For Immediate Release

QRT success story: “I decided that wasn’t the way to live.”

MORGANTOWN, WV (Feb. 12, 2020) — In a life filled with a lot of lows, Elizabeth Rose finally hit rock bottom two years ago.

She already had lost custody of her two kids. “I was just so out of it, I didn’t care,” said the Morgantown resident. “I thought about them sometimes, but I was so high, it was blocked out of my mind.”

Her husband, the primary breadwinner, had a hemorrhaging brain stroke and while he was hospitalized, Rose turned to prostitution to support her drug habit and to help earn money to live.

At one point, she was down to 110 pounds and “so out of my mind on meth,” she said. Her parents, who normally don’t get along, got together and called her on her prepaid wireless cellphone, begging her to come home, “telling me that I was going to die.”

And, she noted, “I was probably going to die. I remember hanging up on them and destroying the phone and throwing it out. I thought they would be able to find me through calling that phone.”

It wasn’t until after she divorced her first husband and was staying with a friend, a man she eventually would marry, that she finally reached her “do or die” moment. He was giving her money for methadone; she was using it to buy drugs.

“It got to the point where he was ready to throw me out,” she said.

He gave her one last shot, and she took it. “I decided that wasn’t the way I wanted to live. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired.”
Coincidentally, however, it was her birthday, and she was determined to celebrate one last time. In what sounds rough but proved to be a stroke of good fortune for her sobriety, two of her drug dealers were raided and she was robbed.

“I was like, ‘You know what? This is my time to get sober. God doesn’t want me doing it.’”

“And the thing is, if you are saying, ‘This is my last time,’ you’re not ready.”

The fact that it was her birthday means that Rose celebrates her sober anniversary — April 14, 2017 — on the same day. But she prefers to only count one year, not two, because she spent the first year under medically assisted treatment, or MAT. She used methadone and Subutex to help her get off drugs. “I don’t consider it full sobriety time,” Rose said. “Some people consider it clean time, but I don’t.”

Ironically, Subutex is the drug that led Rose down the path of addiction. Subutex is the brand name of buprenorphine, a drug that treats opioid addiction. When her first husband went to jail on a non-drug-related charge, she took a friend’s advice and went to a Subutex clinic to get the drug in order to sell it for bail money. Eventually, both she and her first husband began taking it intravenously.

“His cousin started coming around. He was addicted to heroin,” Rose said. “Subutex is the same thing for cheaper. We ended up doing that.”

That led to harder drugs and to five years of overdosing. A couple years in, her kids were taken by Child Protective Services. They now live with her mother.

A turbulent childhood that included sexual abuse and family members who also turned to drugs placed Rose in a prime position to eventually take them up herself. She also has struggled with mental issues.

Once she was hooked, coming down from drugs meant facing the bleak reality of those issues as well as not having her kids.

“That was my biggest reason for not wanting to come down,” Rose said. “When I did, everything would hit me like a ton of bricks. All of my emotions were too heavy to handle.”

Finally, a shot at a stable life and fatigue from the one she had been living gave her the strength to finally give up drugs. Very quickly, things have turned around for her. She has been the general manager of a convenience store for eight months now. She’s moving up
rapidly in the business and soon will be over another store in addition to the one she currently manages.

One person who has been happy to watch Rose’s progress is Deputy Jason D. Morgan of Monongalia County Sheriff’s Department, a member of Monongalia County Health Department’s Quick Response Team (QRT).

The grant-funded QRT includes MCHD employees as well as law enforcement, first responders, peer recovery coaches (PRCs), a pharmacist and other community members who meet weekly to figure out how to solve the area’s high rate of opioid and other drug usage. First responders send overdose reports to a Dropbox account and the PRCs work to connect individuals with treatment and other services.

Morgan knows Rose’s family and interacted with her often during the time she was using drugs.

“Every time I dealt with her or somebody else when she was there, she was high,” Morgan said. “I would say, ‘When can we get this going? When can we get you help? When will you accept help?’”

Now, when Morgan sees Rose, her healthy appearance always pleasantly surprises him.

“It was kind of shocking to see her actually holding a job,” Morgan said. “I didn’t recognize her. She looked so good from being off drugs.”

In her sobriety, Rose has also found comfort in helping other women, “taking girls in bad places off the street,” Rose said. “I’ve made them my No. 1 priority. I take them to Walmart to get hygiene products and clothes, anything they need. And I get them to detox.”

Her counseling now consists of online Narcotics Anonymous meetings that she has started. “It got to the point where I work 90 hours a week, so I had to find another way to be able to do it.”

And then there are her kids, who she hopes to see soon. Her mother wants her to have two years of sobriety under her belt before she lets her see them. “She raised three drug addicts,” Rose said. “She knows how quickly things can change. She’s trying to protect the kids.”

The steady job and promotion have helped. “I’m starting to gain her trust.”
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