



STAFF PHOTO BY SUE SICKLER

A figurine of a drunken clown sits on Phil Malonson's desk as a reminder of how drugs kept him from realizing his dream of becoming a professional clown.

## Sober — one day at a time

Phil Melonson overcame drug addictions and now helps others

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**O**n the forward edge of Phil Malonson's desk sits a figurine of a drunken clown covered by an old newspaper, leaning up against a fire hydrant. The clown's clothes are tattered, his face is worn with streaks from the demons that tear at his body and his painted smile is faded and smudged.

In many ways, Malonson says, the drunken clown statuette is very much like himself. Around the rest of his office are clown images, reminders of the life he once wanted to lead very badly. But the figurine on his desk is more representative of the forces that nearly destroyed him and kept

him away from his dream.

"I always wanted to be a professional clown, but the drinking and the drugging kept me from doing it," Malonson said in melancholy tone.

At the age of 10, Malonson was sniffing airplane model glue behind a house on Lake Avenue to catch a buzz. It did not take him long to graduate to stronger drugs and a dark life of abuse and addiction.

"I was sniffing glue, smoking pot and doing hallucinogens and before I knew it, I had a needle in my arm," Malonson said. "I was 14 years old and I thought it was a way of life."

By the time he was 16, Malonson had dropped out of school and was working hard to support a

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