



TASC

Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities

Our Stories

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“My recovery coach was awesome. Whenever I was going through something and needed someone to talk to, she was there.”

- Kimberly Kennedy, former TASC Recovery Coach Program client, 5 years sobriety



“When I regained custody of Marshall, I was relieved, happy, and scared. I had a second chance.”

- Kim, pictured with son Marshall

Photo by Paul Merideth

“5-4-3-2-1,” counts Kimberly Kennedy, 37. “Marshall, when Mommy says come here, you come here.”

“I want to play,” giggles four-year-old Marshall, a plastic baseball in hand.

Kim, a single mother of four, is learning to parent for the first time. She lost custody of her eldest son and daughter, now 15 and 13 years old respectively, and gave guardianship of her 10-year-old son to a close friend. At the time, Kim was addicted to alcohol and crack cocaine.

“I have four children but Marshall is the only one that I have the opportunity to raise and parent.

“Addiction ran throughout my whole family: my grandmother, grandfather, mother, aunt, and uncle,” explains Kim. “It was everywhere on my mother’s side. That was all that I ever knew. That was all that I’d ever seen. So that’s what turned out to be my own coping method. I was selfish, and I put myself in the position to have to live without my children.”

Kim dreams of becoming a substance abuse counselor and establishing a recovery home to help other women struggling with drug dependence. She credits the TASC Recovery Coach Program and her faith for her newfound determination and hope.

“My recovery coach was awesome,” says Kim. “Whenever I was going through something and needed someone to talk to, she was there. She called me weekly to check on me to see how I was doing. That let me know that somebody cared and that I had someone of positive influence in my life that cared about me. She stuck by me.

“I now keep my focus on my son and doing the right thing.”

Kim, a full-time student at Harold Washington College in Chicago, is expecting to graduate next spring with an associate’s degree in Applied Science and a concentration in substance abuse counseling. She also works part-time in the human resources department at a local community college.

“I don’t get frustrated or discouraged,” Kim says regarding how she manages to juggle parenting, work, and school. “I want my family to be comfortable, happy, and healthy. So, I just do it.”

“I wasted so many years. I can’t change any of it, but I can live for the day.

And I do.”

*- Janice Kolodziejczyk, former TASC Recovery Coach Program client,
nearly 3 years sobriety*



“I had to go through what I went through to get me where I am today.”

*-Janice, pictured with daughter
Christina*

Photo by Paul Merideth

Four-year-old Christina imagines she’s a princess as she twirls around her castle made of six orange traffic cones and a floor of small cement blocks.

“She’s my motivation,” says Christina’s mom, Janice Kolodziejczyk.

Every moment with Christina is precious for Janice after having lost custody of her daughter for two years.

Janice describes herself then as a functional alcoholic who lived in the shadow of an abusive husband. Despite having lost custody of her eldest son years prior, also losing Christina to the state’s foster care system came as a particular shock.

“It was horrible. For three weeks straight, I was so depressed I didn’t get out of bed,” explains Janice.

Raised the youngest of three girls, Janice was extremely close to her own mother. When her mom passed away in 1996, Janice began drinking.

Over time, the drinking progressed. Janice became addicted, involved in the court system, and finally mandated to TASC’s Recovery Coach Program.

TASC provided Janice with an understanding of the chronic nature of addiction and the treatment and other tools critical to managing her recovery. She has been sober since 2005.

“It’s not easy,” Janice says, referring to her new life of sobriety. She credits her current husband as being her biggest support. Both are in recovery and continue to lean on each other, taking it one day at a time.

As Janice focuses on her second chance at parenting Christina, she also works to rebuild her relationship with her son. They talk on the phone every day and she visits with him frequently.

Both Janice’s children start school in the fall: her son college and Christina kindergarten. Until then, Janice says she’ll cherish their days together.

“I wasted so many years. I can’t change any of it. But I can live for the day. And I do.”

Today, Janice is the mother she always intended to be. Remembering her own mother, Janice smiles and says, “I know she’s proud of me.”

“I have been given a second chance in life. I want to make the most of it.”

-Cheryl Cline, former Winners' Circle member, nearly 5 years of sobriety



Cheryl Cline (left) says she is happy that her mother (right) now calls her and says, “I am so proud of you.”

