



IT'S AMAZING WHAT YOU CAN SEE WHEN THE LIGHT COMES ON

My name is Dan and my story starts out one beautiful and sunny day in March of 2012. I say my story starts there because that's when my life changed and became a story worth sharing. For transparency's sake though let's go back to the early days. My formative years weren't all that unusual or different from those of many average Americans. I came from a normal loving household with two supportive and wonderful parents. I had an older brother who I had the usual playtime and fights with. My early days were, for all intents and purposes, wholly uninteresting. I don't have any major traumas or life-changing events which I can look to and say, "Yep. That's it. That's the moment I decided to become an alcoholic." I wish there had been a distinct moment so I could ensure that I don't repeat that moment in my children's lives or so I can know how to intervene in their lives at just the right time to save them from what I have been through and now deal with on a daily basis. But then I also look to what I've been through as a point of pride and of accomplishment; I look to the strength I never knew I had, or the faith which had been previously unknown to me until that sunny day in March of 2012 when I walked through the doors of The Extension.

As a functioning alcoholic I had been able to maintain some semblance of employment by working in the hospitality industry. I was a bartender, cook, and a manager at one time or another from

1992-2012. Towards the end of my career in restaurants, I began to drink more. In fact, before I came to The Extension, I was drinking from the moment I woke up until the moment I passed out. I had fallen into a hopeless state of being and I really didn't see much point in anything. My family had grown tired of my empty promises to stop drinking and straighten out my life,

“AT THE TIME, I HAD NO IDEA WHAT SOBRIETY WAS”

I was losing my possessions and my mind, and I had become homeless. It was at this lowest point in my life that a friend of mine suggested I speak to the staff at The Extension. Coming into The Extension was the best decision I have ever made.

From the day I walked through the doors at The Extension, I was loved. I hadn't felt that kind of unconditional love in years and I didn't believe I deserved it. It took some time for me to grasp that these strangers didn't actually want anything from me but rather wanted to give me something. They wanted to give me the gift of sobriety. At the time, I had no idea what sobriety was,

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www.theextension.org

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Comments or questions about this newsletter or any of the functions of the Extension, Inc. are encouraged, please send correspondence to us at P.O. Box 793, Marietta, GA 30061
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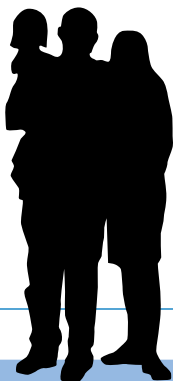
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A member of our staff or Board of Directors would love to come to speak to your group about issues related to homelessness, addiction and more importantly recovery. Just give us a call at the number above.

The Extension
1505 Church Street Extension
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but I felt like it had to be better than what I was doing otherwise. I had always assumed that sobriety meant being clean from alcohol and drugs; and it does mean that. But, it meant so much more than that too and that's what The Extension taught me. It meant integrity and following through on your commitments. It meant honesty in every aspect of your life. It meant emotional stability, financial stability, and brotherly love. It meant all of the things I had always wanted in life but never knew I was capable of. The Extension showed me how to work towards achieving sobriety through discipline, perseverance, and dedication. I was required to show up for classes five minutes early and I was expected to learn while in these classes. I was expected to show compassion towards my brothers and those I dealt with in my everyday life. I was expected to keep my bed area clean, keep my belongings in order, and I was expected to save money from each paycheck while also staying current with my monthly expenses. I was taught how to do all of these things through classes and guidance from my counselors and peers. I was taught the importance of remaining teachable and embracing the fact that maybe I didn't know quite as much as I thought I did and that maybe there might be some valuable lessons out there waiting to be learned. I embraced the culture of recovery and sobriety that The Extension offered and I set out to become the man I had always wanted to become.

While at The Extension I did some serious soul searching and asked a lot of questions. I read all the AA literature I could wrangle out of Mr. Bert and often times I would camp out in his office asking him what he thought the readings meant. I spent time meditating and praying in an attempt to cultivate a deep and meaningful connection to my higher power. It was through the guidance of the staff at The Extension that I began to realize a bigger picture for my life. One that involved service rather than taking and while this was at first a foreign concept to me, I quickly saw that the more a person gave the more they received. I began to ask how I could give back and that's when this program of recovery really began to take hold in my life. It was during one of my quiet moments of reflection that I began to see a vision of what my future could look like if I were willing to utilize the tools given to me by The Extension and if I were equally willing to work hard for my goals. I made a decision to do just that.

