

Antoinette's Story



Today Antoinette is living life on life's terms without depending on alcohol or drugs to get through the day. She is a recovering addict proud to be celebrating four years of being clean. Making this dramatic U-turn came after years of addiction that started in grade school.

Antoinette is the eldest of four children. Her mother raised her and her three brothers as a single mom after her father's life choices resulted in his incarceration. Antoinette missed her father so much and she pined for the day he would be released so they could be reunited. Unfortunately when that day came, instead of reuniting with his children, he chose to remarry and spend his time with a new family breaking his daughter's heart. Antoinette's mother remarried, this time to an abusive man. Both parents' life-styles were heavily dependent on drugs and alcohol making it extremely easy for Antoinette to have access to the same forms of addiction early in life.

For many, many years it was easier to follow in her parent's foot steps. Even after several required encounters with rehab, Antoinette was not motivated to change until one day in 2004 when she lost all hope. Continuing life as she knew it was not an option. Jobless and homeless, Antoinette knew she needed help and that help would not come from the people she knew. Her only option was to finally step out on faith. To take personal control and responsibility for her life choices and seek the professional support she needed to learn how to cope with life's ups and downs without drugs or alcohol and survive.

A friend offered Antoinette a place to stay for awhile. An offer she would have gladly accepted in the past. It was always easier to lean on someone rather than to believe in herself. She recognized her dependency came out of a need to belong and deep-seeded anger. She decided to seek the help of the St. Vincent de Paul Hotel homeless shelter where her new journey began. With the guidance of her case worker, Antoinette willingly participated in a 30-day program. Based on her previous experiences, she knew even with her best efforts, 30 days would not be enough to make the changes she needed so she entered the Salvation Army's Adult Rehab Center where she spent 7 months working their program. As she approached the time to move on, a counselor worked with her to identify housing options that would keep her working on the path to recovery. This is when she was introduced to the St. Vincent de Paul Supportive Housing Program. While impressed with the program, she was told there was a year's waiting list for single

women. Several weeks later she got a welcomed call - an unexpected opening made it possible for her to be considered for the program. God had answered her prayers.

Her first experiences with the program were very good. Her case manager, Charla, was so supportive. Always willing to listen, provide guidance and keep her focused. Antoinette, however, felt bad because she needed so much and because of health issues did not have a job. Charla helped her set priorities, health first, then work. After needed surgery Antoinette began working part-time at the St. Vincent de Paul Hotel as a Female Guest Attendant. Her part-time hours grew from 16 to 24 hours. Antoinette liked helping other women, many living the same lifestyle she had for so many years. Providing a helping hand to others was soon becoming her calling and her good work was rewarded with a full time salaried position.

Antoinette said “working for the hotel is not only personally rewarding but serves as a reminder of where I can go back to if I relapse and I know I deserve better than that. I just celebrated my 3rd anniversary with the Hotel. I have never held a job for so long. I’m still learning how to share. I now know my secrets kept me addicted. I’m also learning how to trust and deal with anger issues after years of molestation and rape. The choices I make today have the benefit of a network of supportive people interested in my success. Everyday I learn more about how to deal with life on life’s terms and to deal with it without drugs or alcohol. Everyday I ask God to help me live a normal life, keep me clean and sober, going to meetings and talking to the right people”

Antoinette has pursued her education and is now an Alcohol & Drug Counselor at the St. Vincent de Paul homeless shelter.