



THE GIFT OF DESPARATION

The gift of desperation is a beautiful thing. How you gain it is another story. My life has never been a fairy tale but I can say I was blessed with a large family that loved me from day one the best they knew how. I was the first child and grandchild so to say I was spoiled rotten and doted on was an understatement. I always knew I was loved and never wanted for anything. No matter what was going on I always knew my family was a phone call away for anything. At age 19, I started working in an emergency room as a registrar where I met my future husband. Two years later we were married with a baby boy on the way. I continued my career, becoming an insurance specialist for a group of surgeons in Decatur, as well as my husband and I buying our very first home. I enjoyed being a wife and mommy and loved working in the medical field. At age twenty-five I learned a back condition I had my whole life was getting much worse and my boss recommended a procedure he assisted with on a regular basis. So at twenty-five I scheduled a serious back surgery, and got sent to a pain clinic. I was immediately written a huge prescription for heavy narcotics without the blink of an eye. This would be the beginning.

Six months later and I was still working, but highly addicted to pain medication and taking more than prescribed. I have the surgery and a few months later the Doctor tries to lower my dose. I begin running out of pills too soon and in a panic

reach out to an old “friend” who I knew might know a thing or two about finding pain pills. Turns out he knew more about just pain pills, I was introduced to my new best friend heroin. I had intended to just use it when I ran out of pills but I failed my drug test at the pain clinic, so I was dismissed as a patient and heroin was all I had left. No one ever spoke the word addiction to me or talked to me about getting help. I just knew I was sick without narcotics in my system and that I couldn’t tell my husband or my

– *The Gift of Desparation continued on page 2*

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www.theextension.org

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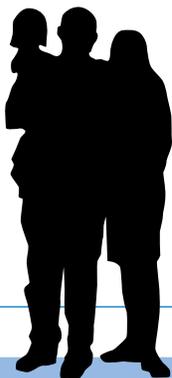
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A member of our staff or Board of Directors would love to come to speak to your group about issues related to homelessness, addiction and more importantly recovery. Just give us a call at the number above.

The Extension
1505 Church Street Extension
P.O. Box 793
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The Gift of Desperation continued from page 1 –

sweet loving family. My use quickly escalated and I was introduced to the needle. I was shooting up in the bathroom at work on breaks and I tried to go home and play mommy to my toddler for a while but that quickly was traded to everyday evening trips to the Bluff by myself. I am a very short tiny white female but I never thought

have so much as a ride home from the hospital. I reluctantly went to please them but wasn't ready. The gift was still there, but I still wasn't ready yet. I couldn't even complete the 30 day program and had a stranger pick me up. I came home to an empty house as my son and husband were staying with family while I was away. I took full



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twice about walking into a trap house full of men or what could happen to me. Heroin was all that mattered. I was a "functioning" addict for another year until I was hospitalized from a staph infection in my face and jaw for two weeks from my IV heroin use and picking at my skin. I also was bleeding out from infected stomach ulcers and had to have emergency surgery to stop the bleeding, while my face and neck were extremely swollen. At this point, my family finally knew I was using drugs and did their best at an intervention—either I go to treatment or they would have no contact with me including my husband; I wouldn't

advantage of it. That began the parade of strangers through my beautiful home and destruction set in. I started drinking every day and was stuck at my house, since I had wrecked my car high on heroin right before I was hospitalized. I was jobless and had no money for food and no way to get to the grocery store. My parents came by to try to reason with me and get me some help, but I was having no part of it. I wouldn't see or talk to them for nine more months. The hardworking independent woman they had raised me to be was gone, getting high was my number one priority in life. I had given up. Along with many faces of people

that used my house to do drugs in, meth came into the picture. I then became an IV meth user and any sanity I had left was gone. I didn't care I couldn't talk to or see my son. I didn't care I was served with divorce papers. I didn't care the new men I surrounded myself with were physically abusive at times. I especially didn't care when all the utilities were shut off at the house when it was freezing outside as long as I had my drugs. I had no winter clothes that would fit me and no money to buy any food. Strangers were squatting at my house, stealing anything I had left of value and trashing the house in the process. I spent Thanksgiving, my birthday, and Christmas alone for the first time in my life. I remember laying in my room shivering and crying looking at a picture of my son and wanting to die. Death had to be better than the lonely paranoid hell I was living.

