

LEARNING HOW TO SURVIVE: JULIE'S STORY

"I DIDN'T KNOW THERE'S HOPE FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT UNTIL I STARTED EDUCATING MYSELF THERE AND ACTUALLY PUTTING THE WORK IN."

A note from Stepping Stones: Julie's story is a special feature that exemplifies the hard work and dedication we see everyday in the adults who work with our advocates. We are so proud of Julie and love the chance to share her story.

"I was running for a long time. From the time that my son was born until he was two years old, I was running."

A Childhood of Survival

Julie's life was marred with chaos and abuse from a young age. After her parents split up, her mom got into an abusive relationship and that's when life changed for her and her siblings. *"When I talk about drastic abuse, it was really, really bad. On Saturdays, we'd get up and clean walls. If we didn't do it right, we got beat. One incident*



Stepping Stones advocates are available to speak one-on-one in person, over the phone, or online via Zoom with anyone experiencing abuse in West Yavapai County. Call our helpline at 928-445-4673 to talk today.

I remember was that I didn't clean the bathroom right, so [her mom's boyfriend] got the AJAX, shook it everywhere, and threw me around in there to where I was scrubbing the bathtub seeing my own blood. I was only 11 years old. It wasn't so much of having a childhood, it was about learning how to survive."

At 16, Julie was thrown out of the house, began a relationship with an older man, and got involved in gang activity trying to fit in. "I was holding a lot of anger issues I didn't understand I had at the time." Eventually, her choices led to her getting arrested and going to prison.

When Trauma Continues

"When I got out of prison, I went back to what I was familiar with, because all doors were shut on me. I couldn't find a job. I ended up getting pregnant and having a daughter."

During this time, Julie experienced a traumatic incident when a friend's child drowned, and she further withdrew herself. "I didn't know how to deal with the hurt. So I left my daughter with my mom, and I started making really bad choices. I was really angry. That's when I ended up meeting my son's baby daddy."

From a "Queen" to On the Run

At first, Julie felt "like a queen" and thought she had found a great relationship. "I felt loved. I became that ride or die chick. He made me feel good. We were never apart."

But, the rose-colored glasses



Stepping Stones advocates work together to provide around-the-clock support for adults and children experiencing abuse and victimization. They listen and provide 24/7/365 advocacy support. Whether someone needs a safe place to live because of a domestic violence crisis, or if they just need to talk, we are here.

came off. "I started doing things wrong, according to him. I was put down. I wasn't worth anything. I wasn't a good mom. It got really physical on both ends, because I had to defend myself." Julie felt herself switch back into the survival mode she learned as a child.

"It got really physical on both ends because I had to defend myself. I didn't want to lose the love that I thought I found."

"I was living moment by moment. I walked on eggshells. I didn't want to lose the love that I thought I found. I was trying to be that person he needed me to be, and at the

same time losing myself."

Julie got pregnant with her son, and she decided it was time for something different. She moved into her own place, but her ex would show up to break windows and "cause chaos." She got thrown out, and it made her afraid she was going to lose her son. "I left there and stayed with a friend. He would come and do the same thing. I was running out of places. The way he got me to go with him is that he took my son from me, so I followed of course."

After more incidents with the police, Julie took her son and found herself on the run. *"I was staying in abandoned buildings. I'm breaking in, staying there so he won't be able to find me. My son was a baby, not even a year old."*

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JULIE'S STORY: "THE ONLY THING STOPPING ME IS ME."

