

Testimonials from Recovering Addicts

Below are personal testimonies shared by recovering meth addicts who live in Central Oregon. These were written in July 2009:

Archie
Zane
Kara
Sara

Archie

I am an addict and my name is Archie.

I do not ever remember saying when I grow up, “I want to become a drug addict and go to prison.” Becoming a drug addict really was not part of the plan, yet somehow drugs got in the way of my dreams. I started drinking and smoking pot at around the age of thirteen. I do not know if I was born an addict, but the first time I used drugs, an addict was born. What started out as fun on the weekends, turned into a way of life. Using meth became the most important thing in my life. I lived to use, used to live, and did whatever I needed to do to obtain the drugs to support my habit. This cycle transformed me into someone I hated. Using drugs caused me to isolate and shrink into a very small world. The only people in my world were those involved in getting, using, and finding ways and means to get more drugs. I became very selfish and self centered and ran on instant gratification. I was the last one to know I had a problem and could always find ways to blame my problems on everyone else around me.

Loneliness, fear and desperation began to invade my life. My disease would continue to progress until no one wanted me around anymore. The first people I burned and let down were the people I loved the most, such as my family, friends, and loved ones. I went through their lives like a tornado. I drained them emotionally, spiritually, and financially trying to fill the emptiness I felt inside. It did not take long until I became hopeless, homeless, and worthless. My disease led me through a life of crime doing whatever I needed to do to support my drug habit. I would eventually become a career criminal.

Caught up in the legal system for over seventeen years with fifty-seven arrests and five trips to prison, I finally reached bottom and decided I did not want to live like that anymore. I decided to seek help. I showed up at the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. I was beaten spiritually, and emotionally bankrupt, but I was willing to try anything to get my life back on track. I did what the people in the rooms suggested, which was to go to ninety meetings in ninety days, and not use drugs in between meetings. I got a sponsor, accepted some direction, and did what was suggested as a program of recovery. I got involved with service work and volunteered my time unselfishly to help others recover from addiction.

I have a beautiful life today and I would not trade it for anything I ever had while I was using. I will always be an addict and I have to do something every day for my recovery. I had to change the people and the places that I used to hang around. I do not know anyone who drinks or uses drugs today. All of my friends are clean. I have been clean from all drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, since March 5, 2005. Since that date my life has changed dramatically. I no longer live on the streets or in abandoned vehicles and buildings. I live in a beautiful house. I just finished my first year of college to become a drug and alcohol counselor. I made off parole for the first time in seventeen years in January of 2008. I have a valid Oregon driver's license and a beautiful career as a counselor at Bridges Boys Academy. I have a lot of beautiful gifts and relationships in my life today. The biggest gift I have is freedom from active addiction. I am no longer a slave to my drug of choice. I have come to know peace and happiness and my lost dreams have awakened. I am okay with the man in the mirror. I am living proof that we do recovery, one day at a time.

Sincerely,
Archie H.

Zane

I'm an addict and my name is Zane.

This wasn't the way I planned on introducing myself to complete strangers when I was a child, but is the way that I introduce myself today. Not because I want to, but because it is the truth, and I don't have to live my life hiding behind that truth anymore. For the first time in my life, I am blessing with the knowledge of recognizing myself for who I am; a recovering drug addict learning how to live, one day at a time.

I began using when I was ten years old. I was raised in Hawai'i, in a culture where smoking pot was commonplace. Both of my parents smoked pot and drank on a regular basis, and often had groups of friends over to party and socialize. I was an only child until the age of ten, and spent a lot of time watching the adults in my house have a good time getting loaded. So, when I was confronted with an opportunity to smoke some pot with a friend of mine, I took it. Though I had no idea where that first experience would take me, I knew that I wanted to keep doing it. Not only did I like the way I felt, but I craved the excitement that came along with getting away with it. It was this combination of sensations which would define my addiction. When I became an addict, I also became a criminal. As my usage of drugs progressed, so did my criminality.

By the time I was thirteen years old, I was sure of two things: I loved to get loaded and I loved to break the rules. Therefore, breaking bigger rules meant doing harder drugs. At this point in my life, I had graduated from just smoking and drinking to experimenting with drugs I had seen glorified through the media. Cocaine, pills, and LSD were becoming regular additions to my recipe of rebellion and irresponsibility, and I loved the

image I was creating of being a “bad boy.” School got left behind for my social life, and things like girls, drugs and money became far more important. Manipulation of my parents, and any other adult who didn’t condone my lifestyle, became my full-time job when I wasn’t partying, and I had embraced the belief that I didn’t care what anyone said or thought about the choices I made. Little did I know that my addiction was at full tilt, and that I had lost the power to control the choices that I made, because my addiction was making them for me. Then, my life began to take a dark turn, and self control was lost.

