

## **Georgeann's Story: a Drug Court Graduate Vignette**

April 13, 2009

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Georgeann was born in prison to a heroin-addicted mother. She has never met her natural father who is serving 3 life terms in prison in Arizona for murder.

Georgeann lived in a series of foster homes in Orange County (27 to be exact) by the time she was 7 years old. Eventually her mother's drug addiction escalated to the point that she killed herself in a small motel room with Georgeann by her side. The troubled 7-year old child, not knowing what to do, stayed in the room with her mother's body for days before she ventured out to ask for help. Georgeann was traumatized and orphaned at 7 years old.

Georgeann married at 15 years old. She had 2 children soon after and was living what could be considered a fairly normal life when her husband was decapitated in a violent car crash. She was a widow at 25 years old, left to raise her children alone and found drugs as a way to escape. As Georgeann states, "I put my drug use first. I was not there for them".

Georgeann moved to the desert with her children and her drug use escalated. In 1998, Georgeann's 9 year old son was shot in the head when he and a neighbor boy found a loaded gun in the empty lot between their homes. Her son was in a coma and she was asked to make the decision to terminate life support. She signed the necessary papers and on the day she was to "pull the plug", her son awakened from the coma. That was on Mother's Day, 1998.

Around that same time, Georgeann was busted for possession of methamphetamines and was already on felony Probation. She was told she would go to prison...or... she could try a new program in Riverside County, the Desert Drug Court Program. This would require a year commitment to counseling and recovery, intensive supervision and frequent drug testing. Child Protective Services took custody of her children and her son began his rehabilitation in a foster home. This motivated Georgeann to make some drastic changes. She dedicated herself to completing the demanding drug court program, worked a part-time job and vowed to regain custody and care of her son.

Georgeann graduated from drug court in 1999. She never had a single absence, never missed a drug test and exceeded the requirements of drug court. She was the first female graduate in the new desert program. As a result, Georgeann regained custody of her son and continues to care for him today.

Life is still a struggle financially but Georgeann is grateful today. She feels blessed to be a part of the drug court program in Riverside County and reminds us every time she takes a cake on her sobriety birthday that she is thankful for the program and the support she continues to receive from this valuable program. She figures a life full of tragedy can also be a life full of miracles! Georgeann is 10 years clean and sober.