

A Story of Hope: Living Proof of Freedom From Addiction

I have always felt a calling to reach hurting people like Evalina, beginning at a very young age. When I was a child, my mother and father began to reach out to men and women from the streets and bring them out of a life of addiction.

Men who had no healthy father figure; Women who were victims of violence, addiction, trafficking—my parents brought them into our home to get them off drugs and introduce them to Christ. Throughout 50 years of ministry, New Life for Adults and Youth has seen 20,000 people come through the men's and women's program homes in Richmond, Virginia. Still, my heart was aching to reach more. Taking a page from my parent's book, my husband and I opened our own home.

For many years, Carlos and I would take in the girls who are mothers. We would teach them how to reestablish their relationship with their children as they were learning how to walk in their own Christian faith. I can't express how exciting and humbling it is to get to be a part of returning mamas to their sweet children.

That is where the vision for a new ministry home was born.

For many of the men who graduate from our 12-month program, transitioning to a job or school is much easier. When a woman comes out of the same lifestyle and is met with the responsibility of parenting, it is much harder. Our program offers so many things, except for a place where mothers and children could reunite after their stay in our Christian rehabilitation center. One day the Lord impressed upon my heart that He wanted *me* to create this home and call it Mercy Moms House. Without a dime in my pocket, by faith, I began to proclaim that we would have this special spot for families.

Well, God did a miracle through the help of many small donors, and we were able to open a beautiful home where mothers could continue finding healing in the Lord while living with their children.

Evalina is one of those moms.

“I was really angry at my parents. I felt abandoned. I could not understand why they gave me up, and I was looking for love in all the wrong places,” the mother of four admits. “I had my oldest daughter, Kelsey, when I was in 12th grade. After I graduated high school, I started hanging out with the wrong crowd, drinking and going to clubs while my grandmother watched my daughter. My first encounter with a hardcore drug was with a guy; he introduced me to cocaine, and it went from there.” Evalina was like many moms caught in addiction—she loved her children, but substance abuse demanded all the attention. What addiction wants, addiction gets. If you know someone who struggles with drugs or alcohol, then you know addiction turns a loved one into a stranger.

“Now that I’m clean and sober, I look at the past and I think, *I did that?* Like, I really got high? I was really that selfish? But I know now that it wasn’t me. The drug in me made me different, until one day I realized I didn’t have much left in me. I was scared I was going to die if I kept on the way I was. I fell to my knees and surrendered to God.”

That was three years ago. Evalina came to Mercy Mom’s House with her children and received care, support and guidance to be the mom her kids need. “When I first got them, it was kind of tough, you know? But with the Lord on my side, now they’re just all coming together. They’re praying. We’re loving on each other, and there’s unity in our home. Even the other strained family relationships are healing. Being a sober mom and being able to raise my kids so they will follow Christ and not take the same wrong steps I’ve taken—this is the greatest gift.”

This is what sets New Life for Adults and Youth apart from traditional rehabs. This is recovery, yes, but we offer recovery through the renewal, remaking and restoration found in the love of Jesus. First and always, we introduce them to Christ and help them build a solid foundation in their faith.

On top of that groundwork, we have a nationally recognized vocational training program to equip our students for a career when they leave. Of course, some of them, like Evalina, don't leave. Evalina is now the director of the women's program in a time when overdose deaths are spiking due to the pandemic. Some municipalities report a 20, 40, 60% increase.

To make things worse, due to the high cost of traditional treatment facilities combined with the financial impact of COVID, many families cannot afford help for their loved ones. I believe that is unacceptable. Since my parents started this ministry in 1971, we have never turned anyone away for financial reasons. That's why we are so grateful for our prayer warriors and financial supporters. You shouldn't have to be made of money to become who God made you to be. Evalina is only one example of what freedom looks like: Healed by the only true cure for whatever tries to keep us trapped—a relationship with Christ.

With the necessary health precautions in place and a strict COVID-19 testing policy, New Life for Adults and Youth has space available in both the men's and women's homes. If you or someone you know is struggling with a life-controlling issue, call 1-844-231-HOPE (4673) or submit an application.

And tune into this episode of *Rosalinda's Faith-Fuel Podcast* titled *Living Proof of Freedom From Addiction: A Story of Hope*, on the Charisma Podcast Network. {eoa}