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## SHERYL'S STORY



As I am writing this, I am watching the show "Intervention." How appropriate. There was a difference though. The intervention did not work out very well on this week's addict/alcoholic. I did drugs for the last time on 03/12/2007, almost 10 years clean!

I am quite honored that Chaplain Judy asked me to share how God has been blessing me. I am coming to you with a whole new outlook and a whole new life and career! The one thing that has not, nor ever will change, is that I would not have anything without God keeping His promises to me! He is my "always"—my "constant"—my "Father," and I am so blessed that He loves me. Never once did He walk away from me and never once have I been alone.

I met Chap in SLO County Jail in 1991. I was in jail for drug possession and my daughter was only 2 years old and I was a complete train wreck. Chaplain Judy touched my heart from the minute I saw this lady.

I continued to go in and out of both Santa Barbara County Jail and SLO county jails for a long time. I went from drinking and smoking bud to cocaine and drinking, to taking pills and getting addicted to pain meds; and this led to a big fat heroin addiction. The one drug that I would never ever do, I did. Sick, incomprehensible demoralization. I was on felony probation in both counties for 21 consecutive years. Yes, that word consecutive means that I didn't get any days off! I never got anything "concurrent" and I'm sure that God and Judge Flores had something to do with ALL of that. (Oh...and my part for landing there)! I ended up with something like 19 charges, and that was before Proposition 47.

That is not my story though. My story is simply one that involved substance abuse and alcoholism that lasted from the time that I was 14 years old until I was 41. I had periods of sobriety, abstinence and even real recovery before, but it never really lasted. The last time that I was court ordered to a residential program, I was blessed to land at "The Father's Heart" which was the first residential home for Captive Hearts. I had been in custody in two counties, thanks to Judge Flores, and he allowed me to get treatment in SLO County where I lived and gave me a chance to live in Nipomo to be close to my husband, Gary... who, for some reason did not give up on me either!

I left the Father's Heart early when Chaplain Judy came to me and said, "Jesus told me to give this to you." It was a pregnancy test. Oh my goodness, I was pregnant at 39 years old? Whaaat? I could not believe it!

I was so worried I'd have to return to custody due to them not being equipped to handle a pregnant woman. Chaplain Judy made it work to allow me to finish the program after I had my baby.

This wonderful little gift from God came with a bang! I had to call 911 as my water broke at home and my husband was on a telephone pole in Guadalupe working! He ran in the house and the paramedic turned around and handed my husband his first born son! It was a great day! A miracle!! I had this little guy, Matthew David, and he has never had to see his mother under the influence!

I also have a daughter, Savannah Rain. She went with my first husband at age 5 when I was not making good decisions and for the next 13 years, I did everything I could to try to get her back home with me. It never happened. In 2013, after years of doing things right, thinking she would come back home the second I got sober. No! She waited until she was 18. She called and asked if I could help her get to Pismo! So, the week after her last day at school, she finally moved back home.

In 2009, I went to school to get my AOD Certification. I was able to raise my son and go to school because my husband made it work to where I could go to school at night when he was off work. It took me 5 years to get through school, but I finally did it! I was blessed to be able to Intern at Captive Hearts, Casa Solana, Ken Starr Wellness Center, Project Preemie and Recovery Point. Good Samaritan gave me a job as a Drug and Alcohol Counselor after I completed my Practicum Hours and for the next 2 years I worked with the Out Patient clients. My caseload was pretty much Prop. 36 and CWS clients.

I will never forget the day that my, then Program Manager, took me with her to my first ever Veteran's Treatment Court staffing at the Santa Maria Superior Court. Judge Rogelio Flores was there. He acted like he was falling off of the chair when I walked in!! He said, "Oh myyyy Goshhhhh" Sheryl!???" He then came up after we all laughed and gave me a hug.....and told me he was very proud of me. He was the first Judge who saw right through my bull. I was usually able to pay for private counsel and just pay, pay, pay! But not Judge Flores....he said no and he meant NO! He told me, "I don't know how you've been able to go in and out of jail for over 10 years in two counties, but you're not doing it in my court room!" Thank you Judge, you saved my life...when nobody else could or would. You knew if I was inside, I would not be able to run amok.

