



ALICIA'S STORY: LOVE'S A DRUG

"I got hooked on people. Drugs would have been easier because people are everywhere. There's no rehab, and I can't just go cold turkey. I have to see people."

Growing up in rural Yavapai County, Alicia lived an isolated childhood. Challenging family dynamics mixed with living in a very rural area, Alicia focused her young adult life on finding love. She believed that a relationship was the way out and the only real path she had to move forward in life.



Stepping Stones advocates answer the helpline 24/7 for safe shelter and support.

"Parents taught us, you're not going to be successful in life. You have to get into a relationship. And then you never really ask yourself if you like this person, it's just asking if they like you and you go for them." Her very first relationship was unhealthy, and she left her rural home for the Prescott area in search of more opportunity and safety. She quickly met and began a relationship with someone new. Enjoying life as a young adult with newly found freedom, Alicia got pregnant with her first child. Her pregnancy offered her a chance to grow into being a mother. "My baby gave me direction. I stayed with the father until the baby was six months old, but it was just a nightmare. I tried to make it work, but I couldn't." Financial strain from maternity leave and changes in his job led her to make a change. She met her now ex-husband, and for a long time they were simply friends. One night, all of that changed when they went out with a group after work. "I kissed the boy because he was cute, and he kissed back. Then I didn't go home. I moved in that day. I didn't have anywhere else to be, and I was used to jumping ship."

They moved into an apartment outside of Prescott where she felt isolated and began to see his true colors. "I didn't have a phone anymore, but it was a better apartment and



the package was sweeter. But I didn't know about his alcoholism, his drug addictions, his depressive episodes. Even knowing him for over a year before, it was never like that." Months later, she got pregnant and they moved back to Prescott. "It was supposed to be a fresh start. He worked all the time, so I was alone again raising kids. He would be so nice on the phone and in text messages, but in person, he was awful."

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JULIE'S STORY: CREATING A BETTER LIFE FOR HER CHILDREN

By Jeff Lewis, Stepping Stones Volunteer

Like others who finally decide to call Stepping Stones for help, Julie was most concerned for her baby son because of the unstable life she was leading to keep them both away from an abusive father.

"I was homeless and running from domestic abuse." During that time, she was able to take her baby son to a doctor for basic health care, but some developments for him, like learning to crawl, did not take place when it normally would. "We were staying in abandoned buildings, so I was always on the go, and I either had him strapped to me, or I was holding him going place to place running from my son's dad. My son didn't have the freedom of learning how to play, and he was always clinging to me."

Julie wanted the best for her son but she was afraid of losing him and didn't know where to turn. All of that began to change when she turned to Stepping Stones. There, like so many others, Julie and her son were welcomed and given safety, shelter, support, hope and everything else she needed to help her turn her life around.

"They brought me into the shelter. That's when I began to see the transformation in my son. I got to see him crawling and playing and being a kid. He was able to verbalize and

express how he really felt for the first time. I got to see him run, climb, play with toys and talk to me more than when we were out on the streets. You could see in his face that he was starting to light up. Even his eyes changed."

At the shelter, he began to cling less to his mother and even have normal childhood tantrums. "Having someplace safe to be, he did act out. He started having tantrums, which he didn't have before, but I realized it was because he finally felt he was in a safe spot."

"It was like his color came out. He started expressing himself. I started seeing his character for the first time. And that woke me up to realize the damage that was happening to his development while we were on the streets."

While Julie was on the streets trying to stay away from her son's abusive father, her ten-year-old daughter was staying with Julie's mother because Julie felt it was too much of a risk for a young girl to be with her in a homeless situation. Once Julie was safe at Stepping Stones, her daughter was able to come and visit.

After Julie was able to move on from the shelter and get an apartment, she and her daughter and son were able to all live together. But there were issues that mother



Julie and her son on Christmas morning when they lived in safe shelter. Today, Julie and her children are creating healthy, happy futures.

and daughter needed to work on because it had been a few years since they had lived together. "When we got back together, my daughter withdrew from me because she didn't know how to deal with the loss of me while we were separated, so she shut down. Still to this day, she's working through that."

