



# Innovative Practice: “College Nights” A Vision of Empowerment”



A collaborative with Minnesota  
North College-Mesabi Range  
Campus and Range Hybrid  
Treatment Court in Virginia, MN

# Objectives



To build lasting relationships within the community and treatment court

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Create unique environments for participants & teams to learn from each other

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Engage people in opportunities for a different future using education to create individual change

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Open doors to new and innovative approaches to participant and student learning



**Mary Kay Riendeau, LADC LSW, MSW,**

Department Head for Human Services and Addiction Studies at Minnesota North College-Mesabi Range Campus

23 years of experience working in substance use disorders and addiction studies

36 plus years working in the human services field.

2023-Outstanding Educator Minnesota State Colleges

2022-DHS grant for treatment court participants and graduates., BIPOC, low-income recovering from opioid use disorder

2019-DHS grant for social workers, probation officers, BIPOC, low-income

2016-Co-founded "College Nights"

2010-Mary Kay pioneered bimodal classroom instruction in Minnesota (simultaneous Zoom and in-class)

2006-Multidisciplinary team that established the Range Drug Court (currently Range Hybrid Treatment Court)

Dedication to providing quality education in innovative methods to assist students in their life endeavors

1998-Drug charge in 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District



# Mary Kay's Passion



## Insight From 4 Old Guys and Thoughts

13 bars and 2 liquor stores, 1800 people

John H.-Probation

Lanny-Plant a good garden

Mr. K-Inspired education

Pat G.-Mentor

## Ideology

Takes a village

A drug charge could be the best thing that happened

You can do anything you want in recovery

Education keeps a person busy and can repair drug use damage by exercising the brain

Education can change your lifepath (Empowerment)

Give people a taste of education, it doesn't have to be addictions,

Role Modeling-if she can do it, I can too





**Aleesha Ward**

2016-Treatment Court Coordinator for the Minnesota 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District and hired to manage the Range Hybrid Treatment Court

Since 2016- Established three new Treatment Courts in the Sixth Judicial District

2016-Co-founded “College Nights”

Past Experience-Coordinator for a Juvenile Drug Court program in Fargo, ND



# Aleesha's Passion



## **Desires for Participants**

Focuses her additional efforts on developing relationships

Building bridges between Treatment Courts and the community

Collaborations are instrumental to building lasting supports for participants



## **Ideology**

Supportive of creative and forward-thinking leadership in the sixth district

Dedicated community partners and teams

Sky is the limit with what you can do together



# How The Collaborative Effort Began



## Aleesha's Action Steps 2016

Wanted to collaborate in community

Called Mesabi Range Campus looking for a connection

Was given Mary Kay's number and reached out

Didn't know what she was doing but did it anyway

Probably would rethink it now- LOL



## Mary Kay's Shower

On vacation in Jamaica when Aleesha called

Took a shower where she does a great deal of thinking on things

Sparked the idea of participants as students learning about addiction from a counselor perspective with other current students

Everyone participate, Mary Kay's class, treatment court professionals, participants, and distance learners

Pitched to Aleesha

Another shower, another idea: Scholarships



## 2016 Humble Beginnings

Met and collectively thought we would give it a whirl

Thought out a sketchy plan

1st year introductory addiction courses: Introduction to Addiction and Counseling Theory and Skills (3-hour block classes)

Human Services Helping Process class holds a fundraising event or community event to raise money for scholarships

# College Night Philosophy



Using education in rural communities to empower individual change

Creating new and innovative approaches for participant learning that is adaptable to their lifestyle

How to establish community connections in your rural court



Person-centered approach as entering the school environment you are a student and not a “participant”

Learning about being a counselor can enlighten you to the other side as a professional views things

Open communication about substance use disorders and recovery is one key to wellness

Exploring all sides and views can give you a new perspective

Seeing role models succeed can give hope, inspiration, and facilitates identification





# Treatment and Hybrid Court Best Practices



Positive contributions of drug courts has been achieving long-term rehabilitation of participants' employment and educational status

Treatment court provides or refers Participants for treatment and social services

Addresses conditions that are likely to interfere with their response to substance abuse or mental health treatment (responsivity needs)

