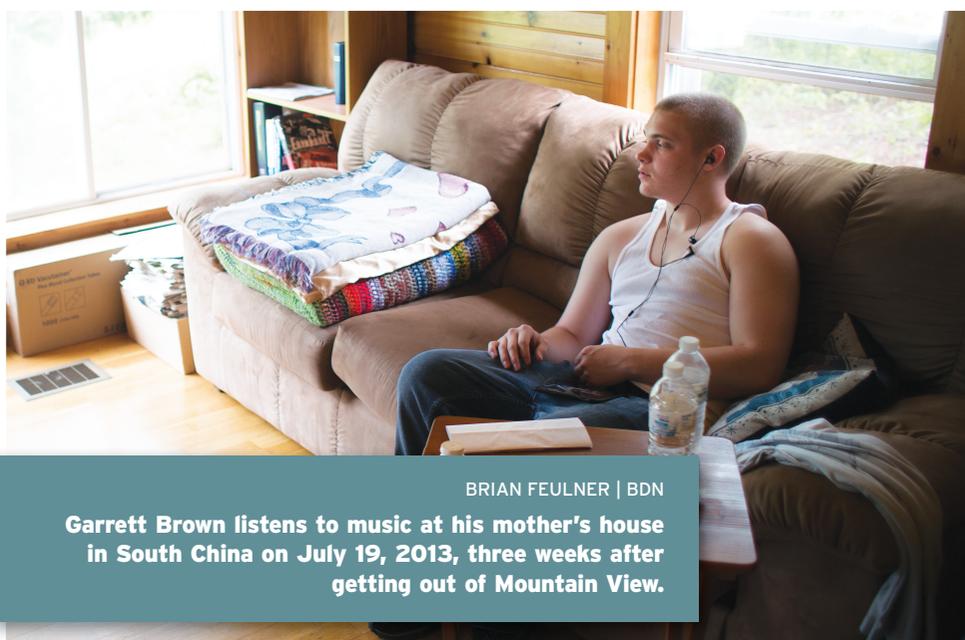




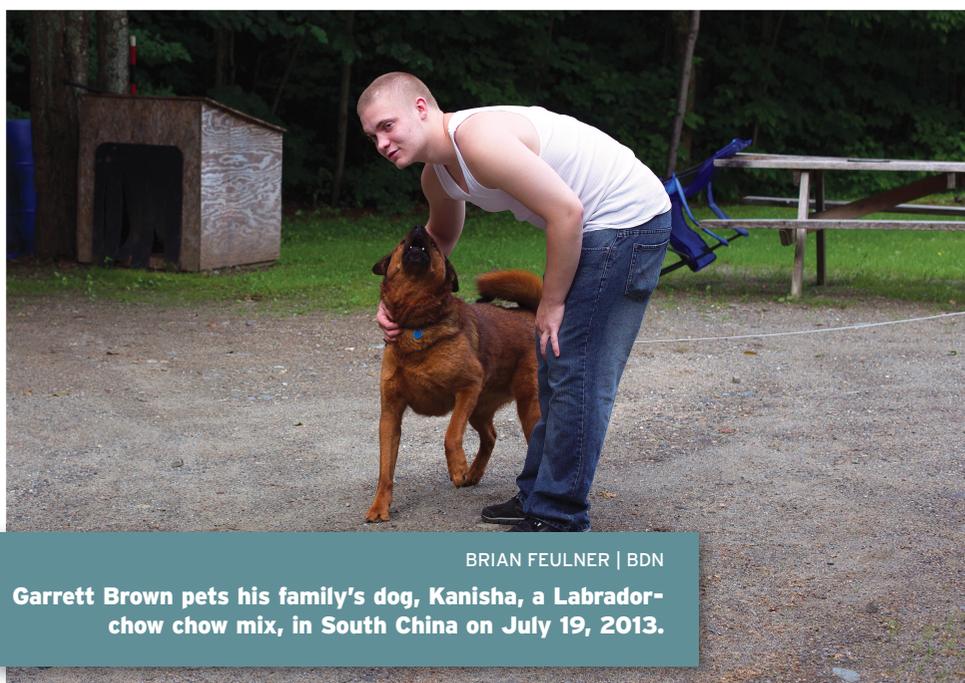
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Pat Kimball is executive director of Wellspring, which provides outpatient and inpatient help for people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders, in Bangor.



BRIAN FEULNER | BDN

Garrett Brown listens to music at his mother's house in South China on July 19, 2013, three weeks after getting out of Mountain View.



BRIAN FEULNER | BDN

Garrett Brown pets his family's dog, Kanisha, a Labrador-chow mix, in South China on July 19, 2013.

Maybe he thought he could get well on his own, but an addiction to heroin is like diabetes or heart disease. It's a chronic condition that needs to be managed long-term.

"It is a brain disorder. It's not simply 'I want to change.' Because your brain chemistry has changed," said Pat Kimball, executive director of Wellspring, a substance use treatment center in Bangor.

"We don't treat substance use disorders like we do other diseases. We blame the client. 'We gave you all these opportunities, and you blew them all.' And [Garrett] really didn't blow them all. They just didn't match what his need was, and he wasn't ready," she said.

Doctors understand the threat of cancer and know to treat it immediately. If one treatment approach doesn't work, they try another. "We don't blame the patient and say, 'You didn't try hard enough,'" Kimball said.

Garrett had been free from Mountain View for three weeks. We were at his mom and stepdad's home on July 19, 2013, and he was antsy and bored — trying to get used to life without a schedule. "I have anxiety meds. I can just take those now by myself. In [Mountain View], you can't do that. Just little things like that. Everything's different. At the end of meals you always had to, like, count your silverware," he said.

license or car, which made it difficult to get to appointments. He didn't have money, so he had to rely on his family. What's more, he didn't come out and say he needed help for his addiction. Or maybe, I think now, we weren't listening hard enough.

Yet this is often a characteristic of those with a substance use disorder, which makes it harder to identify, let alone treat: They don't tell you how bad it is.

Garrett said the right words: He recognized the imperative of staying away from his old friends because, as he put it, "I didn't know too many people when I was out who weren't doing bad things."

But, looking back, there were warning signs. He said he didn't trust himself to stay away from his friends. He kept worrying he was going to do something stupid.

He was falling. The first thing I thought when I saw Garrett on Sept. 25, 2013, was that he looked changed. Maybe it was the little tuft of hair on his chin or the fact that he looked bigger than I remembered. Maybe it was the thinning of his face. Whatever it was, he looked harder. He told me he'd been drinking with friends that morning.

He'd been at Job Corps less than a month when he and others went "robotripping" — getting high on cough syrup. He wouldn't tell

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He thought he needed structure to stay substance-free, since it had helped before. That's why he was heading to Job Corps. The program had a curfew and schedules. But it wasn't treatment.

Traci looked at him often and smiled, so happy to have him close.

At that point neither his mother nor I fully understood how serious his drug addiction was. He had immediate problems that were more evident. He didn't have a driver's

me much, just that other students ended up in the hospital. Job Corps couldn't confirm the cough syrup incident because of privacy law, but it did confirm Garrett was enrolled July 23 to Aug. 16. Its policy, in general, is to remove students found to have used a controlled substance, including codeine in excessive amounts, or abused alcohol.

Garrett told me Job Corps would allow him to return and finish the months of learning he had left if he completed counseling, but it