I "had" to work in VTC then! I got to for a little while but my company needed me elsewhere. *(continued on pg. 2)*

## New Intercessory Prayer Team

We now have an Intercessory Prayer Team Facebook page that we recently created. If you would like to join our team to give your prayer requests as well as pray for others' needs, please contact Chaplain Judy at judeth@att.net and let us know you would like to be involved. We will add you to our team for unified prayer.

Captive Hearts needs you to pray for us as we are determined to see God's hand at work in our jail, resell store and recovery homes. Those on the front lines in ministry need prayer covering continually. Our country is in desperate need of prayer as well. For those who think they don't have a ministry, this is for you. Become involved!

## Sheryl's Story (cont'd)

I was promoted to a position at the Probation Report and Resource Center to take a new position as the Re-entry Drug Court Counselor and I got to work in Drug Court, Dept.3, in Santa Maria for the next 2+ years. I also became the female AB109 Counselor and worked at the PRRC until I recently took a position in SLO County at a facility that is closer to home.

I miss working in Drug Court; I miss working with Criminal Justice clients. I am now working in private practice and at a new facility in North County. My heart is working with those who were like me. In trouble! During my 4+ years working in Santa Maria, I decided to get a specialized Certification; it's called a CCJP, which is a Certified Criminal Justice Addiction Professional. I am one class away from getting that certification and I am super excited about it.

None of anything that I wrote thus far would be possible if it was not for my Savior Jesus Christ. He is the one who will never, ever leave or forsake me, HE is my greatest fan. He is my redeemer, my best friend and my forever Father. I love Recovery, I love the 12 steps. I just love Jesus more. I know that I cannot have anything without God in my life. I have a wonderful and very small group of people that are there for me when I need them and I couldn't do life without them.

I am saving the best for last. I have the world's BEST husband and we will be celebrating 14 years of marriage together on Valentine's Day. Yes, he stayed with me throughout all of this, my disease, my recovery and now our life tighter is one of trust and love. It is NOT easy, but we make it work. I will forever try to make him proud that he did not give up on me when everyone else told him that I wouldn't ever get it together! Sometimes, you need someone to just believe in you! Thank you Gary DeWald. I love you!!!

Thanks for everything that you do, Chaplain Judy and Captive Hearts. You are my Mama Ju, my mentor and my favorite Chicken Dumplin' maker of all time! —Sheryl

## Prayer Needs

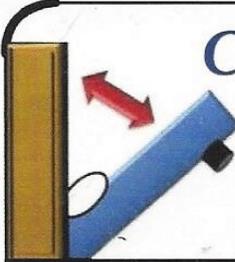
- 17-year-old Ryan Teixeira—cancer
- 9-year-old boy—suicide thoughts
- Dee Adams—cancer
- New Life Church board as they select a new pastor
- Ron & Gwenn Wood—complete healing in their bodies
- Captive Hearts—decisions to be made to grow our ministry
- Redemption Street Disciples—staff
- Men's home this year—must have money to begin
- Chaplain Judy—continued healing

## Mailing List

It's that time of year when we give opportunity to those who would like to be removed from our newsletter mailing list. We want to be good stewards of our time and money, so if you wish to be removed, please let us know.

## Seeds & Needs

- ⇒ We need someone to take over and maintain the website (redo and recreate)
- ⇒ Mentors for our ladies
- ⇒ Volunteer with experience in drug & alcohol to give hours to our home as an intern
- ⇒ New donors for our Scholarship Fund
- ⇒ Volunteers for Second Chances, 4 hours/wk.
- ⇒ Someone who would like to plan and operate a spring yard sale
- ⇒ Volunteer who would like to do public relations in the community for Captive Hearts



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