

Heather Williams Story

On the Run

Imagine a young woman spending two years hiding from the police because of warrants for her arrest. She ends up living in a camper behind her drug dealer's house, unable to escape the addiction that has engulfed her life. What if she was your daughter or sister and her circumstances were about to get worse? Heather Williams overdosed in that camper on what she thought was methamphetamine. It turned out the product mostly consisted of baking soda, which absorbed the nutrients in her body and sent her to the hospital. Three weeks later, on Thanksgiving, she overdosed again after shooting up a meth/fentanyl combination. With everyone gone to celebrate the holiday, she was left alone and unconscious for three days.

Birth of Addiction

Heather's addiction started in 2007 at the age of eighteen. She was raised in a conservative Christian home by loving parents, but she longed for freedom and independence. That chance came when a friend invited Heather to live with her. That friend and her boyfriend introduced Heather to drugs. She says, "I didn't like it at first, but the more I tried it I became addicted." She was arrested in 2007 and her parents bailed her out of jail. After that she stayed sober for about seven years. Heather and her partner had two children together during that time, but in 2017 they both relapsed and were arrested for trafficking. They lost custody of their children. She went to jail for two weeks, but "went straight back to it" as soon as she got out. This led to the two years she spent hiding from the police.

Unlikely Intervention

On the morning of November 13, 2019, she was arrested in Indiana for possession. While in the "drunk tank" at the Clark County jail, an officer told her there were ways to get help and to seek the God first. She decided she would get help when she got out of jail in March, but the release date was delayed due to Covid. After a transfer to Oldham County for ten days, her lawyer realized she had never been offered treatment for her addiction and asked the judge to order rehabilitation. That's when Heather was interviewed by the director of Awake Ministries and put on a list of potential candidates. On May 18, 2020, she was awoken by a deputy who told her to get ready to leave. She had been accepted into the Awake program.

The program typically takes about six months to complete, but Heather took a full year. "I needed to work through a lot from my relationship with my oldest two kids' father. I went through abuse of every kind for seven years with him. It took a long time for me to work on the program steps and realize my character defects and who God is to me. How He's a father." She says her sponsor prayed with her, helped her understand the Bible and explained what it was to have a relationship with God. Heather says the Awake program "helped me relearn truth and discover who I was. I had to discover who God was. I didn't understand that as a child. It took a

while for me to want to go to church.”

Early on in the program, Heather had to get a job to pay legal fees and child support. She says she worked at a restaurant, but soon got on with a company who works with Awake to help recovering addicts with jobs. She has been working from home doing title work for a law firm since then.

New Life

Heather graduated the program on May 20, 2021. She attended Shelby Christian Church where she says, “they help me see how there’s more to life than addiction.” She met her husband, who is also an Awake graduate, at the church. At the time he had five years of sobriety and waited for Heather to complete the program before taking her on a date. They now have a beautiful daughter together and Heather gets visits with her other two children.

“My success is because of the people around here and the local churches who support the program. It’s such a welcoming environment. I never felt like I fit in anywhere before, but I felt at home as soon as I got to Shelbyville. I love this community because it’s so loving and accepting.” Heather loves being able to give back and help others by serving at the Awake Food Bank, making food for Father’s Love and plans to start making meals for Awake residents. “This helps the community see that we’re building a new life and connecting to other ministries in town.” She attends Bible study at her church and volunteers there as well.

Advice

Heather offers advice to those who are dealing with a loved one caught up in addiction. “It’s never something we think we can handle. I always told my family I was okay, but I knew I wasn’t. We want to think we can control it, but we know we can’t.” She advises family members and friends to be supportive, but not an enabler to an addict. “Just let them talk. Be there for them when they need you. Don’t give them money. You can take them to get what they need, but don’t take care of them. My family felt to blame (for the addiction), but it wasn’t their fault. I’m the one who chose to put it in my body. I had to learn from my own mistakes, my choices.”