Diminish criminal recidivism (criminogenic needs)

Increase long-term treatment gains (maintenance needs)



Depending upon participant needs, complementary services may include:

- Housing assistance
- Trauma-informed services
- Criminal-thinking interventions
- Family or interpersonal counseling
- Vocational or educational services**
- Medical or dental treatment

Participants shall only be required to receive services for which they have an assessed need. – Minnesota Treatment Court Standards (based of NDCI's Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards, Volume 2)



# Community Centered Criminal Justice Learning/Approach-How College Nights Works



## Classes

Four times a year, 2 classes in Fall Semester and 2 in Spring Semester (Classes-3 Hour Block Classes)

1<sup>st</sup> Hour-Treatment Court presents to Mary Kay's cohort, students (participants), and guests

2<sup>nd</sup> Hour-Everyone networks, food refreshments, and fun

3<sup>rd</sup> Hour-All Professionals except instructors leave and have engaging lecture/education

Mary Kay's Class signs a waiver for confidentiality

## Incentivizing Attendance

\$50 off their Treatment Court Fees or 3 hours CSW credit

FREE FOOD when you attend in person

Unique opportunity for participants to hear from experts in the field

Connect with team members outside of the courthouse and see them from a different perspective

2 Scholarships each year for a free class in either Introduction to Addictions or Counseling Theory and Skills



# How Does College Nights Work



## Speakers

DWI/Hybrid Courts

Mental Health Courts

Probation Officers

Hybrid Court from other states (Ex: Atlanta, Georgia)

Graduates (powerful)

## This Years Speakers

Aleesha organized national experts to present

Aaron Arnold, Chief Development Officer at NADCP

Julie Seitz, Project Director at National Center for DWI Courts

Jacqueline Van Wormer Ph.D, Director of Research at the National Drug Court Institute

Special Note – all of our experts have presented free-of-charge (Mary Kay slipped them a dinner card at their location when Aleesha wasn't looking)



# College Nights Kicked Covid In The Pants



## Teaching

Zoom, Telepresence and In-Class since 2010 (yes, way before Covid)

Addiction Studies cohort has students from all over the state

Students can come in class and on Zoom

## Covid: A Good Thing?

This is one project that went on uninterrupted during the pandemic

We were already set up with a Zoom Room and capitalized on the situation

We were able to offer participants to attend over Zoom and continue to do offer that option, as well as in-class

We recognized the virtual component and now invite presenters from around the country

Event now open to treatment courts statewide





# Zoom Room at Minnesota North College-Mesabi Range Campus



# Proud And Deserving Students



## Scholarship Winners

Human Services-Helping Process class holds a community fundraising event or community event to raise money for scholarships

We have awarded 6 scholarships to Treatment Court participants for classes

Three chose to continue to become Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors or Alcohol and Drug Counselor Temporary Permit.

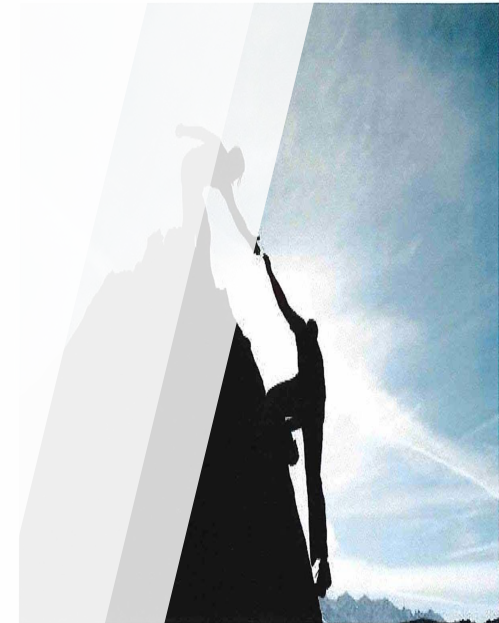
One obtained her bachelor degree in Social Work and Works for Fairview Hospital in Hibbing, MN as a licensed social worker (pictured)

## Testimonials

*"...my main hope in being accepted in this scholarship and having this change to attend college once again so that I can once again feel proud of myself"*

