

# REFLECTIONS ON THE *Journey*

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Nothing here at Journey to New Life is possible without your generous support and advocacy for what we do. We want to share some of the stories you've impacted and *thank you for everything you do* to go on this journey with us and our clients.

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE *Curtis' Story*

When Curtis Dotson returned to the Kansas City community after doing two tours of duty in the 1960s during the Vietnam era, he felt like the world owed him something. And he didn't have the patience to work for it. For him, the money just didn't come fast enough. He wanted fast money, so, even though he says he always held down a job, he turned to a life of crime. It started with burglaries, then advanced to robberies, and ultimately, escalated to drug dealing. He got away with it for awhile, but the stress put a strain on him. He didn't like the feeling that he might need to do whatever it took to protect the product that was in his possession.

"I never got caught," he said, "that was kind of like a badge in that circle of people, but the strain it has on you every time you see a policeman, you have to act like there's nothing wrong, but inside, you're just churning. You got a pistol on the seat. You got drugs in the car. And you know you're going to jail if you get caught."

Eventually, Curtis did get caught. He did his time. He got out. He got caught again, and so the revolving door began. In 1978, he was sentenced to life in prison — a sentence he's still serving even though he was released from incarceration last April. "I still have to report to somebody. I still have somebody telling me what I can and can't do," he said. But he credits Journey to New Life for helping him gain some independence and freedom. "It's just like the logo says, 'Journey to New Life.' That's what it is," Curtis said. "It doesn't mean stay here. It means go find a new life for yourself — a life that's better than

the life you've lived. I think it's about time for me to take over my own life. I know the difference between right and wrong. I feel blessed because Journey helped me see that. They put me in a new frame of mind. "

Curtis says there hasn't been a single time that he's reached out to Journey to New Life, and his call wasn't returned. "They've never refused to help me," he said. Even if the answer isn't easy, he says, his case worker will do some research and get back to him with the information he needs. The organization has been pivotal in helping him achieve self-sufficiency and self-sustainability. "I knew I wasn't going back to the penitentiary," he said. Journey to New Life gave him the tools and help he needed to achieve that goal.

At 74 years old now, Curtis doesn't miss an opportunity to share some advice and experience with what he calls the "youngsters." He tells it like this, "I try to tell a lot of the youngsters, you know, you can do a 2-year bit here, a 5-year bit there, then go back out there on the streets. You stay out on the streets maybe 2 or 3 months, then you catch another case. You go down to the county jail, maybe do 6 or 7 months," he said. "You know what you're doing? You're doing life on the installment plan. That's all it is."

***"[Journey to New Life] never refused to help me."***

- Curtis Dotson

*Curtis' story continues inside >*

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*- Curtis Dotson*

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

*Continued*

Today, after several decades of being incarcerated, Curtis is reunited with his parents, his siblings and his four children. He says he calls his mom every day, and his children each call him at least once a week. He can't change the past, but he's happy to be in their lives and happy to have them in his. He gets particularly excited when one of his children calls and tells him to put his shoes on. "I know I have a breakfast coming then," he said. 🌱

## THE LITTLEST THINGS ARE THE **BIGGEST THINGS**

### *Kevyn's Story*

Last month, Kevyn was on a video call with her grandfather giving him a quick tour of her apartment. Her grandfather was struck by something that probably seems almost insignificant to most of us. It was a small thing, but to her grandfather, it was a big sign that Kevyn had made a change for the better. During the virtual apartment tour, her grandfather noticed that Kevyn didn't own just one flat screen TV. No, she had one in her living room and another in her bedroom. Kevyn recalled the conversation like this, "He said, 'Wow, Kevyn, do you not see what you're telling me?' And I was like what, that I have TVs? And he said, 'No, a few years ago, you would have been trying to sell those TVs because you were so far in your addiction. You would have never had a TV like that.'"

Kevyn has come a long way indeed. It's rather shocking to hear how calmly and matter-of-factly Kevyn describes the trauma of her childhood and her interactions with the justice system as a young adult. At just 29 years old now, she demonstrates a strength and maturity well beyond her years. Kevyn's youth was plagued with instability, fear and uncertainty as she ping-ponged between the normalcy of her grandparent's home and the chaos of her mother's.

