

## SUCCESS STORY

Angie grew up in a home with an abusive father. Her parents divorced when she was six years old and she was referred for mental health counseling at the age of seven. The school counselor described her as very nervous, high-strung, and unable to concentrate or complete her schoolwork. She was prescribed Ritalin for hyperactivity but her mother took her off of the substance as she did not feel it was helpful. Angie continued to struggle with behavior problems through her childhood. She saw different mental health professionals and was in and out of residential treatment programs. One psychiatrist believed she had perceptual disabilities, another physician recommended she be placed in a long-term residential treatment center for the emotionally disturbed.

Between the ages of 10 to 12 years old, Angie was sexually abused by a family member and she was thrown deeper into behavior and emotional problems. At the age of 17, Angie was introduced to methamphetamine and other drugs. Between the years of 1977 to 1994, Angie continued to use drugs, injecting both cocaine and methamphetamine, ultimately using on a daily basis by 1993. Along the way, she married four men and divorced three. She had a son, Josh through another relationship. He was born with cerebral palsy and she cared for him while living a life of excess drug use.

Fortunately, the Drug Enforcement Administration stepped in on January 10, 1995 and began investigating the defendant and her husband for allegedly distributing multi ounce quantities of methamphetamine. Life came to a grinding halt. Angie was convicted of one count of possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine and was sentenced on April 14, 1995 to 135 months custody to be followed by a four-year term of supervised release.

Angie released to supervision on June 3, 2002. Prior to her release, she befriended Tim while living at the federally appointed halfway house. Like Angie, Tim had a history of methamphetamine addiction and a conviction for methamphetamine distribution. He had already begun his supervision as monitored by this writer. Both were honest about the development of their relationship and sought approval for continued contact. Both had substance abuse conditions and participated in treatment at the contracted provider. When it became apparent the two were in a relationship, the counselors coordinated appointments so they could process the development of their relationship with the therapists.

Angie released to a small rural community to be close to her mother who had custody of Angie's 15 year-old son. Angie took on responsibilities quickly, maintaining full time work with a forty-mile one-way commute and ultimately, full time parenting responsibilities of Josh. Shortly, Tim requested permission to relocate and reside with Angie and Josh. Although this was against this writer's recommendation, allowances were made and the two began living together in November 2002. Tim also maintained stable employment in Wichita and commuted with Angie.

Interestingly, Angie and Tim's relationship did not follow the often predictable course of a halfway house romance. They each completed substance abuse treatment and maintained sobriety. On April 17, 2004, Angie and Tim were married. This was Angie's fifth marriage and Tim's second, however, Angie commented this was her first marriage where she was not using drugs at the time. Angie and Tim purchased a home in their rural community during the fall of 2004 and Tim successfully completed his term of supervised release on April 26, 2005.

The success story does not end here. In June 2005, Angie purchased a café in her. The business has been hard work but is profitable. During a field contact, patrons of the café

appeared to know Angie well and have friendly interaction with her.

Angie successfully completed supervision on June 2, 2006. During her time on supervision, she completed required counseling. She was subject to drug testing and never failed a test. She stabilized with employment, with housing and in her personal relationships. Both she and Tim are examples that long term positive change can happen for individuals with a history of drug addiction and crime. They continue to reside in their purchased home with Angie's son who works part time in her café.

Angie wrote the following about her life changes:

*I first have to say that God is what happened to me. God changed my heart, but he had to let me hit the wall first. I always have had to learn the hard way.*

*Upon my release I have found a few things to be true. First, we all need a little supervision because we have been restricted for so long that there is too much coming at you at once. Boundaries help. Secondly, It helped that the probation officer didn't imply in anyway that I would fail. He allowed me to speak my mind and to discuss how and why I had come to these conclusions. But I never felt that I was going to fail nor was I made to think that and that helped so much.*

*Tim and I have a great support team in our family and church. We have been blessed so very much.*