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Ex-inmate says program helped him get on track

By Joe Baker/Daily News staff

"My life was totally out of control."

That's how Keith Lambert, now 41, described his life before he got arrested on two counts of armed robbery and kidnapping. He had been drinking alcohol since he was 13 and doing drugs since his early 20s.

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It all finally caught up to him one very bad night. He ended up getting sentenced to five years in prison. While incarcerated, he was denied early release three times. Lambert spent most of his time behind bars thinking about his life.

"I would see people get out and come back in and I realized you can't change your life unless you really want to," he said. "Now I'm glad I didn't get paroled. It gave me time to work on myself. I know what I did was serious. I don't blame anybody around me."

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Although he was born in Providence and grew up in Warwick, Lambert came to Newport after his release in October 2006. One day he and his girlfriend were at the Community Baptist Church and he learned about **Turning Around Ministries**, which has an office in the church. The faith-based outreach program has since helped him find a job and has been there for him when he has felt the stress associated with making the necessary changes that will keep him out of prison.

"(Turning Around Ministries) is helping me out, giving me avenues, pointing me to jobs available, providing me with food and clothing," Lambert said. "For a person coming out of prison, that's a big help."

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Lambert now is making it, distancing himself ever so slowly from his former life. He has a job stocking shelves and is staying at a local motel. Things are good now, but he realizes he is a long way from being out of the woods.

"It's hard work. You have to control yourself on a daily basis," Lambert said. "I have 10 years of probation hanging over my head. That in itself is an incentive, but by itself it's not going to keep me out of prison."

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