

Fall 2021 • Newsletter

FROM PRISON TO BAPTIZED,

Keri has seen real changes in her life and her faith since moving into Amanda's House.

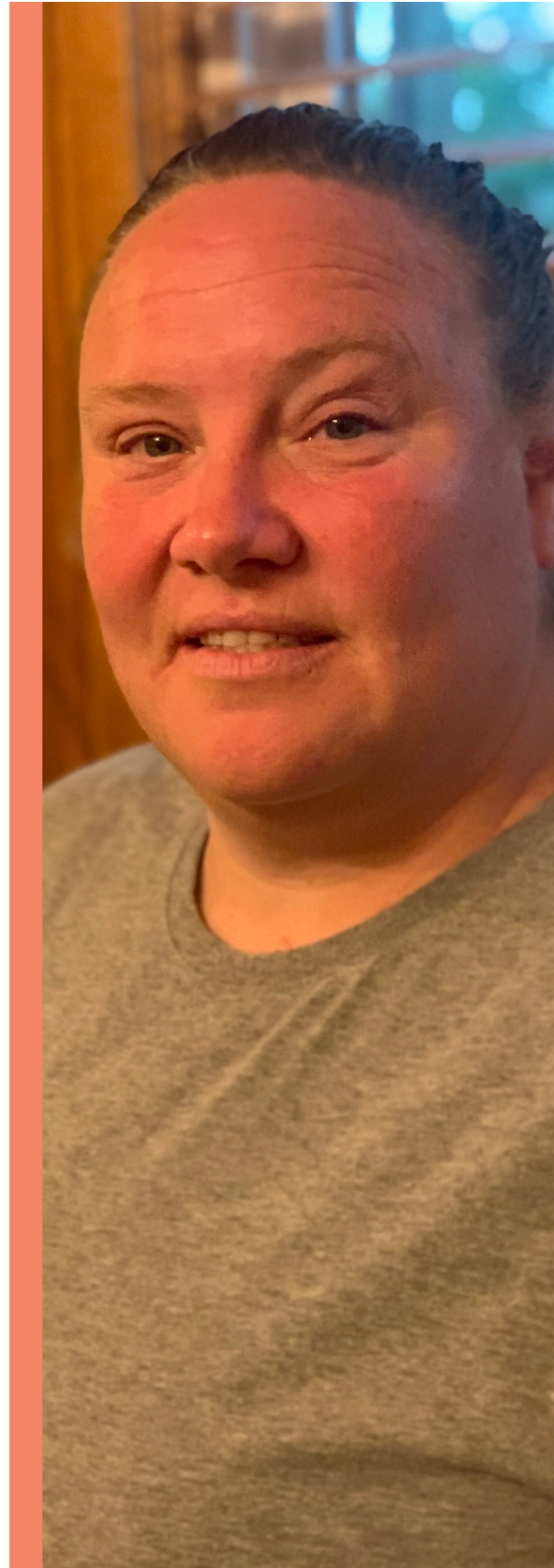
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Keri started experimenting with drugs when she was 15-years-old. After a three-decade long struggle with substance abuse, strained relationships with most of her family, being in-and-out of prison and different rehab programs, Keri was lucky enough to get into drug court. Keri defines drug court as "a prison alternative. It's an intensive treatment program for people who abuse drugs, they try and get them help. Instead of sending us to prison, instead of sending me back to prison they put me in this program so I could do all kinds of therapy and counseling." In order to be accepted into drug court, Keri had to meet strict standards which is followed up by intensive outpatient therapy.

When the facility where Keri was staying shut down, her therapist Tara Smith recommended Amanda's House to her. Keri said she was nervous when she first came, and even though she was not walking with the Lord at the time she "knew that this is the road that I should be on." Ever since that first day Keri says she has been treated like family, "it's been a long time since I've been able to actually trust people. And I trust them wholeheartedly."

After moving, Keri started attending Riverside Church. She is also a part of both an on-site and off-site Bible study. A few weeks after her first attendance at church, Keri gave her heart to the Lord, choosing to be baptized the following week. Keri had thought about getting baptized for years, but she never wanted it to be fake. But, with things going so well for her and after giving her life to Christ, she knew that now "it would be real."

Keri says she is doing "Good. Really, really good now" at Amanda's House. She is meeting all the requirements of





drug court, has a full-time job, and has become a member of the hospitality team at church. She is also working to repair her relationships with her family, slowly making contact with her children, and inviting her mother to come visit her. "I like my story being told," Keri says "I hope it gives hope to the next person walking in my shoes."

Keri would like to thank the Amanda's House donors "because without you this would not at all be possible for me to learn about the Lord." She says that there are plenty of options for men, but not so many for women. "To have this, a place that is safe and secure and stable for somebody coming in off of drugs is a huge impact on our lives. On my life. And I'm sure it's going to be a huge impact on others."

