

Former Hootie Drummer Delivers Testimony to Lee ATU Graduates

The first song Lee CI's institutional choir sang at the July 28, 2016 ATU graduation was "Hold My Hand", a classic hit by the famous South Carolina rock band, Hootie & the Blowfish. It was fitting for the occasion as the Horizon Addiction Treatment Unit's latest class graduated 16 inmates. Each graduate depends literally and figuratively on holding the hands of others to help them through a six-month program designed to address their substance abuse, criminal-thinking, and other life skill issues using a therapeutic community model treatment approach.

The music was apropos also because it honored the featured graduation speaker, Jim Sonefeld, a drummer and vocalist for Hootie & the Blowfish. Sonefeld wrote the song in 1994 as part of the group's iconic debut album *Cracked Rear View*. That album would become the 16th best-selling album of all time in the United States and launched Hootie toward world-wide success.

Sonefeld was visiting Lee CI for the third time. He was there earlier in the year to work with Lee CI's music program along with the DeCoda ensemble, whose visit to Lee and South Carolina was partially funded by the Hootie & the Blowfish Foundation. This visit was more personal for Sonefeld.



Sonefeld told the graduates that despite his and the popular musical group's success "the lines of truth became blurred by my addictions, and I relied heavily on drugs and alcohol to cope with the emptiness growing inside of me." "I struggled to find peace and to hold my personal life together while surviving as a progressively sick alcoholic living life on the road," said Sonefeld. He said friends and family members tried interventions to no avail, and that it was not until 2004 that he realized he had to do something to turn his life around. Since then, Sonefeld says he has had a full, spiritual awakening leading to a complete lifestyle change. He has recreated himself as a Contemporary Christian artist. Sonefeld says he tries to help others, like the inmates in the Horizon ATU program, by sharing his story and music through the Celebrate Recovery program.

Sonefeld congratulated the graduates on the steps they had taken in their lives through the Horizon ATU program at Lee CI, but encouraged them to have a sponsor and continue a

program that would allow them to maintain their sobriety on the outside. “Don’t be afraid to hold someone else’s hand when you face temptation and need their help”, Sonefeld concluded.



Former Hootie & the Blowfish drummer/vocalist Jim Sonefeld jams before Horizon ATU Graduation