

Success Story: April Penn

April Penn is a survivor. April grew up in Pittsburgh, Pa., with her mother before moving to Georgia a few years ago. Growing up, April experienced abuse during her childhood for two years, which she has blocked out of her memory. Devastated by her circumstances, April dropped out of school, and never learned to read or write. For the next 30 years, April lived a life of drug abuse and addiction.



April first became homeless after she tried living with her sister in a Georgia housing complex and survived off disability checks. They were unable to maintain stable housing after their bills became overwhelming and soon April found herself struggling to keep her head just above the water. She moved from house to house never being able to keep a solid place to live.

For six years April did not have a place to call home. She also had a 2-year-old son to take care of, but had no means to provide for him. She had been kicked out by her sister and by other family members. She tried to find a place of her own but ended up in bad situations with her landlords. April felt hopeless and sad, and without being able to read or write April could not get a job. She and her son were forced to live in shelters.

Eventually, April decided she needed to make a better life for herself and son. She went to **The Gateway Center**, a 24/7 resource center for homeless individuals after being referred there by calling United Way's 2-1-1. There, she found rehabilitation for her drug and alcohol use as well as shelter. She is well on her way towards self sufficiency and pleased with her new direction.

April has been clean for eight years and is managing her debt. She is in college and making the Dean's List, and her son is attending a charter school. April feels life is hopeful and promising. She had made great changes in her life despite her poor family relationships. She wants to begin her own outreach ministry to help others suffering from homelessness and abuse. April holds everything she has to God, and is thankful for all of the blessings in her life.

This story was written using interviews conducted by Celebrating Success volunteers Joshua L. Bagby, Larry & Diana Baker, Katie A. Ethridge, Beverly Hill, Kandayce M. Lee and Lisa Shepard.

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