The Center for Great Expectations in Somerset

Building Resilience in Sobriety

THE CENTER FOR GREAT EXPECTATIONS HELPS MOTHERS STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION FORGE NEW LIVES

ARTICLE PATTI VERBANAS | PHOTOGRAPHY TIER ONE VENTURES LLC

WHEN ALEXIS TRAVIS, 32, WAS ARRESTED IN 2015 FOR A DUI WITH HER YOUNG SON IN THE BACKSEAT, SHE HIT ROCK BOTTOM. The Division of Child Protection and Permanency placed her son and his younger sister in foster care. Devastated by the loss of her children, Alexis attempted suicide.

"I wanted the children to have a mom they could be proud of," says Alexis. "I knew I had to start living a healthier life, and if no one was going to help me, I was going to have to help myself."

She logged onto the internet and found a ray of hope: The Center for Great Expectations in Somerset. Crossing her fingers, she called and hoped for acceptance into its residential treatment facility.

Alexis is exactly the type of woman that founder and CEO Peg Wright envisioned

Alexis Travis and two of her children.

Founder and CEO Peg Wright

helping when she founded The Center in 1998. It began in a small house in Somerville, helping expectant mothers struggling with addiction and mental health disorders. Seeing a need to extend those services after the child's birth, Wright started fundraising. By 2008 she built two residential treatment facilities in Somerset: one for adult women who need long-term treatment for substance use and mental health disorders and their children, and one for pregnant and parenting adolescents with mental health disorders.

Today, The Center provides mental health and substance use disorder treatment to more than 600 people annually, primarily women and their children impacted by trauma, abuse, and neglect.

At the heart of the services is an acknowledgment that addiction is born out of trauma.

Peg explains, "These women are stuck in a cycle. The trauma they have experienced is profound. Their job is to embrace the full path of recovery and to begin to look at the trauma that brought them to where they are in the first place."

Since its inception, The Center has risen to become a national leader in trauma-informed care, teaching its model to other programs nationwide.

In the treatment center, women like Alexis work with a multi-disciplinary team to create an individual treatment program. They also learn parenting and life skills upon which they can build a healthy, sustainable life for themselves and their children. The adolescent residential program, which is licensed by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, helps pregnant and parenting teens from across the state, many of whom have spent their lives in foster care.

Since the treatment centers were launched, The Center expanded its spectrum of care to include: Katy's Place, a child development center that offers nurturing childcare allowing women to focus on their treatment, job training or education; Roots to Recovery, an outpatient treatment program for men and women with behavioral health and substance use disorders; supportive housing; and the S.T.A.R.T. (Supportive, Trauma-attuned, Attachment-based, Recovery & Treatment) program that provides in-home parenting support, substance use disorder treatment and parent-infant mental health counseling for pregnant and parenting women. Upon completion of treatment, The Center also works to connect women to community partners for employment and education opportunities.

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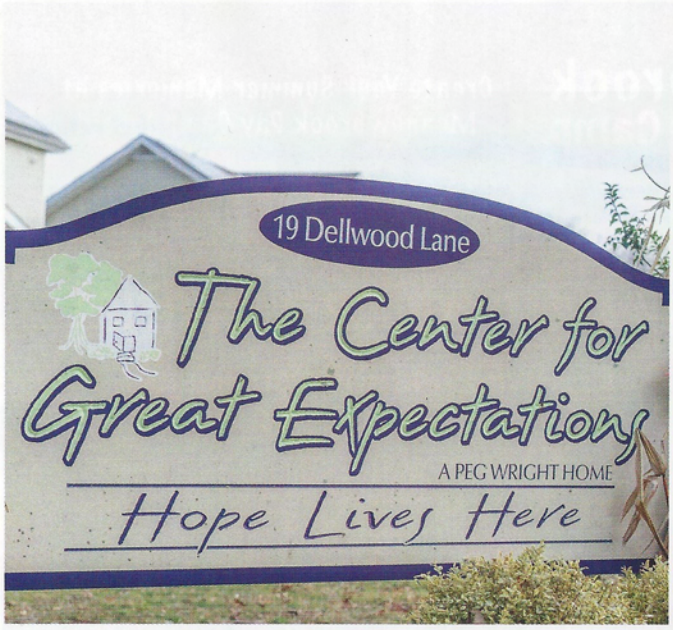

Since entering residential treatment in 2018, Alexis has experienced The Center's full continuum of care. She gave birth to her fourth child while in residential treatment, then transitioned to outpatient services, reunited with her husband and began the S.T.A.R.T. program to help both of them begin a new life.

"The trauma-informed care helped me heal the childhood trauma that still causes me so much pain as an adult," says Alexis, who began abusing alcohol at 26. "Whatever makes you suffer will always lead you back to addiction to numb the pain — unless you get help."

Recently, Alexis received more good news: Her family was accepted into The Center's supportive housing program.

"It's beautiful that these wonderful people took a chance on me," she says. "I was broken down, and they helped build me up by giving me the tools and believing in me."

Learn more about The Center and ways you can help at ***www.cge-nj.org***

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