

## 'We're all young people with really adult problems'

Tiffany Lewis *Telegraph-Journal*

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Tiffany Lewis/Telegraph-Journal Members of the Riverview Lions Club presented youth at Portage Atlantic with handmade quilts earlier Thursday. (From left) Christopher Rideout, Taylor Estabrooks, Cindi Beaumont and Brennan Beaumont

Photo: Tiffany Lewis

Christopher Rideout found his passion in the business of saving lives. But it wasn't long into his fresh career as a paramedic that he realized he needed saving himself.

"I need to go," he told his mother, as they drove back from visiting a rehab facility for youth with addiction.

Rideout suffered from substance abuse. But his life didn't always involve drugs. The 21-year-old says he had a normal childhood, attending St. Stephen High School and maintaining a healthy social life. But he then entered university and became attracted to a life of partying. And tragedy soon followed. His older brother was in a serious car accident where he became paralyzed.

Rideout later went to school to become a paramedic and graduated at the top of his class. But with the pressure of the job mixed with the stress from his brother, Rideout turned to drug use.

“Eventually I was to the point where on all my days off I was using some form of drug or drinking,” he said.

His mother noticed a change and suggested he seek help.

“I was so angry at her when she first asked (and) that she would suggest that I had a problem,” he said. “I had isolated myself so much from her at the time, and separated myself from my family that they really didn’t know what was going on with me.”

Three weeks later, Rideout joined Portage Atlantic, a rehabilitation facility for youth who suffer from drug addiction located in Cassidy Lake, and says he has never looked back.

“We’re all young people with really adult problems, that live in a world that doesn’t teach us to deal with them,” he said.

District N1 of the Lions Club International presented Portage Atlantic staff and youth with handmade quilts Thursday.



The district is part of Lions International, a group of volunteers dedicated to humanitarian work and serving the community.

Taylor Estabrooks struggled with opiate use before arriving at Portage. She said the quilts gives the facility a more home-like feel.

"It makes it so it's not so institutionalized," she said. "You know that someone took their time out of their day and they didn't have to do any of this but they do it for us."

Cindi Beaumont of the Riverview Lions Club said the quilts help to cater to the individuality of the youth.

"It's nice to go in and [have] your bed looking different than the other ones, because right now you go in the room and all the beds look the same," she says. "They all have their own individual look."

Rideout says the quilts communicate something profound.

"It's speaks with such love, the amount of work that goes into a quilt," he said. "Every single one of them is unique, just like every single member here [at] Portage."