

the EXTENSION

The Quarterly Newsletter for Friends & Supporters of the Extension

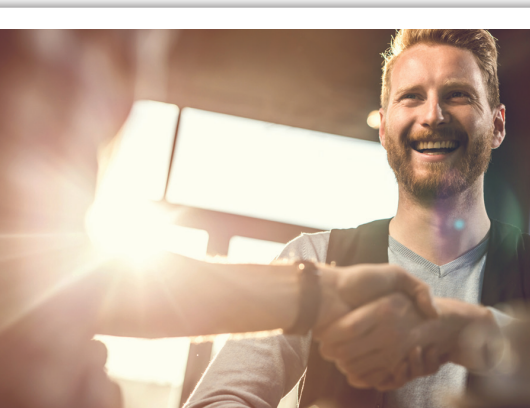


Love Saved My Life

BEING A MALE HOMOSEXUAL METH JUNKIE, the idea of living with 47 guys for my first year of recovery was uncomfortable. On the streets and in particular rooms, I was told that I should find a program amongst men of “my own kind”. That this and only this was the route to my recovery. There was no way, I was told, by some...men “of my own kind” that The Extension would work for me. Happily, my homelessness and desperation pushed me beyond this discomfort into acceptance. And so I entered The Extension.

Certainly, there were difficult times. There were periods where I felt alone and disconnected from my heterosexual peers. And it was at these times that I was given much comfort and support and love from the very many faith based communities and people who give selflessly of their time to The Extension.

We live in a country and age where division is thought to be permanent, unbridgeable. Relentless. And yet, my own lived experience at The Extension proves this is not at all the truth. Whatever divisions may exist on the plains of ideology, orientation, religion, values, partisanship, etc. had no bearing at all on the way I was loved by people from all backgrounds. All belief systems. All deeply and honestly held values. Here. At The Extension.



Which was a great and joyful surprise to me. The loving care I received and needed to receive at The Extension, especially from people who received no benefit in return, was an essential reason why I stayed whenever I encountered a particularly difficult few days. Love from faith. Love from good works. Love by strangers. Love that literally saved my life.

Love at The Extension, far beyond the divisions of the larger world.



“Whatever divisions may exist on the plains of ideology, orientation, religion, values, partisanship, etc. had no bearing at all on the way I was loved by people from all backgrounds.”

For You, For Me, For Us.

A couple is shown in a close embrace, their faces partially obscured by shadows. The woman's hair is dark and voluminous, and the man's face is seen in profile as he holds her. The background is dark and out of focus, creating a somber and intimate atmosphere.

I started partying and had my first kid at 16. I come from a real dysfunctional home, both my parents are alcoholics. I was 21-22 the first time I tried cocaine. At the beginning it was just on the weekends. It started getting out of hand, so I stopped. Later, when I was working multiple jobs at clubs and restaurants, I started doing meth. To help me work those long shifts. I was in an awful marriage and we were both addicts. For a while I thought I was a good mom because I provided materially for my kids. But this wasn't the truth. My addiction became so bad that I lost my kids.

I started using meth 20 years ago. I started off as I guess what you would call a functioning addict, if there is such a thing. Kept a house, job, nice cars. Coached little league, everything. Maintained my life, but I did speed. This went on for a fourteen years. Then I started shooting meth. Everything went downhill. I lost everything. Lost the job. It got to the point, where both my wife and I were shooting it. We ended up moving from friend to friend, just really horrible. Wasn't living right. Sometimes stealing to pay for the drugs and other bad things.

Our relationship started with us doing dope together- which isn't a really good thing at all. We would get on our feet, then we would lose everything. I put my kids through hell. My oldest who's 30 just went to Afghanistan and he still doesn't talk to me. To this day, I work to rebuild my relationships with my kids. One night Michael and I decided to shoot meth. I lost my business because I didn't go to work. Domestic violence, we fought with each other all the time. It got so bad in 2014-2015 we were living in a hotel, we split up. Then we got back together and moved down to Stockbridge and it got even worse. We got burglary charges. I was sentenced to Prison.

And I landed in prison. Both my wife and I got 14 months. During that time, I knew I didn't want to do drugs anymore. My wife got out a month before I did and she got into the Women's Extension. She wrote to me and told me what was going on with her. She gave me an ultimatum. If I wanted to stay together, we both had to get Recovery. My answer initially was "I'm fine, I haven't had drugs in 14 months."