JULIE continued on page 2

If you have questions or want to learn more about our advocacy services and agency, please contact us at:

STEPPING STONES AGENCIES
2651 N. INDUSTRIAL WAY, SUITE A
PRESCOTT VALLEY, AZ 86314 | 928.772.4184
INFO@STEPPINGSTONESAZ.ORG

24/7/365 Advocacy, Emergency Shelter, and Support Programs
www.SteppingStonesAZ.org

24/7/365 HELPLINE:
928.445.HOPE

JULIE’S STORY CONTINUED



Advocates provide one-on-one support.

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After all the trauma they had each been through, creating healthy family dynamics has taken considerable effort. Julie says the tools she learned at Stepping Stones, like forgiveness, boundaries and ownership of your own actions have made a big difference for her children. “I want them to think, not just act. We talk things out but if someone is too upset at the moment, when they’re ready, we’ll sit down and talk. Forgiveness and ownership are also key to making it all work as a family.” As a high schooler, Julie’s daughter is making good decisions about friendships and when she should trust someone.

“She sees my healthy boundaries and that they work. She likes to help and encourage other kids, but at the same time she knows how to keep boundaries. She recognizes that if certain peers are not encouraging and uplifting you, well that’s not someone you need in your life.” Her daughter feels secure within their home and now she wants to get a job and start working to help support the family. In her future, she would like to become a veterinarian or perhaps farming. As for her son in his preteen years, he has already joined The Young Marines, a national program for youths who want to work hard, lead with integrity, and grow into strong confident leaders. He wants to join the U.S.

Marines to serve his country, and then he wants to use his military benefits to go to college. He tells his mom, “When I buy a house I want you to come and live with me.” “I’m very proud of their goals in life.” Julie says a lot of what she learned at Stepping Stones about improving her life, she has worked to pass on to her children. Helping others to get the help that she received at Stepping Stones is also something that Julie would like to do someday. But for Julie, today is enough. “When my daughter tells me, mom I love you, just hearing that and all three of us sitting down and watching TV, holding each other and safe, that’s great!”

12-STEP RECOVERY SUPPORT

Often, substance abuse and domestic violence exist together in chaos and trauma. Over our 46 years of service to the community, we know that only addressing one area of crisis in someone’s life will not solve all their problems. It takes the courage to look at ALL the different parts of life and then take steps forward to address the things that we have the power to change. One of those areas is substance use. 12-step recovery and fellowship provides adults with the opportunity to take a look at their own substance abuse, and Al-Anon helps those with addicted loved ones. For over 25 years, we’ve been able to help people stay connected to 12-step community fellowship. Every day of the week, Stepping

Stones offers meeting space for 12-step recovery meetings. Providing space for meetings means there is always a place for community members to come together and support each other through their recovery journey. Additionally, inside Stepping Stones’ administration office, there is a 12-step recovery bookstore full of medallions, books, jewelry, and other inspirational gifts for people in recovery or others who need support. The bookstore provides a place to purchase items to celebrate the achievements of sponsees, family, and friends on the road to recovery. Want more information or interested in a special order? Contact Savannah at 928-772-4184.

**12-STEP & RECOVERY MEETING SCHEDULE**

2651 N. INDUSTRIAL WAY PRESCOTT VALLEY
MEETINGS ARE HELD IN MEETING ROOM “A” NEAR MAIN GATE

Monday	5:30-6:30PM Roadmap to Recovery - Open AA
Tuesday	6:00-7:00PM Tuesday Night Reflections - Closed AA
Wednesday	5:30-6:30PM 12 & 12 Step Study - Closed AA
Thursday	5:30-6:30PM Lushes T’ Ladies - Women’s AA
Friday	5:30-6:30PM Beginners/Plain Language Big Book - Open AA
Saturday	7:00 - 8:00PM Saturday Nite Live - Open AA
Sunday	8:00-9:00AM Biscuits & Gravy - Open AA 9:30-11:30AM NA Area Meeting - 2 nd Sunday 12:00-1:00PM Sunday Nooners - Closed AA 3:00-4:00PM Red Road to Recovery - Open AA 7:00-8:00PM Sunday No Name - Open AA