At a mere three years old, Kevyn went to live with her grandparents because her mother had fallen into addiction after her husband committed suicide. At 11, Kevyn was sent back to her mother's care. "My mom was with a different man at this point, and they were cooking meth and doing all these things," she said. "That was very traumatic because while living with my grandparents until I was 11, I was raised in church. We sat down and ate dinner together every night. We prayed together. I was dressed nice for school. Everything was a perfect childhood until I was 11."

She goes on to describe her experience, "When I went to live with my mom, there was barely ever any food in the house. Her boyfriend beat her all the time. I would cry and tell him to stop and stuff. A lot of nights, I would make myself stay up. Once my baby brother was born, I would make myself stay up at night because my mom would take so many pills that she'd fall asleep with a cigarette, and I was afraid she was going to burn our house down."

Not surprisingly, Kevyn's schoolwork suffered. She was so exhausted that she'd fall asleep in her classes. Her grades declined. When she was 15, her grandfather stepped in and gave her a job at his business. She saved enough money working there to get a car with a little help from her grandparents. But her mother's addiction never waned, and that left Kevyn feeling



alone. It also led to her experimenting with cocaine. In her mind, she wanted to understand why her mother chose drugs over her. Then, in her sophomore year, she dropped out of high school. She said that was the beginning of a downward spiral. "Things were really downhill from there," she said. "I had all this free time. I started running with the wrong people. I was introduced to heroin when I was 17. I started snorting it. By the time I was 18, I was a full IV user. Things really spiraled out of control from there."

And then she became involved in the justice system. For the next 8-10 years, she ping-ponged in and out of trouble inside and outside of prison. "Every crime I've ever committed, I was under the influence," she said. "When I'm sober, I would never do the things that I did when I was high."

Today, Kevyn is sober. She says something finally changed in her while she was in prison. She realized she was wasting so much time being in trouble that she was missing opportunities to become a better version of herself. She started taking classes. She completed her GED. She got several certifications, and by the time she was released, she'd developed a new confidence she'd never experienced before.

**"I think that Journey to New Life saved me."**

-Kevyn



Kevyn entered Journey House when she was released from prison last August, and since then, she's progressed so positively so rapidly that for the first time, she's able to celebrate having completed the requirements of her sentence and her probation. She credits the welcoming and supportive environment that she experienced at Journey to New Life for keeping her on track. "I think that Journey to New Life saved me," she said. 🌱

## KITS FOR CLIENTS

**We appreciate our supporters who donate items to help our clients.**

The pandemic has limited what we can accept, but our clients still have needs. So, in an effort to make it easier, we are offering an option to purchase kits for clients, either once or on a monthly giving program. The kits are designed to meet the basic needs of clients based on their individual journey. We will continue to accept the donations that we can. This is simply another option to meet the needs of our clients.

Children's Basket



**\$10.00 ea.**

**KIT TYPES (4)**

Adult Welcome Basket, Snack Packs, Children's Basket or Entertainment Kit

Cleaning Kit



**\$15.00 ea.**

**KIT TYPES (2)**

Job Search Kit or Cleaning Kit

Kitchen Essentials



**\$25.00 ea.**

**KIT TYPES (4)**

Survival Kit, Welcome Home Kit, Kitchen Essentials or Self-Care Kit

For more information about what's included in all the kits and the monthly giving program, visit:

**[KITS.JNTL.ORG](https://www.kits.jntl.org)**



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[journeytonewlife.org](http://journeytonewlife.org)

Your help  
makes this  
possible.

**Celebrate the Journey is back!**

Our annual celebration will take place in August.  
We'll be providing more details soon!

## WAYS TO GIVE



### **MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS**

Does your company match charitable contributions? If so, make sure you submit the giving request.



### **PLANNED GIVING**

Remembering Journey to New Life in your will is a great way to create a lasting legacy that reflects your support of the organization's mission.



### **MONTHLY RECURRING GIVING**

If you're giving by credit card, simply check the box to make an ongoing monthly contribution.



### **VOLUNTEER OR DONATE ITEMS**

Journey to New Life is always in need of volunteer assistance and basic living and hygiene items.

**[JOURNEYTONEWLIFE.ORG](http://JOURNEYTONEWLIFE.ORG)**