At the end of January 2016, I was evicted from my home by my husband. I was too high to show up for a divorce hearing at court so the judge granted sole custody of our son to his father. My family was there for this process and begged me to go to treatment. I accepted a warm meal and some toiletries, but declined the offer. I decided to live with my friend who sold drugs out of his car instead. The gift was almost there. I only lasted a week before my meth induced paranoia forced me to have my friend drop me and all my belongings off in a Walmart parking lot at 11:20 pm on a week night. I finally called and told my family I was ready. God wanted to make sure I was extra ready though. I had to make a detour to Gwinnett

County jail for 45 long horrible days for a probation violation. I quickly learned I could never make it in jail and knew I was done. My family reached out for guidance and found out about the Women's Extension. I came straight from jail and walked in a hot terrified mess March 24, 2016. I expected to be able to learn to live clean and sober without having to use drugs and alcohol daily, but the gift I have been given here was so much more than that. I thought I had been a victim of my back injury, of the doctors who prescribed me the pain pills and once I detoxed I would be instantly fixed.

I thank God for everything The Extension has taught me! After being here for a year and receiving weekly counseling sessions along with the groups and meetings that have been available to me, I now know the drugs were only a symptom of what was really going on with me. I have done painful, yet lifesaving work here and am a completely different person. Today, I am a loving mother who is present for her son. I got to read to his kindergarten class last month. I attended his t-ball games with a shirt that proudly says "Julian's Mom" on the back. I co-parent with my soon to be ex-husband who I can today call my friend. I work a full time job and just signed a lease on a townhouse with one of my sisters from The Extension. And one of the best blessings has been the love and support I again have from my family. Once I was broken and willing to do whatever it took, I let the Women's Extension love me until I could love myself... and today I sure do. — Theresa



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MY JOURNEY OF RECOVERY by Robin Miller

It was a pretty spring day in May two-and-a-half years ago. Mother's Day weekend. I found myself sitting in a conference room at a recovery center in another state. I was attending a family workshop with a dozen other strangers sharing the awful bond of having an adult child in treatment for drug addiction. The more accurate term for the affliction is "substance use disorder," but whatever you call it, it had almost killed my son and left me deeply wounded.

ADDICTION IS A FAMILY DISEASE... MY "DRUG OF CHOICE" WAS CO-DEPENDENCY.

It wasn't easy for me to sit in that room. I didn't know what to expect. My mind kept playing back events of the previous four years, the years my son's brain was caught in the vice grip of heroin addiction. I was numb just thinking about all the horror but so grateful that he had survived his latest overdose and had finally hit his bottom. He wanted treatment and I had come to the workshop to learn, or so I thought, how I was going to help him stay alive. I was mistaken in expecting the counselors there to tell me it was all my fault. I was willing to listen to whatever they hurled at me as long as they gave me the "magic answer card." I wanted to leave there with a game plan. "Just tell me what I need to do to keep him alive," I thought to myself. "Call me every name in the book. I don't care. Just tell me what I need to do for him."

The first day of the workshop was filled with explanations of the disease of addiction and why it is so baffling, cunning

and crippling for those who suffer from it. I was no stranger to people afflicted by it. Other family members had struggled with addiction, embraced sobriety and went on to live better lives. I thought the struggle was theirs alone. After all, I knew I didn't cause the addiction, so I saw myself as a spectator in both the path of addiction and the recovery process. That view was different when it came to my son's addiction, I guess in part because as a parent, I had a vested interest in making sure my son survived. That was my duty as his mother. I was the reason he was here on this planet.

To my surprise, I was told at the workshop that I was not a spectator to the process. I was in fact, an addict myself. Addiction is a family disease, I was told. My "drug of choice" was co-dependency. I was collateral damage. We were all the "walking wounded" and needed to understand how we had been

caught in the unmanageable insanity of our addicts. My behaviors, in desperate attempts to manage, control, influence and save the life of my son, had actually come to mimic the same behaviors my son exhibited in his attempts to manage, control and perpetuate his drug use. My life had become a vicious cycle that was being sucked dry of any joy or hope...the same cycle my son faced every time his addiction won the battle in his brain.