*"...I feel very fortunate that the community I live in provides events that educate us on these issues free of charge. I hope to be invited to participate as a professional, possibly speaking as a guest or as a community resource"*

*"...I would like the opportunity to experience and learn what this scholarship has to offer. Learning is always a way of bettering yourself. The time is right for me to start perusing my dreams, I honestly feel this scholarship would open that door."*



## YOU CAN HELP SUPPORT RECOVERY AND HIGHER LEARNING!

Mesabi Range College's 2018 Human Services Club-Helping Process Class has developed and implemented a scholarship program for Treatment Court participants in recovery. This club/class is holding a raffle to raise money for scholarships that will enable Treatment Court Participants to take a class in Addiction Studies at Mesabi Range college every Fall and Spring semester.



- First Prize!  
\$500
- Second Prize  
\$250 Photo Package from High Heel Photography
- Third Prize \$100
- Tickets are \$2 Each

Raffle and Taco Feed in a Bag (\$1.00) will be held April 12, 2018 12:00PM at the Mesabi Range College Commons (Virginia Campus) -Need not be present to win!

**MESABI RANGE COLLEGE**  
1001 Chestnut Street W.  
Virginia, MN 55792

[www.mesabirange.edu](http://www.mesabirange.edu)

For more information on Drug Court in Minnesota:

<http://www.courts.gov/Help/DrugCourt.html>



# Spin-Off Idea From College Nights!



# 2022 DHS GRANT



## Grant-Pilot Program

Mesabi Range Campus Addiction Studies Department received \$543,000 to train and empower 30 individuals from the general population with a diagnosis of opioid use disorder

Designed to prepare individuals for successful permit (ADC-T) or certificate (bachelor's degree-LADC)



## Grant Project Goals

Provide one year of training in either an Associate of Applied Science degree or Certificate for a person with an established bachelor's degree in Addiction Studies

Provide a \$1600.00 (\$800.00 per semester for 2 semesters) stipend for Fall 2022 semester and Spring 2023 semester

Throughout the grant process assist students with submitting a background check, applying for appeals when needed, and attempt to obtain a set aside if needed for past indiscretions





# 2022 DHS GRANT



## Grant initiative

Empower Individuals from the general population with a diagnosis of opioid use disorder

Expand the workforce in addictions counseling in all areas of Minnesota

Established healthy recovery lifestyle

### **Specific preference:**

Persons in treatment/tribal treatment court in the last phase

BIPOC

Low-income individuals

## Grant Purpose

Encourage individuals with opioid use disorder to:

