



rosecrance
life's waiting

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Press Release

Former Chicago Bear Mike Richardson promotes recovery in visit with teens at Rosecrance

Super Bowl winner from 1985 team tells story of addiction and recovery

ROCKFORD – “L.A. Mike” Richardson, a defensive back with the 1985 Super Bowl-winning Chicago Bears, brought his story of addiction and recovery to the Rosecrance Griffin Williamson Adolescent Treatment Center on Tuesday afternoon, March 27.

Richardson was a soloist in the famous “Super Bowl Shuffle” rap video released by the team that year to the delight of millions of fans. He played for seven seasons in the NFL, six years with the Bears and one for the San Francisco 49ers.

Richardson came to the Bears in 1983 as a second-round draft choice out of Arizona State University.

A native of the notoriously tough Compton neighborhood in Los Angeles, Richardson has spoken openly about being introduced to drugs as a young teenager. He later became enamored of the party lifestyle in the professional sports world. His substance abuse led to a string of convictions for drug offenses and a prison stint that ended in 2010.

Richardson, who now lives in Chicago, told more than 80 teens in treatment at Rosecrance that despite all his legal troubles, he had difficulty admitting he had a problem.

“That kept me sick for many years,” he said. “At one point, jails became a way of life for me and then, jails turned into prisons. I had to change or I was going to die – either on the streets or in prison.”

He told the adolescent patients that he started hearing the messages that were being repeated in numerous rehab programs he entered. One day at a time. Keep it simple. Get a sponsor.

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Nothing clicked until he faced himself, Richardson said.

“I had to get honest before I could get sober,” he said.

He told the young patients: “If you’re here today, you’re here for a reason. You guys need to get honest with yourselves. Take advantage of every resource you have here. Talk to your counselors. They are here to help.”

Richardson said he finally “got it” on Sept. 30, 2007, when he got arrested for a probation violation, which landed him in prison.

“That’s the day the officer put the handcuffs on me and said, ‘We are going to take you in,’” Richardson said. “It’s the best thing that ever happened to me – not the day I won the Super Bowl – the day I got sober.”

He urged the patients to use treatment as a new beginning. “If you are sober now, you are a success,” he said. “You don’t have to use any more.”

Richardson is trying to forge a new career in coaching and speaking to youth about the dangers of drugs.

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About Rosecrance

Rosecrance is a private not-for-profit organization offering behavioral health services for more than 14,000 children, adolescents, adults and families each year. Rosecrance provides addiction treatment through inpatient and outpatient programs in Rockford, IL, and services at six satellite offices in Chicagoland. Rosecrance offers community mental health services in Rockford and Belvidere. The organization was founded in 1916. (More information at rosecrance.org.)