Then the clinician at the workshop told us that we had already done everything we needed to do to help our children. We had brought them to treatment. My obligation to my son was complete because the only person who could keep my son sober and alive was him. I needed to understand that I had no control over whatever choice my son made in regards to his future. He would learn in treatment what he could do to stay sober. The decision to do it or not rested within him. I had no control over his sobriety. At first I felt helpless after getting this news. I realized the clinician was right. The only thing I could control was my own recovery, and I had a lot of work to do if I wanted to get better.

By the end of the second day of the workshop, I was struggling with the notion of embracing myself and my recovery. I didn't know exactly what I was going to do, but I knew I had to do one very important thing first. I had to forgive myself. I had to

let go of all of the guilt that had consumed me up to that point. It was keeping me from moving forward. So I forgave myself on that day and started my own journey of recovery.

We learned many valuable lessons and skills at the workshop... how to set and hold healthy boundaries for ourselves, the difference between helping versus enabling, the importance of self-care, how to deal with all the feelings that get churned up and exposed at a time like this, plus new, effective ways to communicate with our adult children after treatment. I left the workshop with a new “toolbox full of tools” to build on the foundation of my recovery. I’ve been building ever since.

I took my recovery one day at a time. It was slow and awkward in the beginning. I wasn’t used to focusing on myself. I became stronger in my efforts by making sure all my decisions and actions kept me moving forward. I found a wonderful Nar-anon family

group meeting that I look forward to attending each week. I found my passion again for writing and signed up for classes that not only enriched my art form, but connected me with a new social community of friends. I joined a women’s hiking club and, to date, have made a 70-pound dent in my target of losing 100 “stress” pounds. I started volunteering at The Extension Women’s Campus and mentoring other families at the same family workshop where my recovery began. I understand what the family disease of addiction is, and I also appreciate how powerful family recovery can be. My son is now 22 months sober and living a wonderfully fulfilling life in another state. Although our recoveries were not dependent on each other’s, we have both been strengthened and encouraged by each other’s success. I am very busy now living the life I was meant to live. It’s one of the magical perks of family recovery.



THE EXTENSION WOMEN’S CAMPUS NEEDS YOUR HELP!

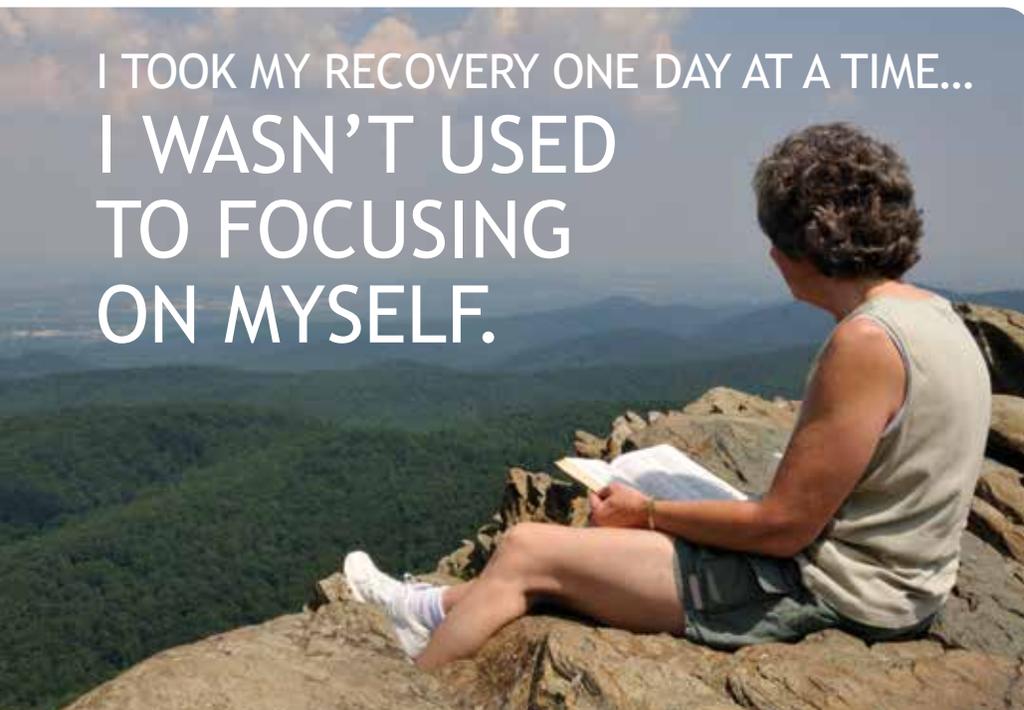
Currently, we have one 15 passenger van that is shared between the Men’s and the Women’s campuses. The Men’s campus has a capacity of 47 beds, and the Women’s has a capacity of 20 beds. That’s a lot of people sharing one van! Due to lack of transportation, the women have had difficulties participating in community activities.

