

*Inspirational*

**Episode 23**

**MATT SHAFER**

*Partner Relations*

*Manager*



*This episode of **INSPIRATIONAL** features a “True Story” from the life of  
**Mr. Matt Shafer (Partner Relations Manager)***

*“ My name is Matt Shafer, and I am in recovery. I won’t bore you with a long story about why I started using Meth because I really don’t know. I was a normal guy with a job and a loving family. One day in my late twenties, I picked up some Meth and did some with a friend. From that moment on, my life would take twists and turns I could have never imagined. I was functioning for a while until I couldn’t go to work or school. I started shoplifting to pay for my habit. I had worked in Loss Prevention before and thought I could outsmart the system, of course I was high when these ideas came to me. I was shoplifting anything from anywhere in the community. This didn’t last long as in 2007 I was convicted and sentenced to 2.5 years in Arizona State Prison. After I was released, I worked menial jobs and it wasn’t long before I started using again. I had 2 kids by now and lived with my parents. I would tell my kids, “Daddy will be home soon” and that would be days later. The more depressed I felt, the more drugs I would do and round and round I went.*

*I was then convicted of shoplifting a second time and sentenced to 1.5 years this time. Once again, I did nothing constructive in prison and was released with no plan. Can anyone guess what happened now? You guessed it; I went right back to meth. There was some time in*

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*between when I would be a good dad and son. So, this time I went on a terror, shoplifting expensive items and selling them on the internet making sometimes 10k a week. I was using more Meth and totally out of control. One sunny Arizona day I returned to my flop house hotel with a girlfriend at the time and I was surrounded by Chandler Police. They had been following me for a year and I was in big trouble. This time I was sentenced to 5 years in prison. I wanted to change my life this time for good but didn't know how. That's when I met the prison counsellor Mrs. Waite.*

*She started a Peer Support program and I enrolled. I became the first Peer instructor and started teaching guys different classes about recovery and other life skills classes. I was certified as a Peer instructor and my life changed once again how I could never imagine. I also went to college while incarcerated and received 2 Associates degrees. I was released to my parents September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, after almost 5 years.*

*I applied for a Peers Support Specialist at Connections Health Solutions in Phoenix and got the job just 30 days after my release. I worked hard and got to know the community I had previously destroyed and started helping others who had addiction and or mental health issues. It's like a 'light on' in my head and I realized I want to help other stay get and stay sober and along the way keep myself sober. People say sometimes you must go through something hard to see the light and let me tell you that's exactly what happened. I was so good at my job; it was about a year later I was promoted to Partner Relations Manager at a corporate level. So, I went from making .50 an hour in prison to 23.50 an hour in just over a year.*

*Now I get to market our outpatient program to give people hope that it can be done. I was invited to speak to the Crisis Intervention Team with all the law enforcement in the Valley to share my story. That was nerve racking telling a room full of Police my experiences. As of today, I am a certified Crisis Intervention Team Coordinator as well as a part time student at SNHU. I will have my BA in Marketing in less than 2 years. I meet CEOs of major hospitals and many other pillars of the community in my daily job. I will be riding with Mesa and Phoenix Police soon to see how else I can help the community. Once Covid permits, I have been invited back to the very same prison yard in Safford to speak to the graduating Peer class and offer them employment. Life sure is funny sometimes, I still drive to work with a smile on my face every day. I go meet with patients in detox centres, hospitals, ED's and many other places to offer help. I also got another big raise from my CEO. I only talk about money because I still can't believe sometimes how my life has gone up and is continuing to go up. I have my*

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*supportive family back and my kids couldn't be happier their dad is back and active in their lives.*

*I want you all to know that people can change. I am grateful to the AZ Department of Corrections and especially Mrs. Waite for helping me when I was in need. I will continue to do anything I can to help others. I appreciate your time in reading this and I hope I can inspire someone out there.”*

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***Website Link of this Story: <https://livingvirtuously.in/inspirational-page-2>***