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NEWS

Haleigh Poutre, 10 years later



by: Kaitlin Goslee

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SOUTHWICK, Mass. (WWLP) – 22News first introduced you to then 11-year-old Haleigh Poutre in 2005 when her adoptive mother and stepfather were accused of beating her so severely it was questioned whether she would survive her injuries.

Her case is best known for changing how the then Department of Social Services operates in the state of Massachusetts. In 2008, after a three-year trial, Jason Strickland from Westfield, was convicted and sentenced to 12-15 years in prison for his connection to Haleigh's abuse.

In January this year, Strickland requested a new trial but his appeal was rejected by the state's highest court.

Now, in an exclusive interview, 22News shows you what life is like today for Haleigh, 10 years after she made what doctors called a miraculous recovery.

An early morning dance party as the girl the public once knew as Haleigh Poutre, now Haleigh Arnett, gets a day off of her typical routine of school, occupational therapy, and doctor's appointments.

You may remember first hearing Haleigh's name in 2005, when her first adoptive mother and stepfather, were accused of abusing her so severely doctors didn't expect her to recover.

Haleigh's injuries left her with permanent brain damage, impairing her speech, mobility, and development.

"She doesn't have like a vivid memory. She can't tell you exactly what happened, but she knows she was hurt," Keith Arnett, Haleigh's adoptive father told 22News.

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Haleigh's child-like spirit was left untouched, however. It was noticeable as she patiently used her spelling board to tell 22News about her favorite candies, M & M's.

Haleigh, now 21 years old, is the care of her new parents, Rebekah and Keith Arnett of Southwick. The Arnett's, already experienced foster parents, and biological parents to three boys welcomed Haleigh into their home 7 years ago.

Dad, Keith said soon after she moved in he left his job as a special education teacher to better care for Haleigh's extensive needs.

"It became too much to work with special needs kids during the day and then come home and work with Haleigh. And now I drive a truck which I fix more than I drive..." Keith explained, but was interrupted with a look out of the corner of Haleigh's eye.

"I'm sorry," Haleigh said. "It's okay Hayl.. it's a choice I made and I'm happy I made it! So there," Keith responded.

The Arnett's say Haleigh's injuries have meant major adjustments for their family but that their deep religious beliefs get them through the difficult days.

"On a daily basis Haleigh is a pretty happy-go-lucky kid who's heart is just full of love and we are blessed to be the recipients of that," Keith said.

The family says that while they're aware Haleigh's case sparked changes in the Department of Children and Families, the state agency responsible for protecting children in the state from abuse and neglect, but say right now, their focus now is providing Haleigh with her best possible future.

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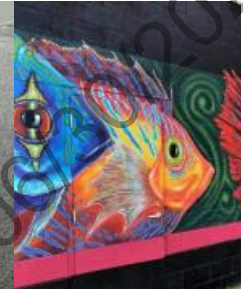
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Keno's "beautiful comeback" adds to Lottery's resurgence

by Colin A. Young, SHNS / Jun 29, 2021

BOSTON (SHNS) - As the Massachusetts Lottery approaches the end of what could be a record-setting fiscal year, officials said sales to this point are up more than 11 percent from the last budget year and more than 5 percent from the last non-pandemic budget cycle.

From July 1, 2020 through May, the Lottery had sold \$5.34 billion worth of scratch tickets, draw game entries, Keno numbers and more -- \$536 million or 11.2 percent more than it had sold during the same time period a year earlier and \$284 million or 5.6 percent more than it had sold during the same 11 months of fiscal 2019, which generated more revenue and profit for the Lottery than any other year.

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BOSTON (AP) — The State House Tours Division is about to be open for business, even though the State House itself remains indefinitely closed to the public.

Secretary of State William Galvin, who oversees tour events for the 225-year-old seat of state government, announced Tuesday that he plans to welcome visitors for exterior-only educational outings starting this week. Galvin's State House Tours Division will begin offering the outdoor tours on July 1, when HarborFest kicks off, and will continue to practice "until it is reopened to the public," the secretary's office said.

