre.

“He hopes that, what was the vice that could have destroyed him, will now provide certain knowledge and empathy that few social workers have.”

“One of my proudest moments was walking across the stage as a drill sergeant and hearing my son say ‘that’s my dad,’” he said.

Today, Alvin, who has since remarried and is working as a therapist at Camillus House, will be on another stage, this time to receive his college diploma.

“I know can’t make up for many things but I can start catching up,” he said. “I want to show my kids that if life’s struggles ever meet them, they can come out of it too.”

Even before dedicating his life to art, Dapiaggi has always been an eccentric.

“Since I was a little kid my passion was to be different characters. My mom [used to] tell me that I would go to school dressed as Zorro or Superman,” said Dapiaggi.

Acting was not always the dream that Dapiaggi’s family envisioned for him. His parents had always urged him to become a doctor or a lawyer.

“The funny thing is that my dad was not a doctor or a lawyer, he was a TV host and my mom was a model. They knew how hard this profession is and they didn’t want that for me,” Dapiaggi said.

Although Dapiaggi’s interests are varied – he is passionate about soccer, writing and music – his interest in acting never faded after childhood.

“What inspired me the most was [while] I was in high school I did research for Evita. At the time they were filming the movie in Argentina and I got really curious about the whole industry,” said Dapiaggi.

After high school Dapiaggi earned a degree in business at an Argentinian university in order to have something to fall back on.

“Although his family warned him of the difficulties of a career in the arts and entertainment industries, Dapiaggi moved...”

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COMING UP | Spring 2012

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Dapiaggi: being on stage a ‘privilege’

THEATRE, page 1

to Miami and enrolled in the University’s Theatre Department.
Dapiaggi’s education at the University has helped him grow immensely as an actor.

“The most remarkable lesson I learned was in Acting 3. I learned to listen to another actor and live in the moment. That totally changed acting for me completely because [I realized] that acting is not just memorizing your lines or waiting for the cue to say your line. You must listen to the other person and live the moment and react as if that moment is real even though you rehearsed it millions of times,” said Dapiaggi.

For the past three years, Dapiaggi has participated in many school productions. In the department, each student is given an assignment to prepare the show for the audience. Dapiaggi has helped with everything from lighting to costumes. Dapiaggi and other students in the department help design the stage, paint the stage, work as lighting designers.

“The good thing about our department is that you get knowledge in every field. Not everybody can be on stage. It’s a privilege to be on stage, but the actors also need the rest of the department to create the rest of the environment for the play. We work really hard but it’s fun.”

Dapiaggi believes this kind of education has given him very valuable experience and opened his eyes to the parts of theatre that he did not have knowledge about before. “I didn’t think about things like [lighting] before and I didn’t care. But I have realized that you need stage design and costume. Basically the most wonderful thing about theatre is telling a story. And you need these elements to make the audience think and believe that the story is real,” said Dapiaggi.

Now that Dapiaggi has earned his degree, he plans on going to auditions and castings in order to make a living out of his passion. “My acting teacher Phillip Church said you will always be afraid when you go to an audition, it’s part of being an actor. Your feelings and your emotions are going to affect you at that moment and you need to control them and get it out of your system,” said Dapiaggi.

Dapiaggi does fear rejection while searching for a job like other graduates, but his aspirations are humble for someone who is aiming to be in the spotlight. “My dream is to be able to live doing this and support my family and be happy. I will be the happiest person in the world to be a part of a theatre company and able to support my family and that’s it. I will live my life like that and I will be complete. If I get the chance to be Brad Pitt, I wouldn’t say no,” said Dapiaggi.

WHERE’S THE BEEF?

Grad plans to play in 2012

MCCLAIN, page 1

“Without them I probably would not be here,” she said. “They definitely played a role in keeping me sane.”

Besides the fact that her new school’s population was about half the size of the one back home, McClain had to deal with the frenetic lifestyle of being both a full-time college student and an athlete. She reminisced on stories of her freshman years where she would dash out of class, have only 30 minutes to prepare for practice, wear herself out and wake up at dawn the next day for conditioning. All the while, she still had papers piling up.

Easy to say, the grueling lesson she learned came in the form of two words: time management. What is her advice to future student-athletes? “Make sure you manage your time from the very beginning. Don’t come in thinking that you can do your homework later,” said McClain sternly. “Do your homework now and practice after. At the end of the day, your education matters, not your sport.”

McClain is studying criminal justice and plans to pursue her master’s program and be a graduate assistant. Though she’s graduating in December, her softball career at FIU is still not done. She plans to play during the 2012 season with one objective in mind: become Sun Belt champions. “I will make that my personal goal. Every year we come so close but we can’t get it,” said McClain. “We know what we need to do and we’ve set that bar.”

Even after the conclusion of next season, McClain will refuse to relinquish softball from her life. She hopes to join National Pro Fastpitch in the summer, the only professional women’s softball league in the country. “I don’t think I can hang up the cleats yet,” said McClain with a smile.
The Beacon – Monday, December 12, 2011

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