

"I walked out of Hell barefoot"



"Pile of crumbs." That is how Deborah Franklin described her life a little over a year ago.

Alcohol and drugs occupied every moment as she lived with a coercive and abusive partner. Deborah lost her job, had her car re-possessed and suffered "loss after loss."

"I knew I was sick."

Deborah's 18 and 11 year old sons went to live with their fathers and her 2.5 year old twins, Allison and Ava, were placed into foster care.

That was still not rock bottom.

For the next five months, Deborah's life spiraled downward and she fell deeper into her addiction. "I was out of control," Deborah stated. "So painful. I was so ashamed I did not want to make eye contact with anyone."

"I knew I wanted to fight. It was just a matter of when."

It was one day in April, sitting by herself in her apartment, that Deborah cried while looking at pictures of her children. "I sat with myself and just prayed," she stated. It was time to enter a rehabilitation facility. She Googled "women and children's programs" and found a program in Waterbury.

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"I literally crawled into rehab," is how Deborah describes that decision. For almost three months, she attended the program, worked to understand the negative relationships around her, and grew in strength. A major part of that work was to heal from her own childhood trauma.



Deborah herself was placed into foster care as a child. "Abuse was normal in my birth family," she stated. It was Deborah, as a young child, who broke the silence to keep herself safe. Her mother did not fight to protect her. "I am everything she is not," is how Deborah describes her.

A commitment to becoming sober was also a statement to "right those generational curses" and address the "fight or flight" coping mechanisms she learned in order to survive.



"The best gift I can give to my children is to heal," she stated. "I just want people to know it is never too late."

During this time, two very special DCF Social Workers supported her along the way.

"I love my DCF team," Deborah commented. She describes Lillian Julien and Solsiree Vega as "transparent from the beginning" while being "supporting, understanding and caring."

It was Lillian whom Deborah first met. "We just clicked," is how she describes their relationship. It was her "calming voice and non-judgmental" attitude which aided in the relationship.

Deborah tells the story of Sol, bringing her furniture, including a couch and dresser, after-hours to make sure her apartment was furnished.

After almost three months, Deborah was discharged from the program. It was Alcoholics Anonymous meetings twice a day, EMDR therapy and maintaining employment which were the next steps.

Deborah credits the work of Child and Family Agency IPV-FAIR program with helping her understand the dynamics in her previous abusive relationship.

It was the Reunification and Therapeutic Family Time (RTFT) program that also assisted her in reunifying with her daughters - assisting in the "smooth transition" from weekly visits, unsupervised, overnights and now support in the early stages of the twins being home.



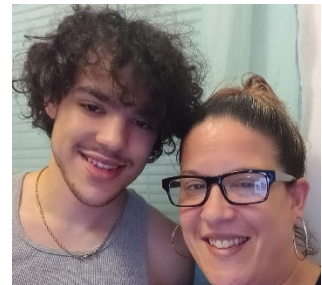
"My children deserve healthy, productive, clean and sober parents," Deborah stated.

Allison and Ava were reunified a few weeks before Christmas. They are home for the holidays!

What does Deborah want them to know, when they are old enough to understand their history? "Mommy is human," Deborah stated.

Deborah is telling her story and many are listening." She was interviewed on Fox 61 news and by Hearst media. She recently told her journey to Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes and Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz. "I feel kinda weird getting all this attention," Deborah stated as she believes she is "doing what any mother would."

Allison and Ava have adjusted well to returning back home. She is grateful for the care they received in foster care and even wrote the foster parent a three page letter asking her to remain a part of the girls life. Her boys are "super happy they got their mom back."



What is her message for other parents in a similar situation? "It's truly up to you and not DCF," Deborah stated. She is adamant that the parent controls the outcome - not DCF.

As her days are now filled with getting the girls to their school programs and working on her recovery,



Deborah remains close to Lillian and Sol. "We have a group chat," Deborah explained. "Hello or good morning my beautiful DCF workers" is how Deborah begins the almost daily texts.

"I will be sad when the case closes."

The DCF staff call her "mama bear."

Deborah's strength is immeasurable.

"I'm living proof you can rise up against the bad."