Photo by Marc PoKempner

Cheryl was raised in Houston in a middle class family. Giving into peer pressure, she started using alcohol and marijuana at age 17, but slowly her addiction progressed.

She graduated from high school and then college with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. She began using cocaine right out of college after a “friend” convinced her to try it.

In 1999, she decided to move to Aurora, Illinois. She had hoped to get away from the life she was leading, but after only one week, she managed to find someone to sell her drugs. Her addiction worsened. In 2003, she was

arrested for getting drugs from an undercover cop and was taken to the county jail. According to Cheryl, “I knew in my mind I was just an addict, but in their eyes I was a drug dealer.”

Sitting in prison convinced Cheryl that she needed to make some serious changes in her life. She did not want to hurt herself or her family any longer. Cheryl knew she needed treatment and she diligently sought help to get it. This included becoming involved in a TASC Inner Circle at the prison where she was sentenced.

Eventually Cheryl was accepted into a work release program. Outside the prison walls, she still attended one-on-one sessions with a treatment counselor and Winners' Circle meetings. While on work release, she was one of five chosen out of 125 women to speak with high school students about her experiences. From that day forward, she felt that helping others was her calling in life. She graduated from the work release program, found an apartment, and went back to school to become a Certified Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Counselor (CADAC). She even called the undercover cop who arrested her. She says, “I told him, ‘Thank you for arresting me.’ I really believe that he saved my life.”

Cheryl has since rekindled her relationship with her family. She is happy that now her mother calls her and says, “I am so proud of you,” and, “I’m so glad that I have my daughter back.”

After maintaining a 4.0 GPA in school and successfully completing her CADAC certification, Cheryl currently works as an addictions counselor for a treatment center in Joliet. She has been in recovery for nearly five years.

“TASC kept me accountable. My case managers were exceptional and caring and were really into helping me recover.”

- Glenn Blackmon, former TASC client, 6 years sobriety



Now, Glenn seeks to live life to the fullest. He puts his family first and then his business, which hires individuals in recovery to offer them a second chance.

Photo by Paul Merideth

Once a manager for an international engineering firm, Glenn Blackmon worked to ensure operations ran at maximum capacity. He was a brilliant worker and appeared to most to have everything life could offer. But Glenn wasn't happy. He was addicted to alcohol and drugs and would soon run into trouble with the law.

“I was a functional addict, or so I thought” explains Glenn, 49. “But the law caught up with me.

“I was in jail for six months and was still in denial. My judge later told me ‘You seem like a good guy. We’re going to get you some help.’ I was then mandated to TASC.

“TASC helped me not to go back. TASC kept me accountable. My case managers were exceptional and caring and were really into helping me recover and knew that my addiction was a disease. They got me into programs and pointed me in the right direction, before the state could give up on me and put me back in jail.

“Before, I didn’t have anyone to look over me. I finally got it.”

Glenn is a proud single parent who rarely misses a chance to share in his two daughters’ accomplishments. Angelique, 22, lives in California and has just been cast in a reality show. And although they were separated for many years, he is working to reestablish their relationship.

Tamika, 13, is a soccer champion who is tough on the field but tender and gentle when near her father.

“I can talk to him,” says Tamika. “He’s cool to hang out with, and he doesn’t embarrass me.”

Glenn carries this care and determination into every aspect of his life. He established Detail Construction, Inc. in 2004 with one customer, and it has grown to 50 customers with a staff of five.

“He’s serious about his business,” says Bruce, who works for Glenn and is also in recovery from drug addiction. “The name of his business is Detail Construction and it’s true. He is very detailed about his work.”

His customers couldn’t agree more.

Rebuilding lives. Strengthening communities. Restoring hope.

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“A lot of contractors don’t see the details, but he does,” says Rose, 37, architect and designer and Detail Construction, Inc. customer. “He gets the job done. It’s always done well, done right, and on time. And he employs people who are very respectful and extremely courteous.”

Glenn’s confidence also has helped him to push past personal limitations. Just last year, he took a major leap in life—literally.

He jumped out of a plane in his first sky diving adventure.

