

## **The Student Becomes The Teacher**

There are many ways to describe Kimberly – Compassionate, Driven, Blessed. When you meet her you immediately get the impression that she is a well adjusted person who has a great life. But something else describes Kimberly. Her past.

By the age of 12, Kimberly was in and out of foster care and found herself living on the streets of Houston. She stated, “I was doing and dealing crack and heroin and when it was all said in done I had a 21 year active addiction.” Kimberly continued, “I gave the Texas Department of Criminal Justice a total of 7 years of my life but that never stopped me from using.” As a 5 time felon, Kimberly never received any treatment while incarcerated which only led to her returning to her addiction when released. In addition to her freedom, Kimberly had to give up her son when she became pregnant at age 17. It wasn’t until 13 years later that the two of them were reunited as mother and son. Years later and pregnant with her second child, she heard about Santa Maria and decided to call. It would be this call that changed her life. “The lady that answered the phone was the very first person to actually care about me in my entire life” Kimberly reflected. “She made me want to get better.”

Kimberly spent a total of 9 months at Santa Maria where she gave birth to her daughter. “Santa Maria became the family I never had. They accepted me and I felt loved and empowered,” she stated. Upon completion of her program at Santa Maria Kimberly’s life was on track. She had a steady job at a local bank, married, had a place to live and spent numerous hours giving back to the agency that had helped her so much. “I volunteered for 7 years at Santa Maria spending time with the ladies and organizing donation drives to get much needed items.” Her volunteerism turned into a full time job as Kimberly was hired as a Recovery Coach at Santa Maria. Kimberly said, “I love being side by side with the clients. Who knows better than me what they are going through.” She continued, “I was the student now I am the teacher and my heart is full.” As a Recovery Coach, Kimberly provides coaching/mentoring and maintains weekly contact with the client to discuss recovery goals, barriers to recovery, challenges, and meet individual needs. She assists with employment, education, health, housing, social, spiritual and family needs all while sharing her own personal journey through recovery.

Kimberly’s heart is full and so is her plate. She directly coaches 28 women at a time for a 2 year period as well as providing support to more than 80 women at our Jacquelyn location. In addition, she is very involved with support groups and conducts outreach on the streets of Houston trying to get women to understand that there is life after addiction. When asked why she does what she does, Kimberly simply stated, “I’m very blessed to be able to share my life experiences to help others.” She concluded, “the most rewarding part of my job is when the ladies I coach come back later and become a coach themselves. Together, we keep the message of recovery going strong.”

Thank you Coach Kimberly. Your perseverance, compassion and drive are a lesson to us all.