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Night after night, Julie wandered the streets to find a place to sleep. "In the middle of the night, 2:00 in the morning, I would be walking with the stroller with nowhere to go. But finally, I broke down and went to my mom." Julie's brother invited her to come stay with him. She took the offer and left. But after some time, she found herself once again on the street with nowhere to go. Julie went to a local church with her son and the pastor shared resources that could help her get back on her feet. Although Julie was scared of what would happen, she was more scared of losing her son. ***"I decided to call Stepping Stones. I was shaking so bad. I was brought up where you don't tell. But I decided to give it a chance."***

"The Beginning of My Life"

When the advocate answered the phone, Julie's emotions overcame her. ***"I just cried and I spit out everything that was going on. I told them I was tired of running. I'm tired and I don't know what to do. I don't wanna go back to where I was, I need help."*** Julie and her son came to shelter. ***"That was the beginning of my life that I have now."***

When Julie arrived, she was surprised to see a home. "My idea of shelter was like everyone living in bunk beds, in cots. I walked in and I saw a kitchen and a living room with a TV. I

was like, this is a house and it's really calm. This is nothing that I was used to seeing, because I was coming from chaos. And now, there's peace and security."

Next, Julie sat down with an advocate to debrief. ***"They're listening and they're hearing me out. They assured me of making the right choice. I wasn't in trouble. It was confidential. They started giving me some resources. They're like, we can help you with this and that, but first, just go be calm. Let your son play and just relax. Don't worry about nothing. I feel like oh my God, they're nice to me. I wasn't expecting that. That's my first experience sleeping with my son and feeling ok, safe."***

"I didn't know there's hope for something different until I started educating myself there and actually putting the work in."

It took Julie awhile to settle into life at shelter. "I didn't realize I was actually in survival mode or victim stance because it was everyday life for me. I didn't know there's hope for something different until I started educating myself there and actually putting the work in."

An "Ah-Ha" Moment

The real change happened for Julie during an educational



Stepping Stones safe emergency shelter is a home with 16 beds for adults and their children who are victims of domestic violence. Call our 24/7/365 Helpline to speak with an advocate.

group about domestic violence when she learned about the cycle of abuse. "I could really visualize step by step what was happening. When you had a blow up and then throwing yourself onto the blow up. I said, I'm involved in that. I started seeing that and seeing that you could break it. I wanted to break the cycle. So, I started looking at my part in it. It wasn't so much of what other people have done to me, but what is my part and what am I gonna do about it? The only thing stopping me is me."

Two Years of Hard Work

Julie spent nearly two years at Stepping Stones processing through her experiences. During her time in transitional housing, she served as a mentor advocate providing support for others. "Every time I saw a new girl come in, I saw myself and how I felt when I first came in. And I wanted to share the experience that I got. The welcoming experience, the clean home, the safe place. To let them know it was ok. Let them know you're safe."

Julie's growth was not an easy journey, but she worked hard to "not be a victim" and "own" her life again. "That's why I'm always grateful to Stepping Stones because if I was never there and never had the opportunity, I wouldn't have my kids. If I didn't make that choice to call and get past my fear, I would never have what I have right now. I probably wouldn't even be alive, to be honest with you."

"I didn't know it could have been different until the tools were given to me. [Advocates] cared and really were pushing

me to do more for myself. And because of that, they empowered me to do what I needed to do for myself and my children. What I have now is like inner peace."

Forever Grateful

Today, Julie feels excited for not only her future, but her kids' futures, too. ***"To have what I have now, it didn't happen overnight, but I won't give it up for nothing. I have both of my kids with me now. They don't have [to wonder] when's the next time I'm going to eat? Or what house are we staying at now? Or is my mom coming back? They're not seeing that blow up, where their mom and dad are fighting and that fear. I don't see that fear in my kids' eyes. I'm grateful for that. I'm grateful that I have a home and I have a job. I have a vehicle. I'm actually doing something productive. I'm caring for me and learning to love myself. My kids are growing up and they're gonna copy that. They're not gonna copy that violence that I grew up to see."***

"They're not gonna copy the violence that I grew up to see."

"I can't wait to see what's gonna happen with my kids, and how their life is gonna turn out. I'm planning for graduation, I'm planning for college. Things that never even popped up into my head as actually possible IS possible. I'm forever grateful."

WHAT TO DO IF YOU NEED HELP: MAKE THE CALL

When you call the 24/7/365 Helpline, you'll get an advocate right away - no answering machines or waiting for a call back. We are ALWAYS available - day or night.



