

New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight



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Magdalena's Pino took his Life Back

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Life is full of choices and those choices can sometimes lead us down the wrong path, a path from which we can never come back. For Magdalena senior, Anthony Pino, his choices early in middle school took him down a dark and dangerous road but, fortunately, he made another choice, one that turned him back on a path to success.

Between his seventh grade and sophomore years, Pino lost several family members, which eventually drove him to drink at an early age.

"From the time I was in seventh grade until about my sophomore year, I lost 15 family members within three years. So I started drinking a lot and putting other harmful substances in my body. Eventually, I just got tired of the life I was living and the path I was on."

Once he knew he wanted to change his course, he went to his basketball coach Jory Mirabal for help.

"I went to Coach Mirabal because I knew he had a good foundation in the church. I walked into his office and shut the door and he asked me what was up. We had just won the state basketball title and I basically turned myself in. I told him that I had been drinking the entire season and I was tired of living that life. I needed help and coach and his family were there for me. They invited me to church and it really turned my life around."

He continued by saying, "I still struggled for a while but now I'm in a good place. To go from an alcoholic at age 15 to where I am today is amazing and I owe a lot of that to Coach Mirabal and his family."

It was hard for Pino to look at himself in the mirror and admit he had a problem but knew he had to ask for help and that he didn't want his addiction to define the rest of his life.

"I had to ask myself if that was really what I wanted to become. I knew I could be one of the best athletes in the state but the drinking had a stronghold on my life and I needed to take myself out of that environment."

Pino said, "I could have been a starter and a major contributor to my team as a freshman and sophomore but I wasn't coming out to summer workouts and was always missing practices. I was always out partying because, at the time, that was the most important thing to me. I have a few family members who are alcoholics or even in jail and I knew I didn't want that to be my story."

In the two years since he walked away from drinking, Pino has used every opportunity to share his message with friends and family, with one consistent message: "It's just not worth it."



“My overall message to my friends since I turned my life around is that drinking is not worth it. I tell them that instead of worrying about what others may think of you or trying to be cool and partying, I tell them I would rather be a success. If I didn’t stop drinking, didn’t get the gospel in my life and didn’t make that choice to turn my life around, to be honest, I probably wouldn’t be here today.”

Pino has been a major contributor for the Steers in football, baseball and basketball, helping Magdalena win the 2015 State Basketball Championship, a moment he got to share with his older brother, Zach.

“There is no feeling like winning a state championship. In this community, we are like brothers and to share that experience with my teammates was something very special.”

He is also a member of the school’s rodeo team, participating in the shooting competition and currently ranks fourth in the state in the light rifle.

“The NRA sponsors the shooting events in rodeo. Coach Mirabal told me about it and I decided to try it out. It has been a great experience.”

Pino will graduate in the spring and plans to attend New Mexico State University and get his degree in forestry then enlist in the armed forces and serve his country.

“I try to keep all A’s and B’s so I can continue to participate in sports. My education will set me up for the rest of my life. I want to attend New Mexico State University and get a four-year degree in forestry and then possibly join the military and serve my country.”