

THE BECKY HARRISON STORY

"Today I am Smiling"

This story is one very good reason we want to see the new psychiatric-medical-dental clinic built on the Rescue Mission's Campus.

I was in the Roanoke City Jail due to a violation of parole. Even though I had tried, I could not quit using. I had heard about the Rescue Mission and asked the judge if he would send me there for help with my addiction. The judge said he would give me this one last chance. If I blew it, I would go to the penitentiary for five years. On June 2, 2007 I was released from jail at 2 o'clock and came straight to the Rescue Mission. I was terrified.

Audrey Wheaton, Chaplain for Women, was the first person I met. Talking to her, seeing the Women and Children's Center (which looked nothing like what I thought a mission would look like), and hearing about the Recovery Program helped me to trade some of my fear for a little bit of hope. I was already dealing with depression and soon after my arrival I discovered a new source for anger after learning that my 9 year-old son had been sexually molested by my ex-husband at the age of five.

The Mission's Psychiatric Clinic arranged for me to see a counselor and get my prescriptions filled. Each week for three months, I met with the counselor who helped me take action steps to deal with my depression and my anger. The clinic provided me with scripts (written by their nurse practitioner) for Zoloft and Trazadone. The Recovery Team arranged for me to have supervised visits with my children (Michael now 10 and Olivia now 9). This was the first step in reuniting my family. Eventually, with recommendations from my Mission counselor, the supervised visits were upgraded to unsupervised, and then to overnight stays. My mother, their guardian, now believed I was ready for this, so a healing process with my mother also started to happen.

I got serious about working a real recovery program and a spiritual journey toward wholeness. I got a sponsor, attended meetings faithfully and started building a network of support "in the rooms" and at my church. I started to feel like I might actually surprise that judge. I started praying that God would help me feel better about myself. Two issues had always made me feel inferior to everyone else. I had a serious case of psoriasis and my teeth were broken and missing so I made attempts not to smile. This made people think I was angry even when I wasn't.

The nurse in the clinic was able to arrange for a specialist visit to a dermatologist. With the clinic's help I was able to obtain a prescription for Embrel (a very expensive drug) through the Encourage Foundation. This injection was administered by the Mission's nurse in the clinic each week. For the first time in my life my skin started to heal and the emotional wounds sustained from the childhood taunts of "leper" began to heal.

In January, a volunteer dentist came to the Mission. He pulled 9 rotten teeth. Another volunteer dentist repaired six teeth and then another volunteer dentist made it possible for me to get a partial to replace the missing teeth. I started to feel better about the way I looked on the outside and that made me feel better on the inside.

Today, I have a lot to smile about. I am clean and sober. I can see light instead of facing the darkness of daily depression. My skin is clear. I am no longer ashamed to let people see my teeth because I now have a beautiful smile. A court date has been scheduled for March 9th to investigate guardianship of my children, so I will soon be a 24-hour mother to my own children and we will be a family once again.

I graduated from the program in January and applied for support team status which allows my children and me to live at the Mission in a yearlong Aftercare Program. I will be a receptionist at the front desk. My goal is to become employable and be able to sustain my family outside of the Mission. I want to give back and today, my success is a walking testimony for the next woman in crisis who comes in our doors. I know the best way to stay clean, sober and healthy is to share my testimony and live a life based on gratitude. *That's why I am smiling!*