



CORNERSTONE COMMUNITY OUTREACH

SPRING 2015 NEWSLETTER



"I Don't Have To Run Anymore" - Misty's Story

My mother was a former nun. She left the convent to take care of my grandmother. All my life she has been a Christian woman, a great listener. She's a very non-judgmental person. Every time I got in trouble she was there for me. To this day, she's my best friend. My father worked two jobs. He provided for us and worked hard but he was an alcoholic. We didn't see him much. My parents divorced when I was 5. As I got older, I wanted love and I went looking for it.

When I reached my teens I started to drink and smoke marijuana. I was looking for affection and attention. At fifteen I became pregnant and I dropped out of high school. After I had my baby, Carlos, I got work at a local grocery store and by 16 I had my own apartment. Rent was \$300 a month back then. My aunt helped with babysitting.

I was 19 when I found out I was HIV positive and I thought the world was ending. By that time I was a single mom with three small children. Thankfully, all my children tested negative for HIV. Because I tested positive, I really thought I was dying. I was in a relationship that was physically abusive. I had to get myself and the children out of the house and into a safe situation. I also felt that the respon-

sible thing to do was to make sure my kids were okay and with people who would take care of them. I did what I thought was best at the time and sent my kids to live with my aunt because I believed I was going to die. Depression from my diagnosis sent me into an addiction I had never experienced before. I wasn't taking HIV meds because it made me so sick. In 2004, I got married to a man who truly loved me. I knew we could make a life together. Soon after our marriage, I found out I was pregnant with our daughter, Alexis. I was very worried the baby would get the virus but the doctor explained to me that the HIV medication would increase the chance that my baby would test negative for HIV. I began taking the medicine and stopped using drugs. Everything was beautiful. I was married, becoming healthy and pregnant with my baby girl.

Then in 2005, my oldest son, Carlos, was diagnosed with leukemia. That year, my husband had a sudden heart attack the day after Thanksgiving and died. Two weeks later, Carlos died. I went into a complete depression for two years and I went back to

CONTINUED ON REVERSE



Become A Charity Athlete!

Team CCO just crossed the finish line in the Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K! This event was a successful start to Team CCO's charitable fitness year. Team CCO has four charitable fitness options still available. Are you interested in seeing downtown Chicago in a whole new way? Have you wanted to visit more than 29 Chicago neighborhoods in a single day? Then the Bank of America Chicago Marathon might be for you. Does the thought of running down Chicago's beautiful Lakeshore Drive thrill you? Then the Bank of America Chicago Half Marathon might be a good choice. Do you want to stroll along Chicago's beautiful lakefront with your friends or family? Then the 3 mile family-friendly Hunger Walk could be best. Or do you want to escape the city and experience a mud-covered, full sensory challenge at the Merrell Down and Dirty Obstacle Race?

Find out more by visiting www.ccolife.org and click on Team CCO!



IN 2014 **213+** PEOPLE

**HOMELESS
TO
HOUSED**

Farewell to the Frigid Weather!

Goodbye winter, hello spring! This past winter many of you voiced your support for CCO's Outreach Work. In the early mornings and evenings Outreach Staff visited the viaducts, loading docks, and underpasses in our area to get our homeless friends living on the streets inside and out of danger. As always, CCO remained open and working throughout the freezing temperatures. Several of our friends on the street had good things to say about the help they received during the deadly weather. "King," who we featured on our Fb and web pages, said "you guys saved my life that night you picked me up and brought me in." "Bob" said that his foot was saved through CCO's Outreach, Warming Center, and volunteer nurses. When Bob came in his foot was close to frost bite. One of our volunteer nurses said to get him new socks and new shoes. We got those for him and his foot began to improve tremendously. If he hadn't come in, his frostbite could have ended with amputation. "Jay" was sleeping outside with no blankets and the police brought him to us one night. Men's program staff took him to several appointments and through careful collaboration with other agencies "Jay" is now settled into his own apartment. Truly a Success!



"King" being welcomed into CCO. Leaving the deadly cold behind.

Misty Stubbs (CONTINUED)

drugs. Losing my son and husband was so painful I couldn't stand it. Alexis was staying with my aunt and my other child. Within a year I got caught with drugs and ended up on probation. It was around this time that my family did an intervention. They knew I was grieving and they told me I needed help. They were right. I checked myself into Haymarket House Treatment Center for 9 months. In treatment I finally got educated about my HIV. Alexis, who was three years old at the time, came to stay with me at Haymarket House after my first 60 days. We stayed in the Mother and Child Program. We loved it! She enjoyed the daycare program and other children. I was getting the help I needed. We renewed our bond and I got help through grief and addictions counseling. I graduated from the program! I continued to go to counseling for years after my graduation. It was very important. After Haymarket House, I found an apartment but I was using my entire check for rent. It was

impossible to afford market rate housing and I found myself homeless. I needed to go somewhere to apply for subsidized housing and save money. I got a referral to CCO. Alexis had a backpack and I had a bag of clothes when we arrived. That's all we brought with us. When we walked down Clifton Avenue I didn't know where to go. Kathy, a CCO security guard, brought me into Hannah House. Staff had made up our beds and gave us everything we needed. They made us feel really welcome. During our stay Alexis enjoyed the after-school program and got help from the tutors there. I appreciated the computer lab and got assistance from my case manager, Courtney. She really helped with my paperwork and housing sign-ups. I wanted stable, permanent housing where Alexis and I could make a home of our own. An organization that works with families affected by HIV/ AIDS got in touch with me. They told me that I could be a part of one of their permanent housing programs. I moved in October of 2013. At the time I didn't have a lot of the things we needed for a new apartment. I saved my money while I was at CCO but I couldn't afford furniture. CCO gave me two dressers, a big food pack, dishes, pans and household items and

brought it all to my apartment. Standing in my new place I remember thinking, "I don't have to run anymore. I've always run to something I thought was better. I'm content in my home now. I can settle down and unpack." Our building has an after-school program for Alexis, summer camp projects, security, computer lab, and on-site case managers. It is truly a home. After I moved into my apartment I began to take courses to be become an HIV counselor. This has been a dream of mine for a long time. I remember finding out I was HIV positive when I was 19 years old. I thought I was going to die and that caused all kinds of problems in my life. I want to help others who find out they are positive. I am happy to say that I completed the training and I am a certified HIV counselor. I am registered for an upcoming training to be an HIV tester. I continue to take classes and I look forward to the day when I can be a part of a shelter or clinic that serves people with HIV.

Cornerstone helped us when we were homeless. They helped us get through homelessness. I feel like Cornerstone is my family.

"That's my life so far... stay tuned for updates!"

Join CCO in offering daily necessities and vital services to homeless families and individuals. We rely on the support of volunteers and donors to provide for those in need. Please donate today! Thank you!



Cornerstone Community Outreach
4615 N. Clifton Ave. Chicago, IL 60640
773.271.8163