

Theresa's Story

The Strength of Belonging



We all want to belong somewhere. Belonging gives us confidence in our identity and the strength to face challenges. **Theresa is dedicated mom, a devoted friend and a hard worker.** After a hard journey, she is now confident in who she is and proud she can share that assurance with her kids as they grow.

Theresa spent much of her life searching for a place of belonging. Her childhood home was pulled from underneath her when she was young and the trauma of it left an indelible mark on her; she felt that as her family fell apart, her identity was also stripped away.

Though she was unsure of her place in the world, **her steely determination carried her through** an abusive relationship and helped her support her daughter as a teen parent, even after leaving school.

The life she had tenaciously built was derailed when tragic accidents took the lives of her brother and her partner in the same year and 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.

At a crossroads of a long and arduous road, the hope of a different 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."* At Saranam their family reunited under one roof- a dream come true.

With their stability assured, Theresa became the backbone for her family that she always wanted to be. Within months she finished the GED she had been fighting to get for the last decade and made it her goal to become a nutritionist.

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.** Having dedicated time to enjoy family activities, along with Saranam's parenting and life skills classes, 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."*



From small gestures like picking up milk for a friend to receiving emotional support as she navigates a new future, the community she 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."