After leaving The Extension I began work on a college degree. I had gone to one semester of college back in 1991, but I failed out miserably and decided college wasn't for me. To start this journey over again at 41 years old was daunting but I believed with all of my heart that The Extension had prepared me to handle anything that would come my way. I began my first semester back at college at Georgia Highlands College.

GHC is a two year, open enrollment program offering various associate of arts degrees. I set my sights on a degree in political science. I was working full time, and going to school full time and I initially thought maybe I had bitten off more than I could chew but I kept my head down and did the next right thing that was in front of me and finished my first semester back in school in over 20 years with 5 A's and a spot on the President's list. With some new found confidence I repeated this effort for four more semesters, including summers and graduated with a 4.0 GPA, Phi Theta Kappa international honor society, a scholarship for creative writing, and an award for graduating first in my class among political science majors. I was also able to turn my time at GHC into an acceptance and partial scholarship to Columbia University in New York. I had to pause and pray on what to do next as these were uncharted waters. Luckily, The Extension had taught me to ask others for advice and help when faced with a difficult decision so that's what I did. It was that moment of pause in asking others that allowed me to see the value in staying close to home. It was right around this time that I met my beautiful wife as well.

I married my amazing wife, Crystal, in November of 2014 and I am truly blessed and grateful to The Extension for showing me how to be a more thoughtful and



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caring individual. They taught me conflict resolution skills and how to listen. These have been invaluable tools in my everyday married life. She has been my daily reminder to find my Grace when it's not clear to me on how to proceed. She has brought with her four amazing sons and my family grew to 8 people just like that! It's these incredible people that I live for today. They are all special and they all inspire me to be a better human on a daily basis. They supported me after I graduated from GHC and went on to graduate from Kennesaw State University with a bachelor of science in political science. Since graduating from KSU I was accepted to, and just finished up my first year at Georgia State University College of Law. I served last year as my 1L class's senator representative to the student bar association. I'm now in my second year of the part time evening program at GSU COL and

I work full-time for an attorney who has been practicing law for nearly 40 years in Atlanta. We are in the middle of a campaign to be elected to a judgeship on the state Court of Appeals which means I would be blessed with the rare opportunity of being able to clerk for a judge. I have set lofty goals for myself and through this program of recovery I plan on continuing to smash those goals.

This is a life I could have never imagined before March of 2012. This life has been made possible because of the lessons I learned through the program at The Extension. I have used the principles I was taught at The Extension in my day to day life and that has made all the difference in the world. I continue to go back and help out where I can, when I can; but as you can imagine, my free time has become slightly more limited! For that I'll be forever grateful.



SOME OF THE PEOPLE HELPING MAKE ALL OF THE DIFFERENCE

MS. RHEA PRIDGEN

As a resident of the women’s program for a number of months, I have been privy to amazing acts of selflessness on a daily basis. Church groups, social organizations, and families take time (and money) out of their daily lives to feed, clothe, and love us. Someone writes a check and the lights stay on and someone answers the phone when a woman or her family is ready to give up and has no where to turn. One of the people that has consistently given of her entire life is Ms. Rhea Pridgen. Ms. Rhea has been a volunteer for over eight years, a liaison for her church (First United Methodist Church of Marietta), and was even the 2011 winner of the Dr. Karl Steinichen Extension volunteer of the year award. I wondered what would drive someone to be so faithful in their service, so I asked her to tell me a little about herself and what makes her such a passionate advocate for the Women’s campus.

“I believe that each woman at The Extension is a child of God.”

What made you decide to volunteer at the Extension?
During a career in community health nursing I became familiar with women dealing with substance abuse issues. After meeting some of the staff and administration while the women’s campus was in the planning stages, my Sunday school class began to discuss providing dinners on a regular basis... my hand shot up to lead that effort. From then on I had the opportunity to become involved in many ways.

Tell me a few of the things you have done as a volunteer over eight years.
I have coordinated the office volunteers and helped identify new volunteer opportunities, helped plan the Extension volunteer appreciation party,

recruited volunteers for tiling bathroom floors, doing routine maintenance, planting apple trees. I have brought women from the Extension to share happy events with our congregation. Activities such as church musical plays, the Forth of July celebrations and United Methodist Women’s tea parties.

I know you are a liaison between the Extension and your church. What are a few of the opportunities you have given the women to participate in with your church community?
The women from the Extension have been involved in our local and international service projects such as: Making no sew blankets for children with cancer, packing 800 ‘back to school’ back packs for needy children, filling 40,000 dry meal bags for overseas

starving populations and even packing comfort boxes to go to our own armed forces.

What keeps you coming back as a volunteer?

