

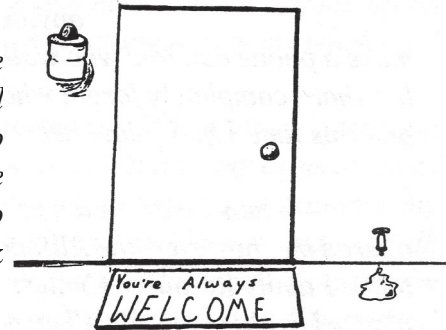
**“WOW! THEY CARED.
THEY CAME BACK!”**

Christy's Story

These words never fail to excite me when I hear them. They were spoken by a woman named Christy who, when she shared her story with me, taught me about the power of human dignity and hope. This story is about people like Christy who, after having her child taken away, spending time in jail, participating in three de-tox programs, falling into addiction again, then returning to her home in San Jose to fight it, prove that persistence is a vital ingredient for both the client and the service worker when addiction digs deep into a person's soul.

About a year ago two women showed up at Christy's apartment in Sacramento. They were concerned that Christy's son, Taylor, had not been enrolled in school and told Christy about the Alliance services – such as the One Stop Career Center at Encina High School which could help Christy's boyfriend out with finding a job and provide information about Narcotics Anonymous/Alcoholics Anonymous (NA/AA) meetings in the area. *“I felt respected,”* Christy went on. *“They were trying to help me out. They offered food and they came back with information on NA/AA meetings in the area. Wow, they cared! They remembered. They came back!”*

“I was interested in the information, and I wanted help, but I didn't grasp at it... I didn't care. The more I saw them the more I thought, ‘God, here they come again!’ My boyfriend and me would hide in the apartment when they showed up at our door! ‘Did you enroll your child in school? We have information concerning the time the trailer will be outside so you can sign him up!’ I was so tired of them coming to check on us. They had my child's best interest at heart, though.”



Eventually Christy and her boyfriend were evicted from her apartment and moved to the apartments across the street. *“Would you believe,”* Christy laughed aloud, *“They began showing up there! Then, even with all their help and caring, I began to realize that I was slipping back into addiction – the thing that brought me to Sacramento so I could get away from the environment in San Jose! I was falling into the old mind trap, ‘I'm gonna' do what I am gonna' do regardless of the situation. Who cares about anyone else?’ The two workers from the Alliance, though, they never gave up on my child's welfare or me.”*

Christy knew what it meant to turn away from her family in her addiction. Before her trip up to Sacramento from San Jose, Christy had ended up in jail and Child Protective Services (CPS) then took her son. After serving time in jail Christy entered a recovery program – and ended up participating in three of them before, she was able to get clean and get her son back. It was her sister in Sacramento who invited Christy to live in Sacramento and get away from the drug environment that kept pulling Christy down. With Aid to Dependent Children (AFDC) helping pay rent and 15 months clean and sober Christy was on her way in Sacramento, until she realized she had moved right back into the environment she had hoped to get away from.

“There I was, on aid, not looking for a job and into my addiction again when I first met the two Alliance community workers. After being followed around for a couple of months by the Alliance workers, getting evicted and moving across the way and getting into my addiction again, I knew I had to get out and make a change. I was ready to grasp at the help that had been waiting for me all this time. So I left Sacramento to live with my family in San Jose, start the Cal Works program and work on getting clean again.”

“A few months later I moved backup to Sacramento to try again. I always knew the Alliance would be there all this time...but this time they were right over the fence from my new apartment! My son and me went to check the mail one morning when I noticed the Alliance right over the fence of my apartment complex. I said to my son, ‘Let’s go over and see if Verna is there!’ I was walking around the school looking for the social services when I ran into a hall monitor and asked for ‘those women who walk around the apartments’.”

“The hall monitor figured out that we were looking for the social services and directed us to the Family Resource Center, where the staff greeted me and my son and offered us a donut! Since there was a social worker on the premise I was able to have my case switched to the Alliance address and then I asked for Verna. I was told that Verna wasn’t around anymore, but Dawn was! The secretary at the front desk then told me about the public phone I could use anytime and told me to come back anytime and have some more doughnuts! The next day I came back to make a phone call and who walked in just as I was making my call? Verna! I was so excited to see her that I completely forgot who I was speaking with on the phone! She was like a long lost friend and this time I had found her!”

“When I was on drugs I didn’t want any help. When I was ready to grasp the help being offered me, however, the Alliance helped me to get my son enrolled in school; transferred my case to the Family Resource Center; helped me with my outstanding warrants; and gave information on places I could get food. When my son and I returned to Sacramento the second time all we had was the clothes on our backs and some stuff in a piastic bag Now that I know what the Alliance has to offer and what they can do I will keep going back”

“Now I am encouraging neighbors to use the Alliance – I wish I could do more, but all I can do is let them know and they can check it out for themselves. A closed mouth don’t get fed!”

Christy

“In turn, I’m starting over again. My boyfriend is in prison in San Jose doing his time so nothing will hold us back and we can start fresh. My sister, who is very supportive, lives around the corner from me and I am within walking distance of people who don’t give up on you – they are always there (literally)! Everyone at the Alliance knows you, greets you and treats you like family. They are much more supportive than my parents, who are always asking ‘Why?’ and ‘What happened?’ My words of wisdom? Don’t ever give up! You can change. Anything is possible. Just put your mind and heart to it.”