

DREAMS COME
TRUE



MY LIFE

My life started all over again for the better after I gave my heart, mind, body, and soul to God. I used to drink, smoke and do drugs; I was homeless. I am not ashamed to say that I dated men who beat me.

Through the course of my life I have lost so many people—my mom, my dad, aunt, uncle, and friends. My children were taken away from me also. With drinking and drug use, I lost a lot of time. The thought of my children kept me alive. I was just surviving and living from day to day.

Now, by the grace of God, I am me again. I am learning to live again, a clean and sober life. I have contact with my children and grandchildren. I have a place of my own. I am finally working on getting my GED, and I have two jobs. I am in church too. I can truly live now.

I am still dealing with some things, but God has put so many good and wonderful people in my life to help me on my journey to do His will. I hope to have my own business one day. Hopefully, I can help people who are going through what I have been through.

This is my story. I hope someone can get some hope from it. We can start over for the better. We can live again. We can love again. We can be loved without being hurt. I am a beautiful woman. I can do for myself with God's help. And you can too. Just let go and let GOD. Keep the faith.

~ Evelina Robinson

MY SILVER LINING

“Every cloud has a silver lining.” I did not always agree with this statement. I would actually get angry every time I heard this saying. I went through a bad divorce about four years ago, and I truly thought my life was over. I did not want the divorce – my husband walked out on me and my son. This was devastating to me. My husband and son were my life. I always put them first. I lived my life for them.

During and after my divorce, I was angry, very angry. I was angry at my ex-husband, I was angry at life, and I was even angry at God. This went on for two years, being angry and hating life until I started talking to an old friend again. She would annoy me because she was so positive all the time, even when bad things were going on. How can someone be so positive? We talked for hours, and she would tell me all the time how I needed to start seeing the silver lining or the good things through the bad. I thought she was crazy.

The more I talked to her, the more I started to see these silver linings, like my son. I got my son out of my marriage, which was the biggest blessing. I also started to look at life differently. Instead of what bad could happen, I started to see what good could happen. My self esteem started to go up, and I got the courage to go back to school.

I am starting to realize life is not so bad if I can be positive. We know bad things happen and that we can't stop them. We can, however, not let them get us down and know things will get better.

So, I now see that my divorce was a complete life changing event. Even knowing it was devastating to me, I am now a more positive person. I even started school, which is always something that scared me. I plan to go to

college and to get a good job so I can take care of my son by myself and be a good role model for him.

“Every cloud has a silver lining” no longer angers me; it inspires me to be more positive and a better person.

~ Angela Traylor

MY ABLE (GED) CLASS

Going to GED class has changed my life. It has turned me into a whole new person. I'm not as shy or quiet; I have the self-confidence I need to answer questions and to ask questions, so I can succeed in class. I finally feel that I have the ability to learn like everyone else. I used to believe I did not have the ability to learn. Now that I know better, I'm working hard for a better future for my family and myself. I believe we have the power to change our lives.

It's not that my life is terrible. I have a great life, three beautiful children, a perfect husband, and I adore them. But I've pretty much always worked nights and my husband works days and two of the boys are in school all day, so I don't get to spend any time with my family. I couldn't find a day job paying enough for me to leave my night job. I knew the only hope I had of ever spending time with my family was to go back to school so I could get a good job. We just need time together; we already have everything else.

Starting these classes was the hardest thing I've ever done. Walking in the classroom for the first time took more bravery than jumping out of an airplane and was harder than jumping off a cliff. I never did well in school; in fact, I only made it to the third month of eighth grade, and I only went two to three days a week at best. I was 15 years old and in the eighth grade when I left school. After moving in with my husband at 16 years of age, I was home schooled by my husband, Troy, and his brother, Matt. I never felt that the home schooling was as good as real school. I only worked on school work when I wanted to. Troy and Matt helped me so much, but I wasn't able to remember anything I learned. I had little hope and much fear.

I walked into class the first day at Live Oaks; I was going to what they called Orientation. I got there, and I had to take tests. I almost panicked. When I left that day, I thought there was no way I would ever go back. After

taking that test, I thought I would be laughed at for doing worse than anyone in history. The next day I forced myself to go back. Then I went the next day and the next day until I really started liking school. Then it started being what I looked forward to. Finally, I loved it!

The first change started from just enjoying how nice my teacher, Paula, was. She was always happy to see me and always had kind words to say. One day I was really having a hard time. I couldn't understand how to do a problem, and Scottye, the teacher's aide, came and sat down beside me, put her hand on my arm and said, "I'm really not very good at this either, but I'm going to try; maybe we can do it together." She helped me. I felt so good having people who cared about teaching me. I knew they wanted me to make it; this class truly cares about its students. They saw me as a person, not just a number. They even have great volunteers; I was really enjoying it.

Shortly after getting used to the night class, the girl that worked for me quit. I was stuck working nights by myself; it left little room for school. So my husband started going to work for me on Tuesdays and working with me on Thursdays so I could still go to school. I finally got a break. A spot in the AM pre-school opened up, so now I was able to go to school in the morning. But I was scared because this was something new – a new teacher, new aides, and even new volunteers.

