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Love for the concept of redemption

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By Lee Comer

I love the concept of redemption. The idea that individuals can find themselves in terrible circumstances and somehow find the courage and means to pull themselves out of a hole makes me feel better about the world we live in. The promise of spiritual redemption to all those who turn to The Almighty is one of the reasons that I am drawn to Christianity. Clergyman and abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher said "We should not judge people by their peak of excellence; but by the distance they have traveled from the point where they started." I love to pull for the underdog and I cheer for those who are able to overcome obstacles and turn their lives around.

On Aug. 25 of this year I was treated to some great "redemption stories" as I was fortunate enough to attend the Annual Meeting of the Davidson Works Workforce Development Board. I am now in my third term as a board member and I look forward each year to this meeting when folks share their struggles and their successes and they explain how they found the courage and determination to start again. I assure you that my contribution is nominal, but the help that is being provided to these folks by the dedicated staff members of Davidson Works is invaluable.

The people who spoke were understandably terrified. (In a recently published survey "speaking in public" was listed as the number one fear cited by respondents. It was greater than the fear of death.) But their pride in what they

had accomplished and their gratitude to the people who helped them succeed was strong enough that each one stood in front of a room of strangers and forcefully and sometimes tearfully told their stories. It was powerful and moving.

I heard the story of a teen-aged mother who was forced to drop out of high school after the ninth grade. By utilizing the Get REAL program she was able to obtain her High School Equivalency Diploma and is attending DCCC where she is majoring in Dental Hygiene. Another young lady talked about the hardships that she and her baby daughter faced after the death of her fiancé. She was determined to provide for her daughter, and with the help of Davidson Works and her own considerable effort she completed the nursing program at DCCC and is now working as an RN.

Another young woman spoke about the difficulty she experienced as she tried to find suitable employment because her work skills, although extensive, didn't match the jobs available in the current market. Davidson Works offered her an opportunity to attend a certified welding class and they were able to help her find a paid work experience. Her own effort and acquired skills along with the assistance of Davidson Works enabled her to get a job as a Certified Welder.

One young man said that his life was out of control until he finally landed in prison. Inside a jail cell he found the fortitude to honestly assess his situation. He said things could have been worse and he realized "at least I'm not dead." He became determined to change his life. He said that he fasted often during this time so the pain could remind him of his "hunger" to reach his goals. It is hard for me to conceive of this kind of motivation.

And because of scholarship money made available to him through Davidson Works, the encouragement of their dedicated staff, and his own unstoppable will to prove himself, this man was able to complete the DCCC-CDL training program. He is currently employed as a certified CDL driver and doing very well. He talked about his sincere appreciation for the career development consultant who guided and encouraged him, and his deep gratitude for all the assistance made available to him by this fabulous program.

I spoke with this young man for a while after the meeting. He was very humble, and he said he was willing to tell his personal story to anyone who wanted to hear it. He also spoke about the impact that his success has had on some of his

friends and family members. They have noticed just how far he has come, and generally think that if he can do it, maybe they can too.

These redemption stories are touching and moving, and the Davidson Works story of dedicated staff helping individuals access all the educational and training assistance that is available to them is nothing less than remarkable. If you are unemployed, underemployed or know someone who is, I encourage you to visit your NC Works Career Center. You'll find knowledgeable and caring folks who just want to help.

Lee Comer is an insurance agent and life-long resident of Davidson County. He is in awe of the dedication of the staff of Davidson Works.