

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.

MARION HAMILTON: **WRITING HIS STORY FROM THE OUTSIDE**

You might expect someone convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison to have a pretty rough and tough demeanor. But that's not the case at all for Marion Hamilton. He's actually very unassuming, quite kind and courteous, and he can take you off guard with his charming sense of humor. Meeting him today, you'd really never know his back story.

That's because, today, Marion is focusing his energy on writing a whole new story for himself.

"That's what I had to do," he said. "I had to write a story about myself. I had to look at the people I hurt and the people I love, and I came to find out I never did love them. I was hurting them, because I was hurting myself."

That's Marion's old story.

"Today, I write it down," he said. "Do I love them or am I hurting them? I find out today that I do love them because I love myself."

Marion has been out of prison for about six years now. He says every day he sets a goal to be better than he was yesterday, and he wants to help someone else along the way. He's enjoying his life now, and he encourages people in similar situations to also write their story to see for themselves that they are better than they think they are.

He recommends this, "Look at the man in the mirror. If you find 10 things you like about him, find 10 things you dislike about him. Write them down. Write a story about yourself and what you want. And be honest with

"I'm grateful for Journey to New Life. It gives us an opportunity to find some place to be at peace and to talk to each other."

- Marion Hamilton

Marion's story continues inside >

MARION HAMILTON: **WRITING HIS STORY FROM THE OUTSIDE**

Continued

yourself. Then you'll see that you are a better person."

Marion credits Journey to New Life, especially the support group he participated in, for helping him be successful and get as far as he has. "It was difficult at first," he said. "But I have family and the support group with Journey to New Life. They gave me the support and the tools I needed."

But that's not the only motivation Marion had for wanting to change his story. Marion lost both his father and his mother while he was incarcerated. He says that experience made him feel like he needed to do this for his mother. "When my mother died, it just took something out of me," he said. "I just had to make a change because I promised her. So, I got my GED, vocational training, and I just started looking forward."

Since being out of prison, Marion has also lost two of his three daughters. So, he makes a point to spend as much time as he can with his daughter and his grandchildren. "My granddaughter, I got a date with her today to go get our nails done," he said. Though he didn't mention what color of polish he would be selecting, he did confirm that it was both a mani and a pedi. And, he said, "I wouldn't trade it for nothing in the world."

Marion remains connected to Journey to New Life. He and Walter Copping are doing what they can to continue Darnell's legacy by trying to revive the support group that meant so much to both of them during their transitions back into the community. He also makes sure he checks in from time to time.

"I stay in contact. I call Rita every week," he said. "I come back when I have time off just to see how everything's going and to let them know I'm still out." 🌱



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ADVENTURES IN FUNDRAISING



JOURNEY TO NEW LIFE
Celebrity Irish Open
OCTOBER 13, 2021



On October 13, 2021, Journey to New Life partnered with the Kansas City Ambassadors for a golf fundraising event, the Celebrity Irish Open. Twenty-one teams participated consisting of Journey to New Life donors, celebrities from the Kansas City Chiefs and Royals and other sports celebrities including sports broadcasters and Olympic athletes. They all came together to raise funds for our cause — and have fun doing it!

We'll keep you posted on next year's golf event, including details on how to participate, so stay tuned!



GERI'S STORY: **BREAKING THE CYCLE**

Geri Newsom recalls the day she was arrested for her fifth time on drug charges. She says she'd had enough.

"When I went to prison, I was broken. I was exhausted. I was over it," she said. "I was tired of the people that I had around me that were just using me. I was just miserable, and I wanted to change my life."

It may be hard to imagine that getting arrested and going to prison could bring someone a sense of calm and relief like that. But that's exactly what happened for Geri. Her life had been in overdrive for a long time, and she was ready for a change.

"We grew up in our nightgowns in the back of a cop car," she said. "For five nights out of the week, the cops were called because my mom and my stepdad had gotten drunk, and they had fought. One of the last times, he beat my mom so bad that if I would have gone to school like she always said, 'just go to school, get dressed, just go to school, and don't tell anybody,' if I would have left her there, she would have died. I went in and checked on her before I left, and she was barely breathing. She was in the ICU for like two weeks."

At 13, Geri became a ward of the court and entered the foster care system where she bounced around from home to home. She got pregnant at 15. She says she tried to work and go to school after she had her daughter, but then she got introduced to drugs, and it just seemed like an easier way.

It wasn't long before her aunt took custody of her daughter.

Over the next six or seven years, she had — and lost custody of — two more children. It's something that she says pushed her even further into the lifestyle that was destroying her. "When you lose your kids, you feel worthless and like your whole being is just stripped from you and so yeah, I dug really deep into the drugs," she said.

That's why Geri viewed going to prison as her opportunity to get clean and change her life. "I felt like, now's my chance, you know, and so from day one, I started reading my Bible, reading all the self-help books I could get. When I went to prison, I got into classes," she said. "So I did that in prison, but Journey helped me come out here and reintegrate with life without having to worry about life's stresses."

"Where was I going to stay, or how was I going to get food or find a place where there wasn't drugs? Journey gave me that opportunity."

- Geri Newsom



Geri's story continues on the back >

GERI'S STORY: **BREAKING THE CYCLE**

Continued

When she was released from prison, Geri moved into Journey to New Life's Peace House, where she stayed for seven months. She moved into her own apartment in July 2021.

Moving out on her own isn't the only progress Geri's made. In September, she celebrated three years of sobriety. Not only that, but she's holding down a full-time job working six nights a week. More importantly, she's also reconnected with all of her children and is working regularly on her relationships with her extended family. In fact, since being released from prison, she's become a support system for her oldest daughter, who Geri says was following too closely in her footsteps. She doesn't want her daughter to end up repeating the same mistakes she made, so she's trying to be a good influence. The turning point, she says, is that she finally forgave herself, and she's invested the time in learning how to love herself and to love and be loved by other people.

"I feel like I'm living my best life right now, you know, I really do," she said. "I feel like, I've got it together. I'm already excited to see what another three years is going to be. The rewards and the blessings and everything that's coming together in my life is just remarkable."

She's very thankful for the role Journey to New Life played in helping her get to this point. When she moved out of Peace House, she says she missed the women, the case managers and the house managers — and the feeling of "home" that she was leaving behind.

Now, when Geri dreams about her future, she pictures herself hosting Sunday dinners for her family, where they all come together, eating, playing cards, drinking coffee and enjoying each other's company. "I want to be that Grandma that's got a Sunday dinner going," she said. 🌱

Geri recently took to social media to tell her story and give some encouraging words for those who may be struggling the way she had in the past.

Her oldest daughter responded:

I'm so proud of you. I'm Also proud to call you my MOM! I know we've missed out on alot of things, but I just wanted to let you know that I forgive you. You have done so amazing in the last few years. You inspire me so much. Like I always tell you , I wouldn't be as far into my recovery if it weren't for your guidance and pushing me to do that next right thing. I wouldn't trade our relationship for the world . I love talking and spending time with you. I tell people all the time that you are my best friend. But anywho. I'm gonna quit rambling.....
I'm so happy we get to experience sobriety together.... as mother and daughter. I love you so much mom. Keep up the awesome things your doing . Dont let anybody tell you any different . Your an amazing , good hearted person.
Love ,
Your twin 😊😊😊💙💜

Here at Journey to New Life, nothing we do for clients like Geri is possible without your generous support.

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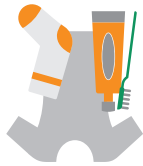
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WAYS TO GIVE