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## **FORMER ADDICT CELEBRATES TRUE INDEPENDENCE DAY**

For Nate Williams this Fourth of July has more personal significance than just the celebration of the birth of our country. It is a day to commemorate his personal freedom and independence from drugs.

Williams owes much of his life renewal to the “Power to Choose” rehabilitation program at Panama City Rescue Mission. In his prime, Williams played professional football for the New England Patriots, but this athlete was playing more than just football. The temptations of a fast-paced lifestyle and huge paychecks led Williams into a world of drug abuse. Even worse was his recent loss of two children in a tragic fire, which caused a breakup between Williams and his wife. Williams said he just went deeper into the drugs until one day a miracle happened to him.

“I was walking from Jacksonville to Atlanta and an elderly white lady stopped and offered me a ride in her U-haul truck,” Williams said.

Even though her driving reminded him of Driving Ms. Daisy, Williams remembered, he still calls her his guardian angel. “I mean, how often do you see an elderly white lady picking up a big black hitch hiker after dark?”

The lady didn’t take him to Atlanta, she brought Williams to Panama City and led him straight to the Rescue Mission where he learned of the recovery program.

“I love the concept of ‘Independence Day,’” Williams says, “I have been in bondage to drugs and personally know how addiction takes control of your life. I am free today because of God and the work of the Mission.”

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Thurman Chambers, Executive Director of Panama City Rescue Mission sees a big change in Williams. “When I first met Nate, he was controlled by his addiction. Today, the drugs are a thing of the past and he is ready to move on in freedom and self-directed living.”

Williams was recently hired at Bay Behavioral as a Mental Health Technician, where he uses his degree in social work and psychology to help people suffering from addictions themselves.

Williams is just one of the 6 recent graduates from the “Power to Choose” Recovery Program at the Mission. These men will give testimony of how their lives were changed through the Mission as it celebrates these men’s accomplishments in a graduation and fundraiser for the Mission’s recovery programs. “Rooted in Trust,” will be held Wednesday July 28 from 8 to 9 a.m. at the First Methodist Trinity Center. Please RSVP by July 21<sup>st</sup>. Businesses who would like to sponsor the program through this event may contact Amanda Harris, Development Director, at 850-215-9007.

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