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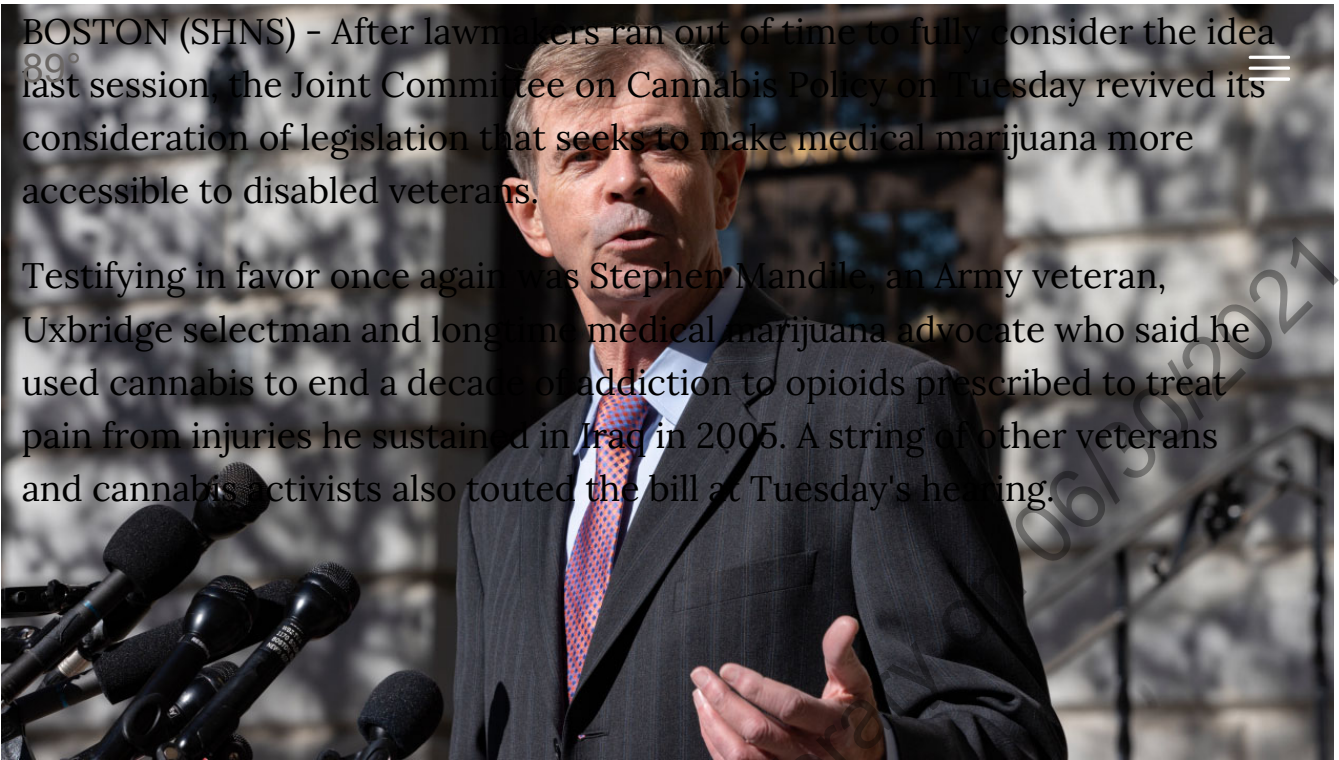


Disabled veterans press for access to medical marijuana

by By Colin A. Young, State House News Service / Jun 29, 2021

BOSTON (SHNS) - After lawmakers ran out of time to fully consider the idea last session, the Joint Committee on Cannabis Policy on Tuesday revived its consideration of legislation that seeks to make medical marijuana more accessible to disabled veterans.

Testifying in favor once again was Stephen Mandile, an Army veteran, Uxbridge selectman and longtime medical marijuana advocate who said he used cannabis to end a decade of addiction to opioids prescribed to treat pain from injuries he sustained in Iraq in 2005. A string of other veterans and cannabis activists also touted the bill at Tuesday's hearing.



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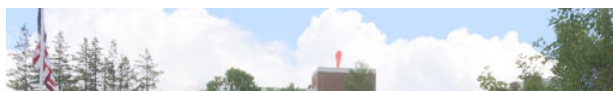
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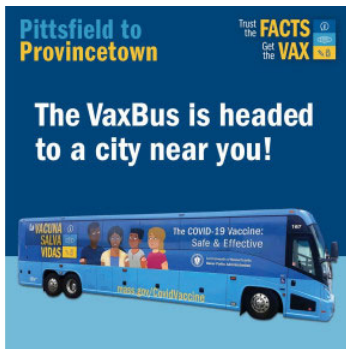
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