

## CHOOSING FAMILY OVER DRUGS

Christina

“I came from a family that looked perfect on the outside, My parents were abusive. My father was a functioning alcoholic.

“When I got to SIU at Carbondale I was a country girl with \$600,000 in the bank. I found this group of kids who looked different, acted different...they were free spirits, and I wanted to be a free spirit. I started using drugs and abandoned school to travel with this group following the Grateful Dead. We lived in tents.

“When I came back to my home town I went right to selling drugs. I turned my family away. I didn’t want their help. I lied to them until they washed their hands of me. I was addicted to opiates.

“I avoided prison, but was arrested 33 times on drug-related charges. I’ve been in and out of treatment 17 times. At the peak of my addiction, at age 29, I had a daughter. I gave her to my mother so DCFS wouldn’t take her, and so I could go on partying.

“I met my husband at Narcotics Anonymous and we were married 60 days later. Ryan had never used heroin, but soon we were both using. I got pregnant and was on drugs the whole time.

“We were in and out of apartments, never paying our bills. Then Ryan got drug-tested and they took Keegan away from us at two and a half months.”

“What turned it around...one day Keegan was brought to ICM for a scheduled DCFS visit. Ryan and I were off property when he got here. That caused Mr. Payne to end our visit. We were pulled into the office and nothing was sugar-coated. We were told that if we cared about drugs more than our son, then there were other people who could take care of our son.

“Ryan and I went downstairs. We realized what kind of people we were, and we flushed the drugs down the toilet. We thought we were going to only stay here to save up money, but this place changed our lives.

“I have an understanding about God now that I never had before. ICM has gotten us into counseling and parenting classes. We’re on a path to getting our son back. We had another baby, Kaiden, while we were living here, and because we were clean and are living in a stable environment they allowed Kaiden to stay with us.

“We do chores, there’s rules to follow. It makes me feel better to be responsible for something. The people I surrounded myself with before, if I wasn’t able to give them something, they didn’t want me. But the people here don’t want anything in return and ICM doesn’t want anything from me but for us to get our lives in order.”

