

THE MISSION Bell

"CARRY EACH OTHER'S BURDENS, AND IN THIS WAY YOU WILL FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST." - GALATIANS 6:2

Shardae Orr

RESIDENT TESTIMONY

From the day I was born, drugs were part of my life. My dad went to prison on September 22, 1983—the day my older brother was born. They even raided my mom's hospital room to take him away. Three years after he went to prison, my father was out for only two weeks, just long enough for me to be conceived. When I was born, my mom cried, saying she couldn't stand females—words that still echo today.

By age seven, her drug use affected me directly. She'd give me Tylenol PM and Wild Irish Rose Whiskey to help me sleep, so I'd be out of the way. I didn't need to see her to know she was on crack; her irritability and stealing made it obvious. Sometimes she'd use heroin to come down, and in those moments, she seemed like "the best Mom in the world."

For two years, our home was a trap house. My older cousins sold cocaine there. It was also when I endured horrific abuse—my mom's nephew made me do sexual things. I tried weed but hated it. I'd cry and beg her to stay home, but "the crack was calling." Sometimes, I'd stay with my paternal grandmother—my only escape. My brother was always getting in trouble and ending up in jail.

When my dad got out in 1995, I thought things would improve. They didn't. My stepdad didn't want us around him because he was a "drug dealer," and my mom was still on crack. By November, my dad was back in federal prison. He was too far to visit but stayed in my life by sending money, celebrating birthdays, and calling often.

At 12, I turned to prostitution. Older men made me feel beautiful. It started in St. Louis—a man I knew gave me \$100. That's when I learned "the power a woman can have over a man." I started using heroin too. I'd sworn off crack and didn't like weed, but in St. Louis, heroin was "like smoking a cigarette."

When I was 19, my dad got out of prison. I was "living like a thug" in St. Louis, bitter and unwilling to return to Rock Island, but I had to because I was homeless and had nowhere to go. When I did return, I finally had my dad back in my life again.

continued inside cover...





In 2009, I used heroin again. By 2011, I suspected I had a problem. I tried to mask it—buying a Jaguar to prove I was different. I've always been a loner and my own worst enemy.

When I got pregnant in 2012, I was still addicted. I tried to get clean, but then my mom caught a federal heroin charge, and I unraveled. I ran to Georgia—the only thing I knew to do.

My second and fourth kids were born addicted. I dragged them through it all. I thought being with me was best. We stayed in hotels and cars. They saw high-speed chases and robberies. In 2016, I even stole my fourth child from the hospital and took all my kids to my dad's in South Carolina. I left, but he made me leave the kids with him. I didn't realize I had an addiction until I was 27. I just wanted to be numb. I never stopped fighting, and it took four years to get clean.

After eight years of sobriety, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, and that is when I started drinking. A week later, I had

a double mastectomy. That evening, I found my friend, who'd come straight from jail to help me, dead in the bathroom. She and I used to run the streets and do drugs together. She overdosed and died in the hospital bathroom, where I found her. I watched the hospital staff try to save her. They couldn't. I checked myself out of the hospital, went home, and drank three bottles of wine.

After that, things spiraled fast. I got two DUIs in four months. I pleaded guilty to the first because I was drunk. Four months later, I told my cancer doctor I needed help. She told me about the Mission. On my way there, half a mile out, a guy hit me. Though my breathalyzer was 0.0, I was still arrested for a second DUI. I beat the charge, but I had violated probation from the first incident. I prayed through the trial, asking God to help me get sober. With proof that I was headed to the Mission, the judge mandated that I complete the program instead of serving two years in the detention center. I entered the Women's Life Program in January 2025.

After I got clean, I realized prostitution was an addiction for me because it wasn't about money, but the power and feeling of being wanted. Since coming to the Mission, I crave that feeling far less. I love myself now for who I am, not for what I can do. Here, I've learned to process things, evaluate what's happening, and that helps me to heal deep within. I've learned to set boundaries with negative relationships. I can now stand on my own two feet.

My dad takes care of my kids, and they moved to Macon to be near me while I am at the Mission. They visit often. When he looks at me, I see how proud he is. I came here wanting it to be over, but now I'm willing to wait. I see clearly and walk humbly. I'm teaching my kids to identify and heal their hurts. They live and work with my dad, who owns and operates a dump truck business. My 16-year-old son is a diesel mechanic, and my 15-year-old daughter handles paperwork. When I go home, I want to help grow the family business. We are healing together. I love the look in their eyes when they say they're proud of me.

"I had no idea the Rescue Mission did this!" That's what most people say after a tour.

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Bargain Center

21ST ANNIVERSARY

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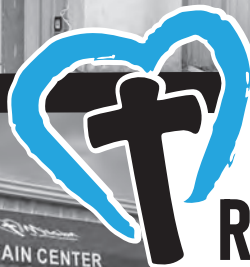
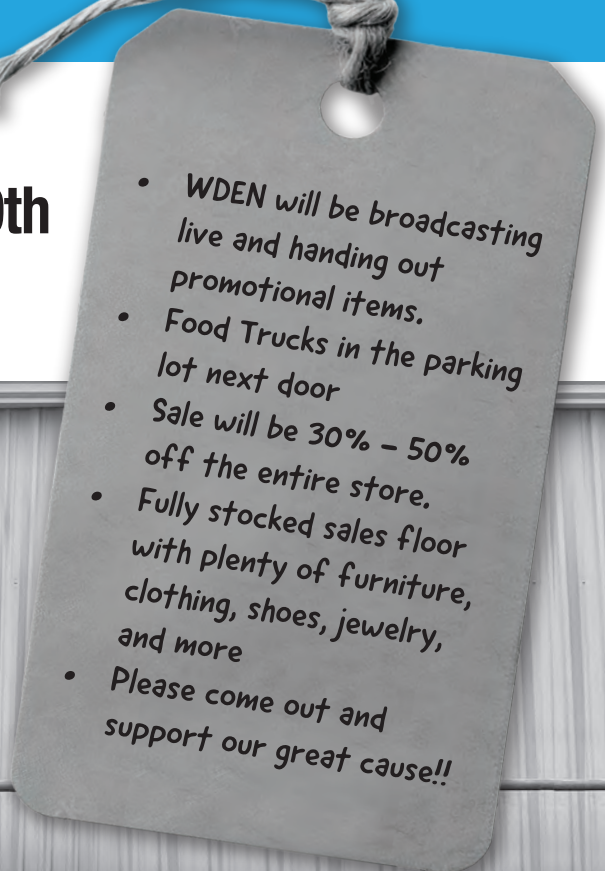
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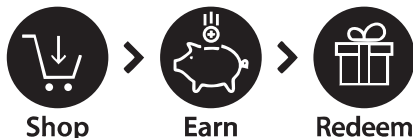
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