

House helps women beat hardship

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By Peggy Longmire

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Tears streamed down the two young women's faces as they described their journey through addictions and how Freedom House transformed their lives.

The occasion was the fourth annual banquet and celebration of two Freedom House graduates.

Freedom House is a residential home, founded in 2006, where single mothers who are at risk of losing their children experience support in their recovery from addictions.

The mothers live and work in a structured, Christian, family environment with their children.

Graduates Amanda and Brandy told of their rehabilitation and how they were now ready to live a new life with their children.

Amanda could hardly speak at times as she described the shame she felt after being molested at age 13 and how she became a bitter, angry person who also lied.

"I absolutely hated myself and the person I was becoming," she said. "I was angry at the people I loved the most, and my life was out of control."

Amanda described how she was searching for something to fill the void she felt inside. She turned to drugs, alcohol and bad relationships.

Her life became so unmanageable that she prayed for God to let her die. Wanting the pain to stop, Amanda tried to take her own life.

Amanda finally found Freedom House and feels fortunate that Freedom House rescued her and has transformed her life. She has now been sober for 12 months and has regained her faith in God.

"I've learned that there is a huge difference between knowing God and having a relationship with God," Amanda said.

By allowing God to change her through the outpouring of love and acceptance she received at Freedom House, Amanda gradually began to trust herself and others.

"God has taken all the broken pieces of me and has started putting me back together again," she said.

Brandy said a year ago she was addicted to drugs, homeless and penniless. She was living in her beat-up car, pregnant and eating out of dumpsters.

For 10 years, Brandy had been living on the streets, going from place to place and doing drugs. During that time, she began having children that she could not care for.

"Finally, I decided to quit running from all my pain and got help from Freedom House," Brandy said.

First, Brandy went on a two-week detox and then made a yearlong commitment to Freedom House, which she described as "the hardest and best thing I have ever done."

Because of the structure of the program and the love she received every day, Brandy was slowly enabled to become what she had always wanted to be — a responsible person and a good mother to her children.

Through the Freedom House thrift store manager, Peggy Smith, Brandy learned how to be a loving, caring person and a good employee.

From her resident supervisor, Wendy — a Freedom House graduate — Brandy learned about forgiveness in relationships and grace for others.

Elizabeth Atkinson, a board member and counselor, “walked me through a really dark place into a world of light,” Brandy said.

From many dedicated volunteers, Brandy learned how to believe in herself and how to work effectively on different negative issues.

Through Ann Thomsson, founder and board president of Freedom House, Brandy finally understood that God has a plan for her life and she was given unconditional love.

“Ann has also taught me how to love, discipline and connect with my children so I can rebuild relationships with them,” Brandy said. “She is an amazing lady that serves the Lord. She helps to set the captives free so we can have a peaceful life with the Lord.”

Brandy said she now has a job cutting hair, which she loves; has a bank account; a driver’s license; and insurance. She attends a church she loves and has gained back the family she lost during her addiction.

“I know who I am, where I am going and I have the beginnings of a great relationship with my children,” she said.

“Thank you so much for volunteering and giving of your time and money to make this happen for me, my children and family,” Brandy said. “I could not have done any of this without you and all you have given me.”

Freedom House graduates receive assistance in setting up their homes and remain in an aftercare program to stay sober and give back to new families seeking freedom from addictions.

Families are provided with shelter, education, transportation, clothing, child care assistance and Christian counseling as they move through their recovery.

The organization believes, in the words of Isaiah 61:1, “He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.”

To suggest a person or organization that has or is making a difference, contact Peggy Longmire at rlongmire@triad.rr.com or 288-9040.