



Sheltervoice

Quarterly Newsletter of The Women's Shelter
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My Story: A Life Transformed

By Amanda G.

I walked out of my home one September evening with my two children hoping to rebuild my life. A life free of emotional, verbal and drug abuse. What I didn't know is that I was running from one problem to another. My life got worse, not better. My family didn't trust me nor did my kids. I was running everywhere but getting absolutely nowhere. I was angry and outraged that my brother ordered me into a treatment facility. I thought I could control my addiction. I couldn't focus on my recovery, nor would I admit I was an addict until day twenty of treatment. I was insisting on going home after I left treatment. But to what? A home of misery and pain just to start using again? Scared, confused, and no where safe to go; my counselor sent me to The Women's Shelter.

My journey began with Ms. Angie. I was asked tons of questions upon entering The Shelter. Can you find a job in two weeks? I answered yes, but was thinking I haven't worked in years; how am I going to pull this off? I did. With a lot of prayer, self-motivation and Ms. Angie's persistence, I did.

I walked the streets of a town that I knew nothing about, through freezing rain, uphill, downhill, miles and miles. Mumbling under my breath from time to time, asking myself why am I doing this? Of course, I answered myself, it's for your LIFE Amanda, shut up and keep walking.

I got two jobs. Both were part time. I worked them for a while. Before long Ms. Angie moved me into the Coles Road transition house. I loved my little house. If I got lonely, I walked up to The Shelter. I went to my meetings and worked my

steps. Before long I was employee of the month and later employee of the year at my job. I was promoted and was able to leave the other job I had.

During this time, I was in a custody battle. I had plenty of heart-to-heart chats with Ms. Angie on what to do. I followed her advice. I got joint custody but not physical custody. I passed a hair follicle test and began receiving visitation with my kids. That continued until last year.

I watched as ladies came in. I remember how I felt when I first came in. I gave them encouragement as others had done for me. Some were grateful and have succeeded in the program. Some have not. I spent my free time helping where I could.

Then it came to pass that I was doing so well that I was able to rent my house without the restrictions. After two years of living on my own, I figured it was time to move on and let another person enjoy my house as I did.

I am now in my own home, have my own car, still have my job, I have FULL custody of my children and I have my sobriety. On December 22nd, I will have 4 years clean. All because someone put effort, patience and a whole lot of faith into my life. The Women's Shelter truly saved my life! I appreciate everyone who made a difference in my life. This story is for Angie, Kathy, Christy, Joanne and Doris. I love the difference each and every one of you have made not only in my life, but my children's lives as well. I hope people continue to donate and volunteer to The shelter. It could save not just one life but an entire family.

Volunteers Reflect on their Experiences

When I met the staff of The Women's Shelter, I wanted to share our organization's vision for working with women. It was clear by meeting's end that the staff members were wonderfully committed to seeing their residents thrive. We were delighted to be able to have the opportunity to work with them to bring Empowerment Sessions to the residents. It has been our UNEXPECTED JOY to realize that the women, although having tumultuous journeys, have great passion for a better life. It has meant so much to connect with all of them. It is confirmation that regardless of our life experiences, we can all be inspiring. They have given us so much more than we thought we were bringing to them.

Nicole Spain White
Pure Dominion Inc.
Pure Dominion Ministries

I have always felt a calling to be of service, but it was never my time. When I sold my dental practice in 2008 I started volunteering at The Shelter. It was a lifeline as I was struggling to stay busy. I also traveled the world for months each year building dental clinics. Now the desire for travel to third world countries has subsided. At The Shelter I find great satisfaction going about my many projects. I know my work is appreciated, and there is never a shortage of things to be done. Each day is different. It is my second home.

Dr. John McGearry

The Women's Shelter staff and director are special friends of mine. I volunteer my time to shop and run errands, which I enjoy. This gives the staff more time for their primary duties such as counseling and handling the daily routine of The Shelter. The Shelter residents are very fortunate to have these wonderful women in their lives.

I have been very fortunate in my life opportunities and wanted to "give back". I chose The Women's Shelter because it makes a direct difference in the lives of others.. The staff is great; the atmosphere is warm and welcoming; and it is apparent that they care about the women that they serve.

In April 2012, I contacted The Women's Shelter about volunteering as a line dance teacher. I wanted to share my love of dancing, and teaching others to dance with the women who reside there. I also thought that the residents would enjoy learning one more way to just have good, clean, all out fun. From the very first call The Women's Shelter staff were warm and welcoming. I didn't know that the class I would teach would be mandatory for the residents. While I had a captive audience, I did not want them to feel like captives. So, I made sure that they followed my two hard and fast rules of dancing: have fun and dance like nobody's watching. Joanne, you really led the way in following these rules. I cannot tell you how satisfying it was to see the women laughing and having fun while dancing. In my class there is no such thing as a wrong step, only a variation on a step. As the weeks went by, the women gained confidence and added their own personalities to each dance. It has been a challenge to periodically integrate each new resident into the dance group and to accept the loss of those who leave The Women's Shelter. However, mostly I have just as much fun as the residents, and we can get pretty raucous sometimes. The group even practiced some dances to show off at an AA holiday party last year and are looking forward to doing this again. What more can I say? This has been a most rewarding experience for me. When we are dancing, we are all the same, regardless of our past and how we got to the dance floor at The Women's Shelter. So, I would like to thank all of you at The Women's Shelter for making me feel like a part of your family.