AMANDA'S HOUSE FIRST GRADUATE



Amanda's House has its first graduate! Carissa Kerschner completed her one-year recovery on July 25th. A celebration with our House Mom, staff and board was held in June. "Being here has really transformed me into a woman that I didn't know existed" Carissa stated at the event.

Since leaving Amanda's House, Carissa has reunited with her daughter, they are now living independently, and Carissa is working regularly. We recently "caught up" with Carissa and asked, how are you doing? "I'm good, this is the first time I have been on my own, bills, insurance, parenting, it's quite an adjustment. I've had to get used to less regular time with the people of Amanda's House. It's been hard, but I wouldn't change anything for the world." Carissa is enjoying getting to know her daughter once again, living day to day with all the challenges parenting brings.



One of her favorite times of the day is early morning enjoying her first cup of coffee and doing a daily devotion. She has been challenged and learning from a devotion called Better Moms, "it helps me every day."

When asked if there was a verse or thought that has encouraged her Carissa responded, "I look to the verse We love Him because He first loved us in 1 John 4:19. I didn't know what love was, all the love that was poured into me through Amanda's House and even after...it just shows God's love. Every day I'm thankful."

How can you continue to support Carissa? "I struggle with cooking meals, they were scheduled family time at Amanda's House, and it's lonely." Carissa is not alone in feeling this way, we all know single Moms who could use a friendly face, gesture, even a meal. If you'd like to reach out to Carissa contact us.

Hope United in the Community: **FIRM FOUNDATIONS MINISTRIES**

Pastor Rod Detweiler, Care Pastor at Firm Foundation Ministries firmly believes that “you don’t have to be a theological scholar to make an impact in your community or in your neighborhood, because ministry for most of us starts in our neighborhood.” Pastor Rod and Jill have served on community improvement committees and projects through Hope United together for many years. Most recently, they have collaborated on the Restored Hope Furniture ministry.

Firm Foundations has always had at the core of its mission to be a part of the community. “We want to just put ourselves in the community so that people that might not ever darken the doorstep of a church might have some reason to stop in.” That’s why Firm Foundations has partnered with other local churches to work together to be a part of their communities. Pastor Rod says that this kind of collaboration between churches and organizations like Hope United can help make sure that more needs are being met.

Through his work on trainings, Pastor Rod says he has realized that that everybody has some kind of a skill that they could use to bless others and that the church has to help their congregations realize how to use their skills to be a blessing. “If we can impact those closest to us that we rub shoulders with everyday then we’re going to be a whole lot more effective than trying to rub shoulders with somebody on the other side of the world.”

He says that he has seen this in action, particularly with one gentleman in his congregation who was the first to step up and help organize community outreach events. This man came from a background where church wasn’t important and he is now a pillar of their church community.

This October, Firm Foundations will be the location for Hope United’s Fundraising Banquet. Please visit Hope United’s website or reach out to one of their team if you are interested in ways to serve.



Hope United's First Annual
DESSERT EXTRAVAGANZA FUNDRAISER

Support our efforts to transform our community while enjoying delectable desserts and listening to testimonies of all that is being accomplished at Hope United!



Tuesday, October 5th
6:30pm to 8:00pm

Firm Foundation Ministries
651 E. Main Street
Centreville, MI

RSVP by calling or
register online



269.858.5583 • WWW.HOPEUNITEDSJCM.COM

GOD'S HEART FOR UNITY

We serve a God who both desires and requires unity with Him and unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus' sacrifice made it possible to attain unity with the Father and with each other. The Trinity is a representation of the unity present in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We were created in this very image so that we also should reflect unity in our relationships. Unity does not mean conformity or complete agreement. Instead, it's an attitude of servanthood, submission, love, and respect.

In the book of John, Jesus prayed that ALL those who would come to believe would be brought to complete unity. He prayed this because there is great power in being unified under the banner of Jesus' name. He continued to say that by this unity "the world will know that you sent me." Unity of the Church is the way to reach an unbelieving world for Christ. Max Lucado makes this comment; "*the world will be **won** for Christ when the world is **one** in Christ.*" In Eph. 4:3 Paul urges us to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Why is it that we have so disregarded the importance of unity? Why have we allowed the sin of disunity within our home churches and Church community to take root and destroy our very witness to a lost world? Unity must be present for God's blessings to be released. When there is unity in His Church, Christ moves to usher in "good news to the poor... liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Luke 4:18-19. God uses His people to bring blessings. But, these blessings only flow through believers walking in unity!



Hope United was conceived out of this very understanding. Christ's Church was meant to impact its communities, its nations, and the world through its oneness! It begins with each of us coming together as a community of believers, despite our differences, living in harmony with the shared goal of loving God with all that is in us and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. When we can be brought together in this manner, nothing that we seek to do in the name of Jesus will be impossible!

Join Hope United's mission to day! Go to www.hopeunitedsjc.com and learn how you, together with your church, can get involved in transforming our community for Christ!



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