Step One Center - 16-18 year olds allowed ONLY if they are meeting participants
No children under 16 years or pets allowed on the property

SUPPORT LOCAL FAMILIES WITH A TAX CREDIT DONATION



You can make a difference for families in the community with a donation through the Arizona Qualifying Tax Credit program. Arizona offers a dollar-for-dollar tax credit on your state taxes when you make a monetary donation to a qualified organization. For 2026, the amounts have changed to up to \$506 filing single and up to \$1,009 filing joint/married. When you claim the credit, you will reduce your tax liability or

increase the amount you receive in a refund. To take advantage of the tax credit, make your donation by April 15, 2027. Because of you and the Arizona Qualifying Charitable Tax Credit program, families at Stepping Stones can discover the support they need to live free from all forms of violence and abuse. Thank you for helping Stepping Stones provide that safe place for local families in Yavapai County.

DONATE ONLINE AT: [STEPPINGSTONESAZ.ORG/DONATE](https://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 BY DONATING:

- ☐ \$506 tax credit (filing single)
- ☐ \$100
- ☐ \$1,009 tax credit (filing joint)
- ☐ \$50
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ 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: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City/State/Zip: _____
E-mail: _____

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**.



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DONATIONS OR OTHER WAYS TO HELP, CALL ALEXIS AT 928.772.4184. READY TO GIVE? SCAN NOW!

ALICIA’S STORY CONTINUED



Holiday art from one of Alicia’s children.

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“He was emotionally and mentally abusive. And his level of drinking kept increasing.” They got engaged, but after a night of drinking, he blacked out and violently attacked her. She didn’t go to the hospital because she wanted to keep it quiet and try to protect her children. After the violence, she told him he needed to get sober. “I told him I wouldn’t marry him and I need to know him sober if I’m going to sign my life over. And he did get sober.” Like many abusive relationships, Alicia had a period where everything seemed great. But even sober, the abuse crept back in. “My normal was abuse from the moment I woke up. It doesn’t have to be hitting. It was shame. I’d clean the whole house, but he’d suddenly focus on if the baseboards were clean. No matter the effort, he projected his awfulness on me.” Alicia left several times over the years, but always ended up going back. “One time, he ended up taking my keys because I was trying to leave and he punched me three times. He had to go to work the next day, and that is how I was able to leave. Since he took my keys, I called a friend. I got out for a couple days, but I had to go back because my daughter got so sick. I had to call him to come pick us up.” The cycle of violent outbursts, calls to law enforcement, and reconciling continued to increase. One day after a fight about the kids, she decided it was enough. “I was always defending the kids, and he said to me that I needed to get more under his thumb. I said, I don’t think I can get more under your thumb without losing myself completely. He got in the shower, and I went outside and called the shelter.” The Stepping Stones advocate who answered the phone helped Alicia create a safety plan for what she wanted to do next. “I have three kids, and I’m terrified. I couldn’t leave for three days until he was back at work.” When the day came, she left and took a step into her new life. Like many, the thought of a shelter where she knew no one was scary