Here's a quick peek at what happens:

1. Call our 24/7/365 "live" helpline: **928.445.HOPE (445.4673).**
2. Let our advocate know what you're calling about. Share a little of your story. They'll listen and ask questions.
3. The advocate will let you know what resources we have available to help, as well as other resources in our community that they can refer you to for support.
4. Finally, the choice is yours - make a decision about what support you need, and begin to do the hard work to move toward a life free from abuse.

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH 24/7 SERVICES

At Stepping Stones, women, men, and children work hard to find freedom from all forms of abuse. Because of you, our advocates are available 24/7/365 to support families receiving services. Check out a few statistics and outcomes that we've seen over the last 12 months: (Data from Sept. 1, 2020 - August 31, 2021)



Advocates provided over

6,383

hours of face-to-face advocacy services including educational support groups



2,808
Helpline crisis and referral calls answered

150
adults & children received face-to-face services



Average number of relationships: 3

Average number of abusive relationships: 2

What does this tell us?
It highlights that underlying trauma or behaviors may be keeping someone vulnerable to abuse.

78%
receiving services experienced some type of abuse as a child

OUTCOMES

Upon completing services with our advocates, adults anonymously reported:



- 100% said they have an increased knowledge of domestic violence and its effect on their life
- 100% felt they are (re)gaining control of their life
- 98% said their safety has improved, even after leaving the program
- 100% said their child has acquired skills that will enable them to stay safe
- 100% said they have increased knowledge and understanding of violence, abuse, and neglect's effect on their child's life
- 100% said their child demonstrates improved emotional/behavioral status during their time at SSA

SUPPORT LOCAL FAMILIES WITH A CHARITABLE TAX CREDIT

"Each day I was at Stepping Stones, I grew, but it was hard. It helped me understand things I can change in my life to not go back to the vicious cycle of abuse. I learned how to be healthy again in relationships, to accept myself, and not to have a victim mentality. Thank you for this chance to grow and change." - Jenny*

*name changed

Jenny's story highlights what it means to give a 2021 Qualifying Charitable Organization Tax Credit donation to Stepping Stones. Families right here in our community are finding freedom from abuse and learning how they can live free from all forms of victimization. Arizona offers a dollar-for-dollar tax credit on your AZ state return by making

a donation to a qualified charitable organization of any amount (up to \$400 filing single or \$800 filing joint). When you claim the credit, you will reduce your tax liability or increase the amount you receive in a refund. You do not have to itemize to receive this state credit! To take advantage of the tax credit, make your donation by April 15, 2022.



DONATE ONLINE AT: [STEPPINGSTONESAZ.ORG/DONATE](https://www.SteppingStonesAZ.org/donate) OR FILL OUT & MAIL WITH DONATION TO: STEPPING STONES AGENCIES 2651 N. INDUSTRIAL WAY, STE A PRESCOTT VALLEY, AZ 86314

I am excited to support families in our community by donating:

- ☐ \$400 tax credit (filing single)
- ☐ \$800 tax credit (filing joint)
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ \$100
- ☐ \$50

I would like my donation to go directly to the following service:

- ☐ Children's Program
- ☐ Emergency Shelter
- ☐ Transitional Housing
- ☐ Wherever Needed Most
- ☐ 24/7 Helpline

- ☐ Please send me information on how I can help local families for years to come through a **Charitable Legacy Gift**.

Please send acknowledgment & tax receipt to:

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Questions? Call Alexis or Brandon at 928.772.4184 or visit www.SteppingStonesAZ.org/donate

Please check with your tax professional for information regarding donations and your specific tax situation.
Stepping Stones' official Qualifying Charitable Tax Credit code from the State of Arizona is: **20034**.

SHOP LOCAL • DONATE LOCAL • SERVE LOCAL

STEPPING STONES THRIFT STORE: MORE THAN JUST TREASURES



Stepping Stones Thrift Store is a one-stop shop with all the amazing treasures under one roof!

