



## Jessica's Story

February, 2008, Jessica celebrated 3 years clean and sober. She is well on her way to regaining her personal independence. Congratulations Jessica!

Jessica was born in the state of Kentucky and grew up in a family environment where drugs and alcohol were a part of daily life. Her mother was happiest high. Her father, a workaholic, preferred to work rather than be home with his family. With an absentee father and a mother high most of the time, parental responsibility and supervision was nonexistent. As a very young child, Jessica was left to do whatever she wanted whenever she wanted. It became her way of life. Her parents divorced soon after her sister, 6 years her junior, was born.

Before the age of eight, Jessica would begin a life of addiction that started with smoking cigarettes – the first step in mirroring the life experience she was born into. One day she and her cousin would discover a more powerful cigarette - marijuana.

At the age of 12 her mother dealt Jessica another challenging hand. As a result of a major motor cycle accident her mother went into a coma that she remains in today. Jessica and her younger sister went to live with their paternal grandparents. Family life changed dramatically. The life of complete freedom would quickly revert to a life where strict rules and expectations were set and enforced. Jessica loved sports and was devastated when her grandparents refused to let her participate in any school activities. She rebelled and soon followed in her mother's footsteps - happiest when she was high on drugs that included alcohol, uppers and methadone. At the age of 19 she was arrested for the first time for public intoxication, followed by three more times for drugs. When she was 24 years-old the court ordered her to participate in both the AA and NA programs.

Jessica wanted to work the programs, but found it hard to resist the temptations that came from living in the same drug environment she grew up in. At the age of 25 she became pregnant. The pregnancy forced her to clean up for the sake of her unborn child. She said "I couldn't wait to deliver the baby so I could get high again." After the baby's birth, in spite of being on probation, she returned to using methadone and knew how to hide it from her parole officer...at least for awhile.

Jessica loved her baby daughter. However that love was not enough to keep her from continuing her drug abuse. Concern for her daughter's well-being, now just one-year old, influenced the difficult decision to sign over parental rights to her daughter's paternal grandparents who lived in the state of Ohio. Her parole officer supported that decision and allowed her to accompany her baby to Ohio to get settled.

While in Ohio, living with her daughter's grandparents, Jessica would begin treatment again and experience one year of being clean and sober. But, she missed her family in Kentucky and began going home for occasional visits. During one of those visits the temptation to join in with family members high on drugs was irresistible. It didn't take long before drugs were a part of her life again. Once again she was successful in hiding her drug use for awhile. Jessica continued to work full time and take college classes earning a 3.23 GPA until she received an ultimatum from her daughter's grandparents - Take a drug test or leave.

## St, Vincent Supportive Housing

To avoid argument, Jessica agreed to take the test knowing what the result would be. On that day in June, 2004, she left for work without the plan to return. Instead she left her daughter and returned to Kentucky where she knew she was free to resume her life of addiction.

Once again, Jessica would manage her addiction well enough to hold down a job, return to Butler County to keep appointments with her parole officer and visit her daughter in Ohio every 2 weeks. As the year was coming to an end, so was Jessica's ability to function. In November, 2004 she was jailed for sleeping in a church parking lot. Jessica told her parole officer she needed help but nothing was done. She was soon released to return to familiar surroundings.

Rock bottom came February, 2005. Arrested again with dope in her pocket and with the patrol camera rolling, Jessica admitted her drug abuse, owned up to what was in her pockets and pleaded and pleaded for help. She hated herself. She had lost everything but life it self. The only thing that had meaning was her daughter and her desire to be with her.

Jessica was jailed in Warren County. The court was willing to release her on bail but she refused. "I wanted to get clean so bad I was willing to stay in jail doing nothing but eat and sleep until help was available". Jessica spent 6 months in jail before that help came.

Jessica chose the MonDay Program instead of the Women's Recovery Program because she heard it was a tougher program and there was nothing more important to Jessica than beating her drug addiction. Following the program she had the choice of being released to a half-way house in either Cincinnati or Dayton. She chose Dayton's Mercy Manor, because it was closer to Middletown where her daughter resided with her grandparents.

Jessica applied herself doing what she needed to do to regain her personal independence- drug free. She was gainfully employed and was actively working the program. Her case manager, Miss Annie, made contact with St. Vincent de Paul Supportive Housing and recommended Jessica as a client. After successfully completing the three-week interviewing process, Jessica was accepted into the program in May, 2006.

Her first impression of the program was that it was wonderful. "I had my own place to live and rent was based on my income giving me opportunity to save money." The program provided a safe environment for her to continue to work on staying clean, help with a plan to work on financial responsibilities and supported her efforts to have a healthy relationship with her daughter. Jessica described her greatest challenge during the early days as loneliness. She appreciated the time she spent with case managers and once she had a phone, things were much better. Things greatly improved when her case manager, Gail, helped her find a car.

After nearly two years in St. Vincent de Paul's Supportive Housing Program, Jessica is about ready to graduate clean and sober for three years. She said she likes being there for others in AA and in the program, as an example of what is possible when you commit yourself to change. Jessica has been continuously employed for three years, where she met her fiancé Chris. Her current goals are to get married; regain custody of her daughter, Christina; get out of debt; and save enough to buy a home. She has over \$1,800 already saved. She also realizes that returning to school will help her increase her career employment opportunities.

Congratulations Jessica on all you have accomplished and best wishes for continued success along your life journey.

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