A donation of a van would allow for greater involvement in 12 step meetings, service work, shopping trips for personal care and greater access to fun activities designed to encourage recovery.

If you, or someone you know, has a van in good working condition, this is an amazing opportunity to support an organization dedicated to uplifting and helping individuals rebuild their lives.

If interested, please contact Tyler Driver at The Extension. (770) 590-9075.

I TOOK MY RECOVERY ONE DAY AT A TIME...
I WASN'T USED
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COME GROW WITH US!

This spring at The Extension Barbara J. Crafton Center (our women's campus), we are organizing a community garden project! We are calling the project "Community Roots". We have a beautiful garden space with raised beds that were built as part of an Eagle Scout project. We came up with a great idea that will use the garden to its full potential and involve the neighborhood. With our Extension family, we will be passing out flyers on Holiday Street looking for anyone interested in planting in our garden. All of the ladies are really excited for the opportunity to not only interact with our neighbors, but also to let them know how grateful we are to live in this community! Thank you for your consideration!

MAKING THE TRANSITION...

I came to The Extension April 18, 2016, completely broken, hating myself and ready for something different. Having just served close to 9 months in jail, I was humble and willing to do anything to never have to go back! I had lived a "normal life" before my active addiction, owned a home, was married with 2 kids, had a well-paying job, had 2 cars, had a house full of belongings; however, I slowly began to lose it all. I knew I had to figure out why I was so miserable that I felt I had to use drugs, or I would never regain any of the things I had lost. I was ready to learn new tools to cope with life on life's terms and to deal with the wreckage of my past.

I arrived at The Extension a three time felon, with a pending charge for possession of heroin, my driver's license was suspended for three years and a divorce pending. I had not seen my kids in a year, was homeless and had lost most of my possessions. Talk about a seemingly hopeless state of mind! Since being at The Extension, I got a sponsor, started working the steps, prayed, listened to my counselor in my weekly sessions, attended 12 step meetings and life skill classes. Slowly things began to make sense. I started understanding what had been wrong with me my whole life! I worked hard, read several books to understand my addiction, developed a relationship with my Higher Power and got to know my inner child. I've worked on making amends, rebuilding my relationship with my children and my parents, finding and maintaining full-time employment and building a network of sober friends.

Something was still missing though.

A huge obstacle I had to overcome was facing my fear of being my authentic self. Once I began learning who I really am, the good, bad and ugly, things really began to fall into place. I worked on healing my relationship with myself and forgave myself for my past mistakes. I stopped living in shame for the choices I made in active addiction. I worked really hard at practicing acceptance and faith. I kept doing the next right thing and the next right thing started happening for me.

I transition on March 26th, 2017 and am a totally different person with a completely different life. I have learned to love myself, something I never thought possible and am not afraid to be my true self. I have an amazing relationship with my children and my parents. In July 2016, a law was passed that allowed me to get my driver's license back. I was recently hired at a much higher paying job, and am moving to a townhouse I was able to rent, despite my felony record. I have overcome so many obstacles because of the things I have learned at The Extension. This place not only saved my life, it gave me the ability to live a fulfilling life, full of love and serenity.

— Lorraine, 2/24/17



COMING THIS SUMMER!



Golf | Fore
RECOVERY

Please join us on JUNE 19, 2017!

Proceeds will be used to support operating costs of our program which includes counseling for our residents.

For more information please call 770-590-9075 or go to www.theextension.org/golf



the
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WE NEED... We need volunteers to prepare and serve dinner,
please call 770-590-9075 for details.



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I pledge \$ _____ per month quarter year

I would like to be sent a reminder of my pledge.

I would like someone from The Extension to contact me.

I made an online donation at www.theextension.org

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