

Our residents at Freedom House share many similar experiences. They have all been through the devastating effects of addiction on their lives, including losing everything that is important to them. Newly arriving residents are close to losing their precious children and have made a decision to quit using drugs and alcohol and enter our long-term program to learn a new way of living. It is scary at first - change is hard, especially when you are letting go of the one thing you believe helps you to cope. Most of our ladies have been abused by adults from their childhood or others. They learned early in life that drugs and alcohol numb their pain and have usually been using those drugs and making poor decisions that come with addiction for at least a decade.

They come in with one or two suitcases; all they own in the world. They are welcomed to their new home with open arms by loving staff, gracious volunteers, and past graduates. They hear all about a God who loves them and sent His only Son to prove His love to them. They begin to see honesty, forgiveness, and truth for the first time in their lives. They see God in the others around them and true love they can scarcely believe. In time they do believe though, and they develop their faith in a God who cares.

Our families eat together, go to church together, do chores together and function as a family unit. They shop, run errands and do all the things a family would do. Through this family unity and much involvement from the community, they begin to feel the support they always needed to heal from the destruction of their past and begin to work on staying clean and sober.

Freedom House residents work the 12-steps learning how to give things in their past and present to their God. They learn about the disease of

addiction and how to recover from it. They learn how to parent as they regain the right to care for their children. They learn by parenting classes, but more importantly by watching the staff and volunteers, listening to feedback, and working on personal goals for their children.

The mothers learn in their evening classes, who they are and about co-dependent behavior that has made them a victim in their lives. They learn how to change these reactive behaviors and to be proactive by setting goals and boundaries for themselves. They transform from being weak to being powerful women capable of taking care of themselves and their families.

Our residents attend AA meetings and other outside recovery groups. They receive individual substance abuse counseling and outside therapy weekly. They read monthly books on recovery. They work with mentors and sponsors to gain support for their recovery while in the program and after they graduate.

The residents begin on a Probation period and progress to Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior levels. All levels have recovery goals and personal goals they have to achieve before they can move on. During the first few levels, the residents work at our thrift store learning how to be successful in a work environment. There, they are given a safe, supportive place to begin their new life and gain employment skills.

On their Junior level, the residents find their own gainful employment or enroll in school. They open a bank account, make a family budget, learn money management skills and begin to build a future for themselves and their children.

When it is time to move out, it is frightening to leave their safe haven, but each resident is guided and assisted through the process by their new friends and family and many community resources. . We celebrate their graduation with much grandeur at a local country club, making the event one of the most exciting days of their lives.

Freedom House graduates typically find housing nearby, rarely wanting to move away from their new found family. They work on their aftercare plan with the continued help of Freedom House staff. In their new homes with their children, they are finally on their way to their new fulfilling life with all the tools and resources necessary to accomplish their dreams!

Ann Thomsson

Founder/President