to Alicia, but she knew she didn’t really have anyone in her corner. “He was toxic, and I knew I needed to get away from him. I left because my children needed a better way to live, not because I stopped caring. It was agonizing because I’ve never done that before.” It took her and her children some time to settle in to their new life and the hard work that comes with healing from abuse. “Just because you’re in a place where you don’t have to worry about violence doesn’t mean that suddenly everything’s okay. You have a lot of work you still have to do to heal yourself and the things that you experienced. So, I went to groups at shelter, and I loved going to groups. The childhood trauma group was always difficult, but I always came back. Then I also joined LAA [Love Addicts Anonymous], which was refreshing. I want to unlearn this crap, so I don’t have to do it again.” Alicia took the opportunity to grow seriously because she knew she needed to change for her kids. One of the things she learned was that she needed to commit to staying single during this time. “If you’re addicted to drugs, when you take the drugs out, then you start figuring out the rest once the withdrawal happens. Same idea here, right? When you take sex and love and people out of that equation, and you start focusing on the withdrawal, you can then figure out who you are on your own. It makes a huge difference, and you come out the other side actually knowing yourself and what you value versus just trying to put a Band-Aid on it with another person.” Today, Alicia is still growing and learning, but is excited for her and her children’s futures. She’s working hard to complete schooling online while also working. She recognizes how her children have also been growing, including seeing that they are more relaxed and able to express their feelings more freely because they are in a safe space. “I’m really proud of myself for doing this. I’m a living example, and I don’t want this whole pattern to follow me again.”

AROUND THE CLOCK SUPPORT FOR LOCAL FAMILIES

Day and night, Stepping Stones Advocates are available for crisis support, safety planning, and helping people find freedom from all forms of abuse. It takes courage and bravery to call the helpline and start the hard work needed to rebuild their life. That is why our advocates have been here for 46 years - to provide safety, healing, and hope to local families. Take a look at a few statistics and outcomes we’ve seen over the last 12 months:

Data from 7/2025 - 6/2026



24/7/365 HELPLINE

Over 2,500 Helpline Crisis and Referral calls answered by trained advocates.

NUMBER OF FAMILIES SERVED

Advocates served 197 adults and children through face-to-face advocacy services.



PROVIDING 6,450 HOURS

of face-to-face advocacy services including educational support groups. THAT’S OVER 17 HOURS PER DAY!

94% OF ADULTS SERVED



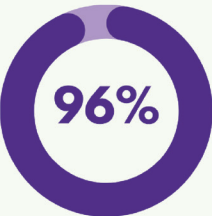
experienced some time of abuse as a child (physical, sexual, or emotional).

STEPPING STONES SERVICE OUTCOMES

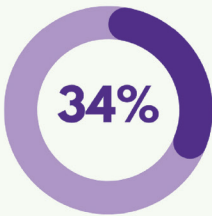
Upon completing services with our advocates, adults anonymously reported these outcomes about their lives:



- Said they are completing their goals.
- Said their child demonstrates improved emotional/behavioral status during their time as SSA.



- Said they have an increased knowledge of domestic violence and its effect on their life.
- Said they are regaining control of their life.



- Said their safety improved even after leaving the shelter.
- Only 34% of families had permanent housing established (their own apartment, etc.). Most moved in with supportive family/friends or left the area because they were unable to secure affordable housing.

GETTING PEOPLE BACK TO WORK - ONE DONATION AT A TIME

Employment Enhancement Opportunity Program is Stepping Stones’ special on-the-job workforce training program. For over 15 years, EEOP provides people who need a helping hand getting back into the workforce with a safe place to learn skills for their future. Our job training program originally was designed to help women in our safe shelter learn job skills to enter the workforce when they often had limited work experience. Over time, our job training program grew to also support others in our community who need a second chance to get back into the workforce. EEOP can start from the beginning and teach basic job skills like managing time cards, customer service, and running a cash register. But it also can help develop more specialized skills like driving box trucks, operating machinery like forklifts, and becoming a leader.