To be self-directed

Self-actualize their experience

Have a person-centered ideology

Become active professionals in the opioid response

Introduce individuals with an opioid use disorder to education

Getting individuals involved in academic and macro community projects



# 2022 DHS GRANT

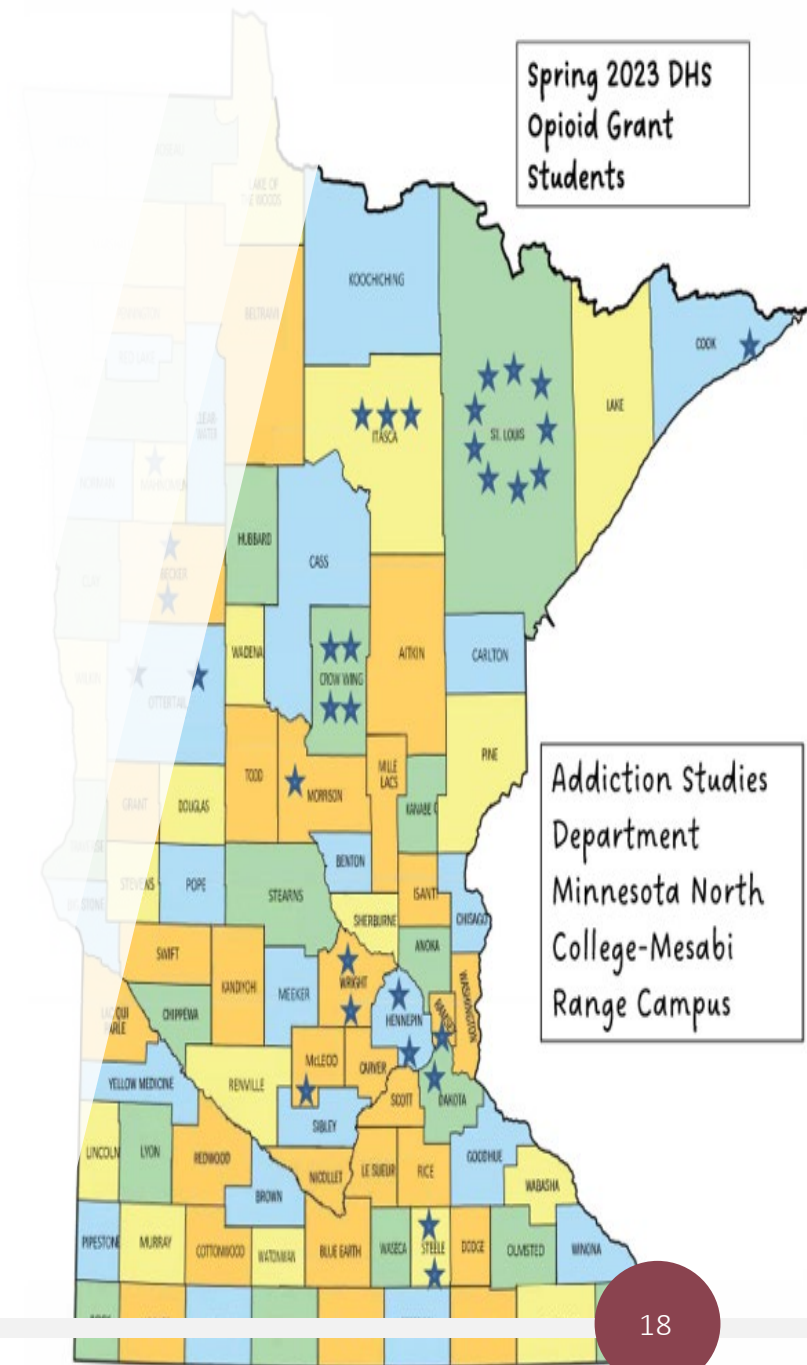


## Grant Anticipated Outcome

- Reduce recidivism
- Inspire individuals to change their life trajectory
- Instill passion
- Effectively care for other individuals with opioid/substance use disorder

## Current Outcomes

- 34 recruited, 30 students currently
- 27 pursuing AAS Addiction Studies
- 3 Bachelor Certificate-coursework done and last practicum
- 7 currently in treatment Court, 2 graduates
- 5 BIPOC
- 12 low income





DHS Grant  
Treatment Court  
Graduate  
Graduated!!!



# Received Another Year



DHS approved another year of funding for the grant

Last year's grant recipients will get full two years paid (fingers crossed they will make it)

Recruiting 11 new for a one full year tuition paid and a stipend

Call Alie Staniger, Grant Coordinator at 218-550-2551 for one of your participants or past graduates if interested. She will send you the Sway and application

[Fall 2023 AAS Degree and Certificate Scholarships for Addiction Studies Program! Application Deadline: July 14, 2023! Only 11 Spots Available That Could Fill Before Application Deadline Date!](#)

Minnesota North College-Mesabi Range Campus (formally Mesabi Range College) has full tuition paid and stipend scholarships for 11 individuals with six months recovery (SAMHSA Working Defini...

[Go to this Sway](#)

# Takeaways



## Aleesha's Takeaway

One of my favorite perks in my role as coordinator

Favorite aspect is having a room full of so many different people, on different paths, coming together to learn and share with each other

This collaboration fosters connectedness, something that we all as human individuals no matter who you are or where your from

Any work you can do to foster relationships within your community is going to be a win for your program and participants.



## Mary Kay's Takeaway

Just want to help substance use disorder folks

Best and most successful project I have ever done in community

Little things can become big things

What do I currently have in recovery that I can share

It's going to take every creative idea to combat substance use

Our communities hold the key

Being genuine shows people how to be genuine





Come Join Us!!

Zoom Meeting ID# 956-182-0295

September 19, 2023

November 15, 2023

January 23, 2024

March 19, 2024



Minnesota  
North College

# Questions?

