

Theresa's Story

A mother of four who has battled drug addiction and abuse to find belonging and healing for her family.

Theresa's early childhood was a happy one until her mother began to use drugs and left her children in the care of their emotionally abusive grandmother. This abandonment left an indelible mark on Theresa; she felt that as her family fell apart, her identity was also stripped away.



Theresa sought out connection in a relationship that was plagued by drug abuse and later turned physically abusive after the birth of her first daughter at the age of 16. She eventually left the relationship, but she had to abandon her education to support her daughter.

Her life fell off its tracks when tragic accidents took the lives of her brother and her partner in the same year. She was left alone with two children under the age of 5. Devastated by the loss of her final remaining support systems she began to take pills to cope; a habit that would haunt her for many years.

Theresa tried to break her addiction several times. She found the strength to quit during her third pregnancy but the pain medication she took following her C-section restarted her habit. When pills became too difficult to secure, she turned to heroin.

Finally, when it seemed that things could not get any worse, the hope of a life with her kids gave her the strength to turn her life around. She entered a treatment program, began her faith journey, and started rebuilding her relationship with her parents. She even got a job in the administration building of the prison. After a 5 year period of success with sobriety, Theresa heard about Saranam and knew it was her last chance to continue her growth and forever change her future.

Their family's acceptance into the program was a relief for both her and her kids. *"Waiting felt like my life was on hold and the kids were worried that we'd continue in the same unstable way we had for years."* Now their family is finally reunited under one roof- a dream come true.

At Saranam Theresa has finally been able to become the backbone for her family that she always wanted to be. Within months she finished the GED she has been fighting to get for the last decade and has made it her goal to become a nutritionist. Her success has rekindled her confidence and helped her discover her passions. She is proud to set a powerful example for her children and hopes it inspires them to invest in their own education. *"I want to send my kids into the world prepared and coming from a place of security and trust."*

Most importantly, the connections their family have built with each other, and within the community, have given them a sense of belonging that had been missing for many years. They enjoy spending time bonding at the Weil Family Center and the parenting and life skills classes have helped Theresa learn how to reassure her kids as they heal from their past. *"We're finally getting a sense of identity, and I'm able to pick up the pieces from my childhood."*

Community was a foreign concept for them before entering Saranam, but the support has changed them. From small gestures like picking up milk for a friend to receiving emotional support as she navigates a new future, the family she has found at Saranam has given her the confidence to reach for big dreams.

"It's full circle at Saranam – we deal with our past, we're united in the present and together in planning the future."