I was fourteen when I was introduced to Crystal Meth. I was on my way to school on the bus and saw a bag full of white crystalline powder on the floorboard of the seat I was sitting in, and I took it home. An older friend of mine knew what it was, and showed me how to make a pipe in order to smoke it. The “ice” epidemic had spread like wildfire across the state, and I quickly became another statistic. Violence and crime became my new way of life, doing whatever I had to do to embody the lifestyle I was now forced to live by my disease. It wasn’t long before I was in serious trouble with the law, and the hopes and dreams I had as a child began to disappear. The freedoms of normal life were no longer a part of mine, and I was only fifteen years-old. This life I was leading would continue for another twelve years, and Hell became my new address. I had become enslaved to my addiction, and it kept me locked up in a dark little cell in my own mind. I have witnessed and participated in horrible things. I have spent years of my life, both as a child and as an adult, locked up in jails and prisons. I have hurt and destroyed relationships with people who I love, and felt powerless to do anything about it. My addiction has claimed many innocent victims, including my children. Apathy became the only defense I had to facing the travesty my life had become, and the only way I found apathy was to stay as high as possible all of the time. By the time I was twenty-seven, I had lost everything to my addiction I had to lose, except my life, and a prison sentence saved me from myself. Had I not gotten locked up, I am certain that I would either be dead or serving a life sentence, because I had nothing left to give to my disease but everything I had, and I thank God everyday for the blessing of incarceration he gave me to save my life.

I am now thirty-one years old. I got clean 4 years ago, and am currently putting the pieces of my life back together. I have a beautiful life today that is filled with all the dreams and aspirations I had thought lost, and I am able to take the steps necessary to see them through to the best of my ability. I am repairing relationships with my family, and am building beautiful new relationships that have substance and love in them. However, I don’t do this alone. I am a member of Narcotics Anonymous. I attend meetings, I have a sponsor, and I work a twelve step program of recovery. And I do it one day at a time. I am not cured, and never will be. However, I don’t have to live the way I had for so long ever again. Recover is a life long process, and I look forward to spending the rest of my life living instead of dying. Today, I have that choice.

I’m an addict, and my name is Zane.

Kara

My name is Kara W. I am 25 years old and I was born in Bend, Oregon. This is the story of my struggle with drug addiction and a life of crime. I grew up in a home where smoking weed and drinking was an acceptable way of life. I first did Meth when I was 12 years old, and I was in love. Throughout middle and high school I hung out with the “stoners” and often partied with people much older than me. I was soon labeled as one of the bad kids and was constantly in trouble. I ran away from home, got suspended from school and would be searched on a regular basis. I did not care; I had an idea in my head that partying and getting high was somehow glamorous and exciting. When I was high I felt like the center of attention, like I could do anything and everyone wanted to be my friend. By the time I was 19 I had dropped out of school and moved in with my boyfriend. I became pregnant and was able to stay clean for the next 2 years and in that time I graduated from high school and had 2 beautiful little baby boys. It was not long after my second son was born that I started doing Meth again. I broke up with my children’s father and took my babies to my mom’s house. I started doing so much dope I could not go home and face my family. I gave up everything I had ever loved and cared about for a bag of dope. I lived on the streets and sold drugs in order to survive. I did everything I said I’d never do. I would do anything to get my next fix. I stole, cheated and lied in order to stay high. For the next three years I ended up spending an extreme amount of time in jail. Every time I would get locked up I would miss my family and wish of a day when I could make things right, but I had no idea how. I hated the person I had become but I could not stop. As soon as I would get out I was right back to the same thing, getting high, selling dope and committing crimes. On the inside I was a little girl scared and alone, on the outside I was hardcore down to do whatever it took. I found myself mixed up with a real bad crowd of drug dealers – these guys did not care about anybody. Over the time I hung out with this group of people I got beat up, held hostage and forced to do things I had never imagined. In 2007 I found myself locked up once again and this time I was done with the dope. I was accepted into a program called Deschutes Family Drug Court, this program saved my life. I was conditionally released from jail to go to treatment where I would learn the tools needed to live clean and free. I was also introduced to a 12 step program called Narcotics Anonymous. On March 2nd, 2009 I graduated from Drug Court after participating in the program for 22 months. In the beginning being clean was a daily struggle and there were many times I wanted to sit down and quit. Through the support of amazing staff members and other recovering addicts, I found the strength I needed to stay clean one day at a time. Today my life is more fulfilling than I could have ever dreamed. I have my children in my life and I am finally the Mommy I always wanted to be. I am attending college to be a drug and alcohol counselor and I run my own small business. I am a grateful recovering addict and this is the story of my experience, strength and hope.

Sara

My name is Sarah H. I am 27 years old and until recently I had a long battle with addiction. Starting at 16 years old I was drinking and smoking weed, really because the other kids I was hanging out with were doing it. Sadly to say after 2 years of smoking weed and drinking I was introduced to Crystal Meth. After about 2 years of messing with

Meth, I had found a needle. From that day on I was slave to the needle, giving up everything just to have it. From age 20 to 25 I have been to jail 14 times, and more rehab than you can imagine. I lost 5 beautiful children, 3 that I will never get back. Still after all this I went to prison. I was a low life. All I did was lie and steal from whoever, whatever. I didn't care about anybody or anything. Not even my own children. Dope was my life and I had to have it. After losing my 5th child, after I had worked hard in treatment to have him, I started back in the same stuff, and ended up nearly killing myself. I had lost my son, couldn't live in my house, stole from my employer and off to prison I went. That's when I decided it was time for a change. I had lost all respect from everybody and I hated myself. So I made the best of prison so I could get everything I could out of it. I have a great life today. I do service work, go to school and spend time with my children – all 5 of them. For the first time in 10 years people like me and want me around, and more importantly, I like me.