Me going to prison for 14 months by myself was the best thing to ever happen to me. I knew I couldn't go back to living the life I used to. I got out November 1st and by the 15th I was at The Extension. They asked me about Michael. I said he was in Prison. I gave him an ultimatum. I knew I wanted a life, a life I hadn't had in several years. It was great. There were times when it was hard. I was a House Sister. We weren't supposed to be talking. But I emailed him. I got honest about it.

When I got out, I went to my parent's house. This was a day by day thing, I didn't have anywhere else to go. Heather asked me "do you want to go to the Men's Extension?" I didn't want to stay a year, I just got out of prison. Then, I looked around at my surroundings and realized I didn't have anything. I also knew that while I hadn't used in 14 months, nothing had changed. I decided to go into the Men's Extension. I had an interview with Bruce and David. After the interview, Bruce said "You got all that clean time and sounds like you have a place to stay with your parents" So they turned me down. It was a Friday. I was confused so I called back on Monday and spoke to David "I really need help. I need guidance, I need to figure out what to do". David told me to come up there and they interviewed me again and accepted me that day.

...There were times when it was hard. I was a House Sister. We weren't supposed to be talking. But I emailed him. I got honest about it.

***It's hard work, learning how to be together sober.
But it's great to be sober.***

At first, I was there only because my wife wanted me to be here. And my family wanted me to be there. I wasn't there for myself at first. We weren't allowed to communicate for the first 4 months and that was kind of tough. I end up buying her a ring during that 4 months. We had sold her previous one for drugs. I asked David if it was ok if his wife gave it to her. I just wanted her to have it. It was something we lost in the drug use. I got a citation for that.

We got in trouble right before the 4 months was over. She emailed me. She knew she shouldn't have but she couldn't wait any longer.

We ended up having marriage counseling. And we got passes together.

After that, Ms. Wynema brought us in and chaperoned our first meeting. After that, they gave us permission to start talking to each other. A few weeks after that, they gave us a pass. 24 hours. We went out to a Cabin in Cave Springs, Georgia. It was real nice.

We still do the marriage counseling now.

The program. I started it for my wife and my family and everybody but as I buckled down and started following the rules, I wasn't doing it for my wife. I needed it. Not just for them, but for myself. I started going by the principals. If you go by the principals if you're a recovering addict or not, you'll have a pretty good life.

I was raised with these principals but put them on the back burner. Being in the Extension re-instilled these morals and principals back in my life. It's changed my outlook on life totally. On everyday stuff.

My dad and mom have put trust back in me. After I graduated the extension my dad has gave me another chance to work for the family business being a tow truck driver. Which is really going great. He has also furnished me a house to renovate so me and my wife can live in it. All in all my life is great now. Me and Heather both are working hard to restore our relationships with our family.

I transitioned the program. In March I plan to go to the CARES workshop and get my CARES certification.

It's hard work, learning how to be together sober. But it's great to be sober. I'm working on rebuilding my relationships with my kids. The damage I did, it was awful.

Heather Freeman and Michael Freeman transitioned together on October 5, 2019.

Thankful Thoughts

Here are their inspiring thoughts of gratitude from our residents:

Brandy I am thankful..... for my son and daughter in law.

Nancy I am thankful for choices

Mattie I am thankful for my struggles and blessings

Amber..... I am thankful for The Extension, thankful to be alive and reunited with my son.

Cassie I am thankful for my kids and my family

Alisha I am thankful for another opportunity

Ki Ki I am thankful for my sobriety and my new way of seeing things

Michelle I am thankful for A great sponsor, laughter, and second chances

Jenny I am thankful for he chance to live again, my recovery and the Extension

Tessa I am thankful for warm socks

Amy I am thankful for my family, my extension family and running water

Crystal I am thankful for my sobriety, the extension, my family and god

Wanda..... I am thankful for children, and waking up everyday

Meredith.... I am thankful for acceptance

Belinda..... I am thankful for growth in my recovery

Ashley I am thankful for phase 2! Woووو!

Tia I am thankful for being sober

Christie I am thankful for my creator GOD

Sheenan I am thankful for accountability and opportunity

Paris..... I am thankful for... my extension life

Jess..... I am thankful for... econd chances and learning new tools

Misty I am thankful for my recovery and my choices today

Jonathan ... I am thankful for the brotherhood and Hope and faith that I got in my life.

Samuel..... I am thankful for willingness

Brent I am thankful for..... the staff member, the Alumni who are equally as passionate and my relationship with my uncle Lamar, which was restored here at The Extension.

Mark..... I am thankful for God loves me and for the life I have now

Justin I am thankful for I have my family back!

Zachary I am thankful for The Extension gave me life when I wanted to die and I am thankful for my family and friends.

