

## LOCAL

# From addict to asset

## Free clinic executive assistant receives state award

**BY RANDY GRIFFITH**

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Hundreds of people have received medical help and information from Johnstown Free Medical Clinic since it was launched in 1998.

But Filipe Lucio of Altoona received something more from the free clinic. The 30-year-old former addict was given a second chance.

"I met great people here and they helped guide me in the right direction," Lucio said.

After pleading guilty to drug charges in June 2012, Lucio received rehabilitation at Quehanna Boot Camp of the state Department of Corrections. Then he was placed in the state intermediate punishment program and eventually moved to Johnstown Community Corrections Facility halfway house in downtown Johnstown.

Lucio's counselor at the Wash-

ington Street facility was Rob Warren, who encouraged the former addict to volunteer and found him an opportunity to move furniture at the free clinic in 2014.

When Lucio asked the clinic's executive director, Rosalie Danchanko, what else he could do, she had him work on files. It turned out he had organizational skills that led to more volunteer work putting those files into a new database.

"I don't know what Rosie saw in me, but I'm still here two years later," Lucio said.

In fact, Lucio was hired in October 2014 as the clinic's data entry clerk for 32 hours a week.



**Lucio**

Funding came from the War on Drugs grant from Highmark Inc. and a state job training program.

Today he is executive assistant, overseeing office staff and volunteers, and represents the clinic with Cambria County Prevention Coalition and other organizations. He was recently certified as a harm reduction specialist to work with those in the community with at-risk behaviors.

"He's my right hand," Danchanko said. "He runs the day-to-day operations."

Lucio's success, and the free clinic's support, will be recognized Thursday at a program in Hershey. Lucio will receive the Governor's Criminal Justice Achievement Award and Danchanko will receive the Employer's achievement award.

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*Randy Griffith covers health care for The Tribune-Democrat. Follow him on Twitter @photogriffer57.*