

Brandee Downs: A Journey from Darkness to Purpose

My name is Brandee Downs, and I am a Certified Peer Recovery Coach (CPRC) and Certified Supervisor of Peer Recovery (CSPR-PR) at Daviness Community Hospital. I also serve as a Treatment Facilitator for Daviness County Community Corrections, where I teach Anger Management and Work Readiness classes at the jail. Additionally, I am an aerobics instructor at the YMCA.

But most importantly—I am a person in long-term recovery.

There are many different pathways to recovery, and in my work, I support whichever path a person chooses. But for me, my recovery will always be through my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I believe in miracles because I have lived one.



A Childhood Marked by Pain and Loss

I was not raised in church. My parents were high school sweethearts who got pregnant with me during their senior year. They married at 18, had me, and shortly after, my dad joined the Navy. We moved around a lot, but by the time I was three, my parents divorced.

Soon after, my mother entered an abusive relationship with a man who was a raging alcoholic. When I was four, my little brother was born, and we moved in with him. That's when life got even harder. I saw things no child should see. I longed for the day I could live with my dad, but that day never came—because when I was nine years old, he passed away.

The circumstances of his death were unclear to me. As a child, I was told that he was cleaning a gun when it accidentally discharged. As a teenager, I was told it was suicide. To this day, I don't know the truth. But I do know that the bullet went right between his eyes, and because of that, his funeral was closed-casket. I never got to see him. I never got closure.

Losing him shattered me. I was grieving, but I was also terrified—living in constant fear that I would come home one day and find my mother dead too. That anxiety made me physically sick. I developed ulcers, acid reflux, and stomach problems so severe that I had to leave class regularly to see the school counselor. Because of that, I was relentlessly bullied.

By the time I was 11 years old, my mother had begun dating an 18-year-old. It was awkward, to say the least. When he moved in, there was a constant flow of traffic in and out of our house, and it didn't take long to realize he was selling drugs.

That same summer, he smoked pot with me for the first time. One of his friends offered me a line of methamphetamine and told me it was like drinking a pack of Mountain Dew. At 11 years old, I was introduced to addiction.

People you know. Healthcare you trust.

Addiction Takes Hold

Junior high was a turning point in my life—but not in a good way. I became rebellious and stopped caring about what people thought of me. I had the "cool parents," which meant my house was the place to be. My friends were partying with my parents, sometimes when I wasn't even there.

By high school, weekend drug use became daily use. I was fighting, skipping school, and getting kicked out. But at home, I was praised for standing up for myself, so I didn't see the harm in my actions. I thought I was strong, but in reality, I was slipping deeper into destruction.

At 18, just before my senior year, my mother moved to Florida with her husband. She left me behind—alone in an empty apartment with overdue bills. Social Security checks started coming straight to me, so I had no choice but to figure out how to survive on my own.

Somehow, I did it. I paid my bills, got my senior pictures taken, bought my cap and gown, and applied for college—all by myself.

On graduation day, as I sat with my classmates, I looked up—and there she was. My mom. She looked healthier than I'd ever seen her. I broke down crying and forgave her instantly. She told me she had needed to get away to get sober. And by the looks of her, it was true.

Losing My Mother and Losing Myself

I enrolled in college at USI and did well during the week. But on weekends, I drank and smoked pot. I stayed for summer school just to avoid going back to Washington and the temptations there.

Then, in my second year of college, my mom was diagnosed with Stage 4 breast cancer. She wanted me to come home and take care of her. So I dropped out and did just that.

She fought hard. For two years, we believed she had beaten it. Her hair grew back, she was getting stronger, and we were closer than ever. But then the cancer returned—this time in her bones.

Her husband left. My brother went to jail. She lost her will to fight. She took anything she could to numb the pain.

One day, she got hold of methadone. The combination of methadone and chemotherapy put her in the ICU. She had her 42nd birthday in that hospital bed. A week later, she died.

People you know. Healthcare you trust.

I blamed myself. I wished I had helped her get healthy instead of taking her pills. But instead of learning from the pain, I ran from it. I dove deeper into addiction, numbing myself in any way I could. I lost control of my life.

I lost my home.

I lost my children.

I lost myself.

Hitting Rock Bottom and Finding Faith

I wanted to stop. I hated the person I had become. But I couldn't stop myself, no matter how much I wanted to.

Then, one day, I was caught with a syringe. I was arrested and sentenced to six months of house arrest.

For the first time, I had to face my reality.

I fell to my knees and cried out to God.

A few days before I started house arrest, my cousin invited me to church. The sermon that day was called "Come As You Are." It felt like it was meant just for me.

At the end, the pastor invited anyone who felt ready to surrender their old life to come forward.

It felt like I was being pushed out of my seat.

I went.

On March 4, 2012, I was born again.

I have been clean and sober ever since.

From Addiction to Purpose

God has restored my life in every way.

I now get to use my journey to help others as a Peer Recovery Supervisor at Davie's Community Hospital. I teach, mentor, and support those battling addiction—because I've been there.

I've also had my criminal record expunged—a reminder that when God wipes your sins away, He wipes them completely.

I want people to know:

People you know. Healthcare you trust.



Recovery is possible.

You are not too far gone.

You are not broken beyond repair.

If you're struggling, reach out. Let someone who has walked this path help guide you to the other side.

Call us today: (812) 254-2760, ext. 4178

Visit us: 3rd Floor, Daviness Community Hospital, 1314 East Walnut, Washington, IN

Fill out a request form: dchosp.org/peerrecovery

People you know. Healthcare you trust.

1314 East Walnut, Washington, IN 47501 • (812) 254-2760 • dchosp.org/peerrecovery