Knowing that whatever I can do to help the staff will allow them more time to work with the women. I get to see the women come out of the cocoon of addiction, poverty, and self-doubt and turn into beautiful butterflies of sobriety, job steadiness, and obtain a mastery of a self-sustaining/fulfilling life. Not to mention, the women are truly an inspiration to me.

Is your spirit of giving a statement of your faith?

Yes, I believe that each woman at the Extension is a child of God. I am called by my faith to reach out to this community of evolving women to support this program and these individuals in any way which I can. I know that each and every one of these women can become the person that God knows that she can be. Don't forget that my interactions and the interactions of our congregation with these women is God's gift from both directions!

If you could encourage someone to volunteer at the Extension what would you tell them?

Several things: As a community in Cobb County we grow stronger when we are engaged with programs which support individuals making a change to wholeness. The Extension is making that happen!

When you volunteer with the Extension you are volunteering with a program of the highest

accredited standards and awards for excellence.

In thinking about volunteering, search for those talents and skills within you, either professional or personal, that might help the program and the women.

At the end of each volunteer session you will leave with a big smile in your heart!



A SPECIAL DAY FOR ONLINE GIVING

Two successful social campaigns raising awareness and funds for the nonprofits, including The Extension, are aligning forces, combining Georgia's biggest day of online giving with a growing international day of online support for charities.

Starting this year, Georgia Gives Day is officially partnering with #GivingTuesday to become their lead organizer for Georgia, re-launching the state's 24-hour giving marathon on November 28, 2017.

Georgia Gives on #GivingTuesday falls on the Tuesday that follows Thanksgiving, and the twin mega shopping days of Black Friday and Cyber Monday, answering the public's appetite to balance holiday "getting" with community "giving."

You can take part in this growing effort by supporting The Extension with an online donation. Simply go to www.theextension.org/give for a link to The Extension's Georgia Gives/Giving Tuesday webpage page. Of course, you don't have to wait until November 28th. You can give anytime through our website by clicking on the Donate Now button at the upper right-hand corner of any page on our website.

Thank you for your support!

GA GIVES
ON
#GIVINGTUESDAY



30 Years of Dedicated Service to Our Community



30th
ANNIVERSARY
Recovering Lives, Restoring Families

RECOVERING THE HOLIDAYS

Some of our residents share what they are most grateful for during this special time of year.

Cory: I am grateful for my life, for good friends, and for the Extension.

Matt: I am grateful for change, for my job, and for my brothers.

Nikki: I am grateful for the relationship that I now have with God by working this program, for the opportunity to be back in society & working, and for the time and the tools I'm being taught so that I can learn to love myself.

Kody: I am grateful for my new life, for a job, and for freedom.

Anthony: I am grateful for my wife, the Extension, and for my kids.

Tiffany: I am grateful for this program, for my sobriety, and for my son.

Charlie: I am grateful for my daughter, for my life, and for my recovery being sober.

Chris: I am grateful for another chance, for a job, and for service.

Devon: I am grateful for my recovery, for the love I have for my daughter and family today, and for my sober sisters & counselors.

Michael: I am grateful for God, my family, and my recovery.

Josh: I am grateful for shelter, for my new family, and for the extension.

Trisha: I am grateful for my network, for my sobriety, and for my higher power.

Carlton: I am grateful for my sobriety, for my job, and for my family.

Josh: I am grateful for love, for belief, and for sobriety.

Sierra: I am grateful for my new healthy and sober life, for achieving my GED, and for a stronger, healthier, and greater relationship with my daughter.

Daniel: I am grateful for the roof over my head, for the men I live with and for my family.

Kasey: I am grateful for life, for God, and for my family.

Jeff: am grateful for my contact with God, for the staff at the Extension, and for my daughter.

Glenn: I am grateful for my kids, another chance, and for my family.

Sharon: I am grateful for the Extension, for help, and for strength.



VAROOM! VAROOM!

Have you ever thought that riding a motorcycle would be a lot of fun? (You'd be right, by the way.) Perhaps you recently purchased a bike and could use a little coaching. Or maybe you used to ride but more mundane parts of life got in the way and you ended up selling your bike. Whether or not you are new to motorcycles or you are an experienced rider who just wants to brush up on your skills, we've got a deal for you.

The good folks at Hellbender Harley-Davidson have donated a slot in either a Skilled or New Rider class. These classes are worth \$350, but you can grab your spot through this special offer for just \$250.

The first person who emails Renee McCormick at The Extension (reneemccormick@theextension.org) and promises to donate \$250 to us gets it. Don't miss this opportunity—the open road is calling!



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



I WANT TO HELP!

Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____

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

Please mail to: **The Extension, P.O. Box 793, Marietta, GA 30061**

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