“I always wanted to [sky dive and scuba dive] when I was younger,” explains Glenn. “I pushed them aside to do other things, unhealthy things. But, not any more. Now, I do both, and I love it.”



“If I didn’t have him, I don’t know what I’d do,” said Tamika, 13, pictured with Glenn.

Photo by Paul Merideth



“Glenn knows what he’s doing technically, but he also has good people skills,” said Dan, one of Glenn’s customers (left). “He’s always laid back and positive, which is good. It makes me feel confident that he’s confident.”

Photo by Paul Merideth

Glenn wants to help others rebuild their lives. He has established a nonprofit business, New Lifewave Foundation, that will provide transitional living for those in recovery from alcohol or other drug addictions.

“I don’t mind helping people who are trying to get themselves back together. I was in the same spot just a few years ago.”

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“TASC helped me stay focused on the things I needed to do.”

- Tim, former TASC client, 9 years of sobriety



Tim remains involved in volunteer activities so he can continue to give back to his community.

Photo by Marc PoKempner

Tim began using drugs in 8th grade. By his sophomore year in high school, he had dropped out of school and was selling drugs to make a living. His drug use intensified. When Tim turned 21, he lost his father to cancer. “I really let it all go, took it to the street, began accumulating arrests for drug use and selling drugs.” At age 25, Tim was facing his first of many prison sentences.

By his third prison sentence—this time 10 years at a dedicated treatment prison in Illinois—a change in Tim’s thinking took place. He decided to “make the best of a bad situation and try to become a better person.”

In prison, Tim attended substance abuse treatment groups and recovery support in the form of Inner Circle. By the time Tim was eligible for release, he had received an education (earning an associate’s degree), intensive treatment for his addiction, and a link to recovery and other community support services through TASC’s case management and Inner Circle and Winners’ Circle programs.

“I had a long list of what I knew I didn’t want to do when I got out, but when it came to knowing what I needed to do next, my list was empty.” He knew that his former incarceration would be a major challenge.

TASC’s Winners’ Circle helped Tim receive clothing, find a place to live, and get information and tips on writing a resume and interviewing for a job. Tim has worked since at Starbucks, as a chef, and most recently as a youth counselor. Says Tim, “Today I can help someone because someone helped me.”

Rebuilding lives. Strengthening communities. Restoring hope.

“My main goal was getting my kids back. TASC kept me focused on what I needed to do to make that happen.”

- Stacy Spain, former TASC client, 8 years of sobriety



“My TASC case manager actually encouraged me and believed in me before I believed that I could succeed in recovery myself.”

*- Stacy Spain
(pictured with daughters)*

Photo by Paul Merideth

According to Stacy, the day her life began was October 18, 2000. That day marked the beginning of a life free from drugs and alcohol. On that day Stacy was living in an Illinois women’s prison.

Stacy remembers abusing substances since she was 10 years old. “It was all around me,” she remembers. “When I was in my addiction I thought I wasn’t hurting anyone but me...but my addiction affected everyone.”

Her addiction to heroin led to estrangement from her family, numerous arrests, and her eventual sentencing to eight years in prison. While in prison, Stacy lost custody of her children.

Fortunately, in prison she also received treatment for her addiction. As part of her parole, Stacy was assigned to a TASC case manager who worked closely with

her to develop a plan for transitioning from prison to the community. In addition to making sure that Stacy met all the conditions of her parole, the plan focused on strategies for maintaining her sobriety, getting help accessing housing and employment, and the monitoring and adjusting of a steady progression of goals and objectives to improve her chances for success.

One of TASC’s first recommendations was that Stacy not return to her hometown. “At first I was thinking, ‘You want me to move where?’ I didn’t know anybody. I had no place to live, no job...but, I trusted my case manager. She convinced me that I needed to get out of the environment where I was used to using drugs, and I knew she would be there to help.”

That first step started Stacy on a path of many successes. Over time, she found a place to live, got a job, regained custody of her children, and successfully completed her parole by June 2005. Today, Stacy and her two daughters live in their own apartment in central Illinois. She works as a seamstress in a local sewing salon. She frequently shares her hope and life experiences in community recovery groups and gives presentations to schools and other organizations.