Sterling I am thankful for this program has saved my life... to be clean and sober for the first time in 35 years!

Brandon I am thankful for the fellowship

Trey I am thankful for my brothers and that God gave me another chance.

Nathan I am thankful for my new found brotherhood, the staff and a newly found communication with my Higher Power (God).

Christopher I am thankful for family, freedom and second chances.

Trever..... I am thankful for my family's love and support.

Cranky I am thankful for willingness to change everything.

Stone..... I am thankful for good friends, family and second chances.

It's the Holiday Season and we have arrived at the time of year when it's customary to show thanks for those around you... family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Those we love and cherish all deserve their moment in our schedule and life. As there is no greater gift than surrounding yourself with those who inspire you, we feel blessed to work with the men and women who choose a new way of life each and every day.

David	I am thankful for	having hope in my life, because hope brings me happiness.
Bud	I am thankful for	family, ride or die friends, my love and son, my relationship with God.
Josh	am thankful for	the basic needs in life.
Tommy	I am thankful for	being given another chance at life.
Babak	I am thankful for	being alive, learning from others, and working on kindness and compassion in every day living.
Jimmy.....	I am thankful for	a structured environment to maintain sobriety.
Evan	I am thankful for	getting so many chances to live a life of recovery.
Lamar	I am thankful for	God, my family and finding the path to The Extension.
Martin.....	I am thankful for	the people around me encouraging me to stay sober.
Andy.....	I am thankful for	an opportunity to accept myself and having a level of comfort.
Kyle	I am thankful for	my friends at The Extension, the community and brotherhood, my friends at work, being able to think clearly and peace of mind.
Adam	I am thankful for	The Extension also helping my twin brother. Thanks to this program, he is back in my life again.
Paul.....	I am thankful for	God's understanding and wisdom.
Coogan	I am thankful for	joy, peace, hope, honesty that has overcome my life.
Mario	I am thankful for	being given the opportunity to heal and improve myself.
Logan.....	I am thankful for	every brother and staff member for a fresh start at this magical place.
Tony	I am thankful for	for my sobriety and getting a job this week.
Jon	I am thankful for	having my family back in my life.
Richard	I am thankful for	this program.
David.....	I am thankful for	all the people who volunteer their time.
Todd	I am thankful for	the vastly improved relationship with my family.
Gabe.....	I am thankful for	finally having \$ in my bank account.
James	I am thankful for	Jesus.
James	I am thankful for	being free from active addiction for over 8 months.
Gordon.....	I am thankful for	forgiveness and a second chance to become the man God created me to be.
Arron.....	I am thankful for	my twin brother.
Eric	I am thankful for	The Extension and my supportive family.
Tom.....	I am thankful for	my kids.
Tom.....	I am thankful for	God's grace and mercy.
Michael	I am thankful for	the restoration of life the program provides.
Al	I am thankful for	the opportunity to save my life.
Brandon	I am thankful for	my kids.
Ryan.....	I am thankful for	to no longer be addicted to Heroin.
Todd	I am thankful for	my life today
Chris.....	I am thankful for	spiritual transformation.
Ruel	I am thankful for	being well on my way to putting my life back together.
Troy	I am thankful for	renewing my relationship with God and starting a better life.

And the Winner Is... Those We Serve!

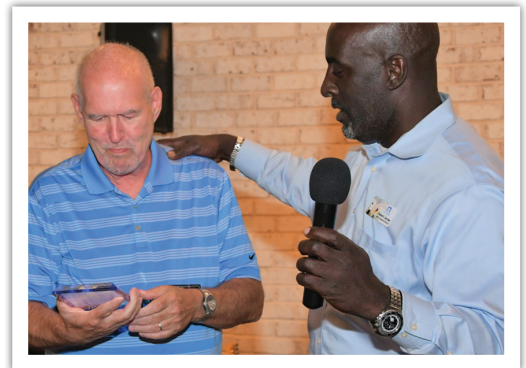
Every year (or so) we give out a couple of awards that recognize people who exemplify the commitment and love of all those who support The Extension. These awards are named for two people whose impact will be felt for generations. This year we gave out the awards at our annual Marietta Blues Bash, held in September.

This year's **Dr. Judith A Hoyt Award for Community Leadership** went to Chief Dan Flynn, of the City of Marietta Police Department. As noted on the award's inscription, "For saying what needs to be said and doing what needs to be done, we are grateful for your leadership and devotion to our community."

Our community is truly blessed to have Chief Flynn at the helm of the police department—he indeed serves and protects with his heart. His service and leadership is entirely consistent with Judy Hoyt's example of selfless service and allegiance to the community.