I went to class scared that first morning, and Marty, the morning teacher, greeted me with a smile and introduced herself. She was very nice, but I was still not comfortable. I wondered if it was even possible that they would be as supportive as my night class, but they were. The first time I had trouble, Marty sat down with me one-on-one, after she sent everyone on break, and stayed with me until I got it. I then knew she would not give up on me. It was great! I had two teachers who didn't think I was a lost cause. I'm sure as bad as I did in the testing the first two days no one would have blamed them if they would have just written me off, but they didn't. The volunteers were great as well. Before my college pre-test, one of the

volunteers (Rod) sat down with me, worked with me one-on-one, and just kept telling me, "No matter what you do in there, don't sweat it. Keep your head up; be confident." Today when I get scared in college, I hear his voice. They also have a great aide, Donna, in the morning. She types all our papers for us, encourages us before we take tests, and puts our mind at ease. She also sings when we do algebra, "Plug-it-in, plug-it-in," so we'll never forget to plug in the numbers. I even have met friends on the way.

I have loved every step on the road because of these wonderful people who chose to believe in me; they chose to help me. But remember, it's still an uphill battle; we still have to want it for ourselves. It is a choice we have to make, to get up every morning and to go to school and to study. No one can give it to us. Hopefully, if more people know that there is a place that can help them, even if they feel it's impossible, maybe more people will get help. One day when I was feeling scared and doubtful, I looked up and saw a poster hanging on the wall. It said, "If you don't take a chance, you don't stand a chance." My son saw me read it, and he read the next one, "If opportunity doesn't knock, open the door."

~ Samantha Naylor

MY MOTHER

I am writing about my mother. She has always been there for me.

When I was a baby, I was sick a lot. There were tons of hospital visits. At age 12, I caught the flu. I was so sick, I could not walk. My mom took me to the hospital. My white cells dropped, and I almost died. My family was told to plan my funeral. I did not want to die. I had my whole life ahead of me. So we prayed, and I got better. Since then, I get my flu shot every year. I also stay away from sick people.

My health improved over the next couple of years. However, when I was nineteen, I started having unusual thoughts and feelings. I became obsessed over cleaning, and I would scrub myself raw. I remember my hands bleeding. My mom noticed I was talking really fast and not making any sense. I refused her help and, instead, I left home. I had a car, which I crashed.

I stayed on the street for a few days. Later, I walked to an airport, but I had no money. The next thing I knew, I was handcuffed and taken to U.C. Hospital. After three days, I was told I was Bipolar and had Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). They told me I would not be able to work again. I had to take pills that cost \$900.00 each month, so I was forced to go on Medicaid. The only one who helped me was my mom. She took me for treatment.

I am now 29. I am trying to get my GED. I live on my own, and I have a nice place to live. I have a dog that I really love, and I am also engaged to my high school sweetheart. My mom has been through hell and back with me.

I used to get mad at God for giving me a second chance at life, just to have me become mentally ill. But I am using my experience to help others, including my mom who, after

many years, is finally in treatment for the same illness. We are both learning how to live each day. I know that, no matter how bad things get, she will be right here beside me.

~ Amy Dunham

GED CLASS IS LIKE GOING TO THE HOSPITAL

I have been at the Scarlet Oaks Adult GED class for many years. Every day when I come to class I feel great because I know I am in the right place. It is just like when I go to the hospital and feel like I am in the hands of a good doctor.

When you visit the doctor he will examine you and find out your diagnosis. After the doctor finds your pain he will try everything to help you get better. If you need medicine or you need comfort he will be there for you. He will encourage you to do better.

This class is just like a hospital. I took the exam. After that they helped every way they could. When I needed help in English, they were right there. When I was struggling they were a comfort to me. When I was frustrated, they encouraged me. They never put me down. Whatever I needed, they were there for me. This class's teachers and volunteers are like a doctor or nurse in a hospital. They did everything.

It doesn't matter how much a doctor or nurse helps you if your attitude does not change. It will not be better. I realized my negative attitude would not help my skills get better. I said to myself, "I can do this." I talked to myself many times. If I can't pass the GED in this place, I don't think I can do it in another place. I really wanted to pass the GED this year. When I took the GED test I changed my attitude. Now I found out I passed the GED. It was so exciting, and I could not believe I passed.

I am so grateful for all of the help I was given. The Great Oaks GED morning class gave me so much, and everybody was so wonderful to me. They are so happy for me. They are as excited as I am. I would like to tell people if you need help, come to the Great Oaks GED Class. They are the most helpful and wonderful people.

~ Kilcha Canfield

HAPPY WITH WHO WE ARE

I'm Cyndi...
I'm happy, easy going, loving, and caring.

I'm Kim...
I'm friendly, shy, trusting, and stubborn.

I'm Becky...
I'm funny, ditzzy, crazy, and wild.

I'm Angela...
I'm sensitive, caring, funny, and honest.

I'm Carrie...
I'm loyal, sassy, boyish, and loud.

I'm Rose...
I'm honest, friendly, patient, and welcoming.

I'm Sam...
I'm happy, silly, dedicated, and I wear my heart on my sleeve.

I'm Kristin...
I'm happily married, respectful, full of energy, and fun loving.

Together, we are a class.
We're a family.
We're all different, but alike.
We're all achievers.
We will reach our goals.
We believe in ourselves.
We are happy with who we are.

*~ Live Oaks ABLE
Kim Backer, Rebecca Baker,
Rose M. Buckner, Kristin Bush,
Carrie Christie, Samantha Naylor,
Cyndi Prewitt, Angela Traylor*