

Success Story: Cynthia Baxter

Cynthia Baxter appeared to have everything in her life together. Her upbringing was great, and she had no complaints with her family. Even though Cynthia was one of eight, she got along with all of her siblings and parents- even after her parents divorced. In 1988, Cynthia decided to join the military. Stressed and bored, Cynthia used alcohol as a crutch to make it through her time in the service. This began her cycle of poor choices.



After eight years of service, Cynthia left the military. She hadn't planned it out well, however, because she had no place to call home yet. Her friends and family allowed her to stay with them for free to help her get back on her feet; she unfortunately used this as an excuse to foster her addiction to alcohol and soon enough, drugs. Cynthia learned how easy it was to sell drugs to make money and got into the business quickly. Eventually, her fun came to an end when she was arrested and jailed for seven years. Dismayed and confused, Cynthia realized she had to clean herself up in order to continue her life.

Upon her release, Cynthia had nothing and no one. She had stopped her abuse of drugs and alcohol in jail, and wanted another chance in society. She went to **The Gateway Center**, a United Way grantee, and they showed her how to receive assistance as a veteran and how to reorganize and restructure her life. "They believed in me when no one else did," she remarks. She also received help from **Project Community Connection, Inc.**, an organization that assisted Cynthia in finding housing and a job.

Recognizing that her success was collaboration, Cynthia knew she wanted to give back and return the favor. She volunteers when she has time and also drives a church bus that picks up homeless individuals and offers them help. In her free time, she enjoys writing poetry about her past and is going a cruise with her family soon! She has remained focused and strong throughout her journey and is forever grateful for the opportunity to succeed in life.

This story was written using the interviews done by Celebrating Success volunteers Allegra Coleman and Clarence Robinson of United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, Wes Singletary of Georgia Power and Robert Nash.

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