Who does EEOP help?
Isolation/no work history: For some of the families in our safe shelter, they experienced isolation in their abusive relationship or did not work because they stayed home to raise children, etc. Often these adults feel like they don’t have any skills they can use to apply for jobs in the community because of their lack of formal experience. Megan* came to Stepping Stones after experiencing years of abuse from her husband. He gradually isolated her, first by having her stay home and not have an outside job to eventually severing contact with her family and friends. Megan was home alone with her husband as her only contact for many years before she finally was able to leave and get help at Stepping Stones. Her confidence was low because she didn’t believe she had any skills to offer an employer, but Stepping Stones Thrift Store was a safe place for her to begin to regain the self-esteem she needed to believe that she was worthy and capable. Two years later, she was able to find a full-time role at a medical office to pursue her new journey toward becoming a nurse!

Recovery: Finding a safe place to work and an environment that understands the road to recovery can be difficult. Our team understands 12-step recovery, can provide resources, and even flexibility so that people can make it to meetings. Johnny* came in for an interview for an open thrift store position because he heard from a friend in sober living that Stepping Stones was open to working with people in recovery. He was still



Above and below: Stepping Stones Thrift Store associates accept donations, sort and price items, and fill the shelves for you to shop.

early in his journey, but he was committed to his sobriety and wanted to be in a supportive environment. Our team saw the skills he would bring to our team and gave him a chance. Five years later, he’s still successfully walking his path of recovery and an important part of our team!

Probation/criminal history: Adults with past criminal history or on probation often face difficulty getting hired. At Stepping Stones, we know that a second chance can truly change someone’s life and help them take steps forward on a better path for their future. Matt* came to Stepping Stones through his court-ordered community service after getting out of prison for a variety of drug related charges. He was not able to find a job after his community service was complete, and with an open thrift store position, he applied and was hired. Because Stepping Stones took a chance on him, he was able to rebuild

his life with stable employment, a chance to learn new skills, and build healthy relationships in the community. Today, Matt has over 15 years of sobriety, and is a leader at his job!

A Common Thread - Pass It On
Adults we work with in our EEOP program not only learn on-the-job skills and self-confidence, they learn how to teach others to do the same. The opportunity to give back and “pass it on” helps the person teaching as much as their peer. It allows for the chance to raise up new leaders who have lived experience that can connect and grow with others in our community who need a second chance and a helping hand. EEOP is another way that our thrift store is more than just a fun place to treasure hunt - it is also a place where people can grow in their skills and confidence in order to become better employees in our community!

**All names changed*

STEPPING STONES THRIFT STORE - FAQs

If treasure hunting is high on your list of favorite things to do, then Stepping Stones Thrift Store is the place for you! Voted Best Thrift Store NINE years in a row, Stepping Stones Thrift offers a great place to shop and donate in the Quad-Cities area with proceeds going back into our 24/7/365 domestic violence advocacy and shelter services. Check out a few of our most commonly asked questions!

Q: WHERE ARE YOU LOCATED?

We’re located at 2651 N. Industrial Way in Prescott Valley.

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR HOURS?

Thrift is open Tuesday - Saturday. Shopping is open 9am-5pm. Donation drop-off is open Tues-Sat 9am-4pm.

Q: WHAT TYPES OF DONATIONS DO YOU ACCEPT?

We are able to accept most gently used home goods, furniture, clothing, kitchenwares, toys, shoes, and more! We are unable to accept items that are broken, do not work, or have stains/tears. If you have questions about your item, call our store at 928-499-3206 to speak with someone before driving over! For a list of items that we are unable to take at any time, visit www.steppingstonesaz.org/thrift.



Q: DO YOU PICK UP/DELIVER FURNITURE?

Yes! We offer free furniture donation pick ups. Call our donation center at 928-759-0225 to learn about what we are able to pick up and our current schedule (can be up to 2 weeks out!). We are unable to pick up boxed or bagged items, as they cannot be secured in the truck.

We do offer furniture delivery for a small fee. Ask an associate in the store for more information about delivering your purchased furniture items.

**HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?
CALL THE STORE AT 928-499-3206!**

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: Denise Merritt at 928.772.4184. Para obtener este documento en otro formato o obtener información adicional sobre esta política, por favor llama a Denise Merritt, 928.772.4184.