Fairfield Worker Combats Gambling Addictions

Carlos Reinoso is the coordinator for the Connecticut Council of Problem Gambling.

Reinoso says the key to raising awareness is education. That’s why he regularly speaks in local schools, including Fairfield Warde High School, to lead a prevention program called WAGE (Warde Adolescent Gambling Education). He also visits community centers and health facilities around Connecticut. Recently, he trained healthcare providers at Optimus Health Care in Stamford and Greenwich Hospitals to ensure that addicts are receiving the best treatment possible.

“Along with money, people lose their cars and houses to gambling addiction,” he said. “They even gamble away their children’s scholarships in some cases.”

Reinoso credits his own education for much of his career success. While enrolled in the University of Bridgeport’s IDEAL Program, he studied human services, psychology and gerontology, which is the study of social, biological and psychological aspects of aging. There, he learned that senior citizens sometimes see a trip to the casino as a form of recreation that could have a dangerous outcome.

"Gambling is a way to escape for some people, just like with any other addiction,” added Reinoso, a former swimming instructor and soccer coach.

Raising awareness for the cause is not just a day job for the Monroe, Conn. resident. As long as he can remember, Reinoso says he has wanted to make a difference in the lives of others.

"I've always had a passion for helping people.”

Carlos Reinoso has a surprising statistic to share: Studies have shown that the euphoric reaction you get from gambling, caused by a chemical released in the brain called dopamine, is the same you would get from cocaine use.

As the coordinator of statewide outreach and community relations for the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling, Reinoso warns Fairfield residents about the dangers of addiction. And even though he estimates that only 5 percent of the population develops an addiction, it is that minority that needs his attention.

“I made a decision a long time ago that I didn’t want to teach in front of a classroom,” Reinoso added. “I wanted to educate and do work around prevention.”