Susan Jo

I love volunteering at The Women's Shelter because it reminds me of the luck I had being brought up by the parents I thankfully still have. The women I meet here are on their way and working things out. By accepting the rules of The Shelter, they accept a lifestyle that can work for them, and they are putting it into action. I'm all for moving forward and love to use any talent or time to help support that.

Thanks,
Ann M.

"Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve."
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
"Service is the rent we pay for living."
Marian Wright Edleman

These quotes have provided guidance and inspiration for me as I strive to be a responsible, thoughtful, caring citizen and child of God. I believe, and have experienced, that a volunteer gets more out of the experience than those they serve. My experiences with The Women's Shelter have proven that to be true.

I've had the privilege of offering yoga classes to the women for eight or now years now; and I am consistently humbled and honored by the presence, openness and spirit of the women who practice with me.

I am humbled because these are women who have been to some pretty dark places. They have decided to turn their lives around in what I must imagine is a terrifically hard journey. I know that living at The Women's Shelter provides and expects a structure that may be difficult for some to adhere to. I also know that yoga asks one to let go of judgments, expectations and competition, and to be willing to open one's heart to what presents itself in each moment. Yoga also asks us to be vulnerable. The women have embraced these concepts, and the practice, with open arms and open hearts.

I am in awe that these women are willing to also practice Ahimsa - a yogic principle of non-harm. While it typically refers to other living beings, I remind the women to be kind to themselves and to accept who they are and where they are in this moment. They breathe with me and practice gratitude. They are willing to accept the premise of Namaste - a Yoga greeting that recognizes the spark of the Divine in each one of us.

Every time I am able to be in the presence of these women I am grateful, humbled and joyful because they give me hope, inspire me to know that things will get better, and impress me with the hard work that they are doing to get their lives back on track.

I am grateful to be but a very small part of the support system for these women as they journey to wholeness and well-being.

Namaste,
Marguerite O'Brien
"Let peace begin with me."

I am Sister Margie, a Sister of Divine Providence. In March of this year a neighbor encouraged me to volunteer at The Women's Shelter. I called Kathy Riley, joined her for lunch, and accepted her invitation to do a Bible Study focused on "Courageous Women in the Bible". This theme is so appropriate for the women here who also have to have great courage to move on with their lives. Their openness and response to the reflections and discussions are an inspiration and blessing to me.

To volunteer at The Women's Shelter is both a privilege and a pleasure. I was drawn to The Shelter when I learned of its mission to provide an environment for women that fosters recovery, rehabilitation, personal responsibility, and respect. It is a privilege to be even a small part of the work to fulfill that mission.

It is a pleasure to volunteer at The Shelter because of the people with whom I interact the most - the staff. To a person, they are smart, witty, and welcoming, creating an atmosphere that makes volunteering there an experience I enjoy each and every time.

Denisa Garner

I pursued volunteering at The Women's Shelter last year with a desire to offer mental health counseling to those that may not otherwise have access or resources to afford the services. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the ladies. It is my joy to walk through this season of life with them as they navigate the areas of life that they want to grow in through the avenue of counseling. I am thankful for the opportunity to work with these women!

Amy Marion, LPC/I

When I first saw The Women's Shelter booth at the South Carolina Book Festival in May 2013, I knew it was an organization whose mission I could get behind. Over the past year I've led a creative non-fiction writing workshop for the residents and helped write, edit, and layout the newsletters. It's been a joy to meet so many different women, and I look forward to continuing to serve as a volunteer with The Women's Shelter!

Betsy Breen

Revente's Second Chances
3050-A Millwood Avenue, Columbia
All net profits benefit The Women's Shelter.

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Columbia, SC 29203*

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Wish List

The Women's Shelter greatly appreciates and strongly depends on donations from individuals, churches and other civic groups. We do not have a lot of storage space, but the items listed below are frequently needed. If you have any other items you would like to donate, please contact us. Thank you for your continued generosity!

(803) 779-4706

- ◆ Electric hand mixers
- ◆ Ice Cream
- ◆ Fresh fruits/vegetables
- ◆ Soft drinks
- ◆ Sunscreen/bug spray
- ◆ Gift cards for haircuts
- ◆ Phone cards
- ◆ Zoo/movie/entertainment tickets
- ◆ Basic alarm clocks
- ◆ Answering machines
- ◆ Umbrellas
- ◆ Shower caddies
- ◆ Gently used black pants/tennis shoes
- ◆ Water bottles
- ◆ Creamer/sugar
- ◆ Coffee/tea
- ◆ Sugar free items
- ◆ Toilet paper/paper towels
- ◆ Paper plates
- ◆ Tall kitchen bags
- ◆ Tin Foil/cling wrap/zip lock bags
- ◆ Laundry detergent/Regular & HE
- ◆ Cleaning supplies
- ◆ Dryer sheets
- ◆ Liquid softener
- ◆ Push Lawn Mower
- ◆ Weed Eater
- ◆ Edger
- ◆ Electric Hedge-Trimmer
- ◆ Shears
- ◆ Pruners
- ◆ Yard Gloves
- ◆ Rakes