From furniture to clothing to home goods, our thrift store is filled with special items at great prices. Want some new books? Most are \$1 or less! There are new items on the floor every day for you to find and bring home.

But our thrift store is more than just a great place to find second-hand goods. It provides paid on-the-job training to those needing extra support as

they get back on their feet, including families who are in Stepping Stones' advocacy services! Our stores serve as a safe place where people can learn and grow as they gain skills that will help them continue to secure employment in the future.

In 2021, Stepping Stones Thrift won Best Thrift Store again through The Daily Courier's Reader's Choice Awards, voted on by the community. We love receiving this honor, but what makes us outstanding are the awesome customers, donors, friends, and associates who work hard to create an uplifting environment to shop in. We couldn't be here without YOU! Thank you for shopping, donating, and supporting local families with us!



Stepping Stones thrift store in Prescott Valley has a variety of clothing, furniture, kitchen, housewares, and more! Shopping and donating locally supports Stepping Stones' 24/7/365 advocacy services and safe shelter for local families.

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS A RECOVERY BOOKSTORE ANYWAY?

We're so glad you asked! In addition to well-known 12-Step recovery books like the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous, we also carry best sellers like *Co-dependent No More* by Melodie Beatty, daily meditation books like *Stools & Bottles* (check it out to understand) or *Days of Healing*, *Days of Joy* for adult children of alcoholics and addicts. Plus, we have selections from local authors, too.

But that is NOT all there is! We have sobriety medallions from simple to elegant, as well as serious and light-hearted greeting cards to share with those working hard each day to stay sober.

Looking for a special gift? We have

beautiful jewelry, T-shirts and caps, mugs galore, medallion holders, jars of hope, terrific bumper stickers, and a lot more in both books and gifts. And we'll always special order for you! All of the proceeds from the Stepping Stones Recovery Book Store support our shelter and advocacy services for those who have experienced sexual assault or domestic violence.

Stepping Stones Recovery Bookstore is open Mon - Thurs 9 am - 4 pm, Friday by appointment. Stop by and visit us, located inside Stepping Stones Administration Offices at 2651 N. Industrial Way, Suite A in Prescott Valley. Call Suzi at 928-772-4184 for more information.

VISIT OUR HUGE THRIFT STORE LOCATION!

WE PICK UP FURNITURE IN THE QUAD-CITIES! CALL OUR DONATION CENTER: 928.759.0225

Mon - Thurs 9 am - 4 pm

Schedule can be up to two weeks out

STEPPING STONES THRIFT STORE LOCATED IN PRESCOTT VALLEY

Stepping Stones Thrift Store
2651 N. Industrial Way, Prescott Valley
928.499.3206

STORE HOURS: Tues - Sat 9 am-5 pm

DONATION DROP OFFS: Tues - Sat 9 am-4 pm

PRESCOTT THRIFT STORE CLOSING

October 30, 2021 is last day to shop for treasures at our Prescott Thrift Store on Goodwin Street.



Stepping Stones 12-step Recovery Bookstore has books, medallions, clothing, jewelry, gifts, and more! Call Suzi at 928-772-4184 for more information or to place a special order.

Under Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI and VII) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Stepping Stones Agencies prohibits discrimination in admissions, programs, services, activities or employment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, genetic information, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability. Stepping Stones must make a reasonable accommodation to allow a person with a disability to take part in a program, service, or activity. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. For example, this means that if necessary, Stepping Stones Agencies must provide sign language interpreters for people who are deaf, a wheelchair accessible location, or enlarged print materials. It also means that Stepping Stones Agencies will take any other reasonable action that allows you to take part in and understand a program or activity, including making reasonable changes to an activity. If you believe that you will not be able to understand or take part in a program or activity because of your disability, please let us know of your disability needs in advance if at all possible. To request this document in alternative format or for further information about this policy please contact: Cori Burke at 928.772.4184. Para obtener este documento en otro formato o obtener información adicional sobre esta política, por favor llama a Cori Burke, 928.772.4184.