This year's **Dr. Karl Steichen Award for Volunteer Service** went to Warren Ridgeway. The inscription on the award sums up the high regard everyone who knows him feels: "Few have done so much for so many. Your steadfast dedication and love of life inspires us all." Karl, who has taken care of our residents' medical needs for decades, continues to arouse reverence and admiration in everyone whose lives he touches.



Four people, two awards, one special night, but the real winners are the people we serve. Donors and volunteers from across our community find a way, in so many ways, to offer homeless, addicted men and women a way to become accountable to themselves, their families, and the community. And our supporters offer a way for their families to heal and become whole. We are grateful for Judy Hoyt, Karl Steichen, Chief Flynn and Warren Ridgeway, just as we are grateful for everyone who reaches out through The Extension and feels the touch of another. It is at the point of contact that we become a community, where we all serve and all are served.



ASK A COUNSELOR



Mr. Robert Jordan has been in the field of Addiction for eleven years. He studied under Dr. Diane Sherman, PhD and received his Certification of Addiction Counseling in 2013. Robert is a 10 year Naval Veteran originally from New Jersey and settled in Atlanta upon his Naval discharge and proudly calls it home. Robert is currently a Dean's List student in Psychology at Grand Canyon University & is the Men's Program Director at The Extension.

QUESTION #1

I've been in and out of AA for 10 years and I'm not really feeling it. Are there any other alternative recovery programs?

Mr. Jordan: *There are! The 12-step model of Recovery is obviously the most popular recovery program because of its track record of success but also because it is the most commonplace. Meaning, it is relatively easy to find a free 12-step meeting anywhere. But 12-step is definitely not the only room in the House of Recovery. Nor does it claim to be. SMART Recovery, Secular Organizations for Sobriety, Refuge Recovery, Celebrate Recovery, various other peer support services as well as clinical treatment also find success in treating the root causes of addiction/alcoholism. What all these different paths have in common is a shared goal of a life free from the bondage of addiction built from a foundation of Honesty, Open-mindedness & Willingness. People are wonderfully different and the larger Recovery Community recognizes that one model certainly won't fit all!*

QUESTION #2

My 27 year son has been struggling for a while. He is not allowed to come back to our house but he called me the other day asking me for \$300 to pay for his deposit at a sober living. I don't want him to be homeless but I don't know what to do.

Mr. Jordan: *This is a tough one. We know we don't want to enable our loved ones in their active addiction. And I'm assuming this isn't the first time he's asked you for money. But also, we obviously don't want to see our kids homeless on the streets. Ask for the name of the Sober Living and contact the Director or House manager. Verify the amount for the deposit and pay the Sober Living directly. Do not give your child the money. Then talk to your son. Tell him that this is a loan and not a gift and that your expectation is that you will be paid back within 30 days of him getting his first paycheck. Recovery can be a long and arduous process, some studies have shown that it takes on average 8 years between an addict first admitting he has a problem and him finally building enough time in sobriety to lift off into responsible adulthood. As hard as this is, remember to practice self-care first!*



the
EXTENSION

*The solution for
homelessness and addiction*

The Extension is a non-profit, tax exempt organization as described in the internal revenue code in section 501(c)(3). The Extension, Inc. is governed by a volunteer board of directors.

Comments or questions about this newsletter or any of the functions of the Extension, Inc. are encouraged, please send correspondence to us at P.O. Box 793, Marietta, GA 30061
Phone: 770-590-9075

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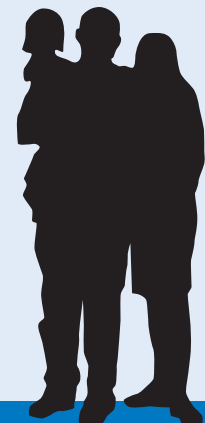
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A member of our staff or Board of Directors would love to come to speak to your group about issues related to homelessness, addiction and more importantly recovery. Just give us a call at the number above.

The Extension

1507 Church Street Extension
P.O. Box 793
Marietta, GA 30061



**Do you have a Recovery related question
that you'd like one of our Counselors to answer?**

Email: ask@theextension.org (we will of course respect your anonymity)



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The solution for homelessness & addiction

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We need... We need volunteers to prepare and serve dinner,
please call 770-590-9075 for details.



I want to help!

Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____

I pledge \$ _____ ☐ per month ☐ quarter ☐ year

☐ I would like to be sent a reminder of my pledge.

☐ I would like someone from The Extension to contact me.

☐ I made an online donation at www.theextension.org

Please mail to: **The Extension, P.O. Box 793, Marietta, GA 30061**

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