

>> People

Life after crack

>> **Former crack addict and NFLer spreads the anti-drug message to teens**

by **CHRIS BARRY**

Name: Alvin Powell

Age: 45

Occupation: Substance abuse counsellor

Bio: This affable Snowdon lug had been kickin' ass playing pro football with the Seattle Seahawks before throwing it all away so as to better immerse himself in the always stimulating, yet somewhat topsy-turvy, world of crack cocaine addiction. Relocating to Montreal because "I wanted to end my life and I thought Montreal was as good a place as any to do it," Alvin instead "found recovery" and has since opened the doors of the Saving Station Foundation [www.savingstationfoundation.com], "a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of substance abuse." Now off the pipe for over a decade, when not personally counselling pinned or teeth-grinding teens about the glory of sobriety, Alvin regularly makes the rounds of the infinitely prestigious high school lecture circuit, championing the "Drugs Are Bad" message like nobody's business. "I have a passion for what I do and take it extremely, extremely seriously. We're dealing with people's lives here, there's no time for bullshit. Lives are on the line."



Rachel Granitzky

Did the Lord have anything to do with Alvin's recovery? "God has always been in my life. Everything that I am and everything that I will be I give grace and glory to God."

Will Alvin make goddamned sure the Lord gets involved in your recovery as well? No. "I respect everyone's belief system."

His primo football playin' weight: 320 pounds.

His crack addict weight: 170 pounds.

Are disreputable crack dealers less likely to rip off a 320-pound football player than a runny-nosed 18-year-old homeless prostitute? "Nah, when man invented gunpowder he made everyone the same size. It only means a bigger calibre bullet may be required to bring you down."

One place to find lots of stoned kids: The West Island.

The drug of choice for burgeoning teen addicts: Cocaine, followed closely by marijuana. "These kids are smoking the most potent marijuana product [B.C. bud] in the world."

And this is a bad thing? "You might think when you first start smoking this marijuana that you can control it, but because of its potency, it controls you. These kids start with marijuana and then move on to stronger stuff."

Does he believe the continued criminalization of drug use is the way to go? He sure does. "Already they are desensitizing kids about [marijuana]. Soon these kids will be old enough to vote and they'll vote to legalize marijuana in Canada - which will be terrible. Lesser penalties send out the message that [drugs] aren't so bad."

So it's fair that responsible drug enthusiasts get deemed criminals just because a few West Island teens can't handle their dope? "Come on, it's children we're dealing with here!"

Last book read: *The Holy Bible*.

Musical preferences: Gospel.

Words of wisdom: "Include an act of kindness for someone in your day, every day. One small thing can mean a lot to someone else."

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