



## *Center your life!*

In my last year in high school, I discovered ceramics. I had always been interested in art, but it wasn't until after I had enrolled in ceramics that I would find a passion for it. As the year progressed, I realized my potential.

My teacher, Mr. Yoshida, always had words of encouragement.

We were taught to center our clay on the wheel. Centering our clay not only made the process of forming of a pot on the wheel, easier, it helped keep our product from being wobbly and unstable.

I can remember one day having a hard time centering my clay and wanting to quit. Mr. Yoshida approached me and said, "Center your life."

It wasn't until two years later that I found the true meaning behind this saying.

It was December and I was with some friends, drinking, hanging out, and just celebrating that it was winter break. It was then that I made the decision to drive home after drinking. I was pulled over, and the last thing I remember is seeing my parents crying at the sight of me in the squad car.

I was arrested for DUI, possession of a controlled substance, possession of a fake ID, and a few other charges. I was taken to jail and booked without hesitation. In jail, I had a lot of time to think and reflect on what I had done and how it was affecting not only me, but my family as well.

When I was released on bail, I went home. As I was about to lie in my bed, Mr. Yoshida's saying rang through my head like a church bell on a Sunday morning, "Center your life."

He wasn't just speaking about ceramics; he was imparting a life lesson.

I hadn't realized the power of the saying. I thought it only applied to the clay that was in front of me. It was easy to get that temporary release and happiness, but true happiness is harder to come by. I had to overcome a meaningless life in order to "center my life."

I now look back and reflect on that dreadful incident, but not in a negative way. I use my arrest as motivation and inspiration for young people, to show that good people do make mistakes. In the end, it's what you do afterwards that truly helps you "center your life."



Thomas Schonhardt