

February 19, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is being written as a request from my son, John. He asked me to write it to tell about the ministry I'm serving as a volunteer; New Beginnings Big Country, transitional homes for women.

New Beginnings is a new beginning for women who have come to know GOD through Christ. Many of them have been in jail/prison while others have been imprisoned to addiction. Some both. Its founder, Missy Denard, reminds women who come to New Beginnings that: "Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new creature, old things have passed away; behold all things have become new." (II Corinthians 5:17)

As a volunteer/observer of this non-profit organization I have witnessed this happening exactly as the verse above states. Many of the women who come to New Beginnings come as a last resort. Everyone else has turned away or given up hope. They have nowhere else to go!

Missy saw this need as Chaplain of the women at Taylor County Jail. The women would be released from incarceration and go right back to the places and people that had brought them there in the first place...a terrible cycle. She would tell you that GOD placed it on her heart to help provide a place and instruction through His guidance to help these women.

The women usually come to New Beginnings with the clothes on their backs and \$50 given to them when they are released. If they come by bus Missy does her best to greet them herself (even in the middle of the night) with a huge smile and a big welcome hug. They are provided basic necessities...shampoo, deodorant, toothbrush, etc. and taken to a place where donated clothes are stored to pick out a new wardrobe.

New Beginnings is a non-denominational Christian organization based in Abilene, Texas which was established in April, 2010. It consists of three transitional phases.

Phase I: Hope House, the first of four houses at this time, is the beginning of their lifestyle change. The women are reminded by Missy, other women participating in the program, and volunteers that they are loved and forgiven. In other words, they deserve to have a New Beginning.

In the following weeks they are assisted in parole mandates, counseling, and help getting their official documents necessary to obtain a job. One of the requirements of living at New Beginnings is getting a job; a part of learning how to readjust their new lives into more productive lifestyles for themselves and the ones they love. It is required that all the houses be presentable to outsiders; therefore, the women must clean and maintain order...assisting, organizing and establishing routines and schedules. In other words, if they do not have social skills to get along with others they must learn. Sometimes this can be a challenge, but as always benefits outweigh challenges!

The women develop a camaraderie that only they and the other women truly understand. They lift up, encourage, and...yes, counsel each other in their struggles to make one more day in this new life.

It is in Hope House that self-discipline and cooperation are developed. It should be added, that effort and resources are spent on those who are willing to comply and try...not those who choose to continue their old way of life. Yes, there is compassion, caring, and love from all those involved with supporting them, but ultimately their success depends on the women themselves to fulfill their dreams for independent living.

Since it is a Christian based organization, Bible Study/Church attendance is required; three times a week for the new women. That is how I became involved. They needed a Bible Study volunteer for

Monday nights. A friend and I took that position...a blessing for me! As an outsider looking in, New Beginnings was and is; everything and more than I had imagined. It is amazing to watch the women blossom right before your very eyes to become the lovely creatures they ARE!

When the women have a secure job, have cooperative house relationships, and are able to obtain and maintain their own cell phone they are moved to Phase II: Mercy House or Faith House. In this phase the spiritual requirements are lowered to two Bible Studies since their longer hours or schedules at work do not always afford them the time to attend. At this time they begin to think about getting their driver's license and saving money to buy a car which can take a while since most of the women have minimal paying jobs. Getting a car is a privilege they earn from doing well in the program. It's a celebration when that occurs!

Phase III: Freedom Apartments occurs when the participants are basically independent. They are responsible for all their living expenses. They pay rent to New Beginnings but remain under the spiritual and community umbrella it offers. At this stage, they may be allowed to keep their children with them. There are no words to explain being at a Thursday Bible Study, the one required for everyone, seeing women of all ages from all social backgrounds and different ethnics and young children all together in fellowship. Wow!

New Beginnings is definitely a new beginning for many previously imprisoned women and you could be wondering if you need to participate in some way. Here are a few questions that might help you decide.

Are you interested in:

feeding the hungry?

giving them something to drink?

taking in a stranger?

providing clothes to those who need them?

or visiting those in prison?

Jesus tells us in Matthew 25: 35-40 that when we do these things for others; we do it for Him. All of those to whom New Beginnings minister are in need of everything listed!

If you would like to know more or how to help in some way, please contact Missy at 325-665-5538 or NewBeginningsAbilene@hotmail.com NewBeginningsBigCountry.com

With sincere appreciation,

Patricia Russell