

'Just For Today' helping women with addictions

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Photo: HEIDI HEILBRUNN/Staff

Cassandra Brayboy, left, founder of Just for Today, a women's residential addiction recovery program in Taylors, and resident Corinne Manning, right, speak to The Greenville News. HEIDIHEILBRUNN/Staff

(Corinne Manning used to have it all.

She lived in a big house, in the “right” ZIP code. She had the wonderful husband and kids. She was a PTA mom and an educator.

An addiction to alcohol led to Manning’s spiraled loss of all those things.

She hit rock bottom when she became homeless and found herself hiding behind bushes in a neighbor’s yard, using a water hose to bathe. That was in the summer of 2015.

Manning found what she needed to pull herself up again with “Just For Today.”

[Just For Today](#) is a nonprofit residential addiction recovery program based in Taylors.

Founded by Cassandra Brayboy, the program is based on the 12 Steps of Recovery. But the solution most women find there is God.



(Photo: HEIDI HEILBRUNN/Staff)

“That’s what I preach,” said Brayboy, an electrician whose program has four houses and is currently serving 24 women.

“My girls are required to go to AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), NA (Narcotics Anonymous) and to find a connection with a church of their understanding,” said Brayboy. “But what I try to do is have God-centered living here and lead them back to what we call a higher power.”

Addiction, Brayboy said, is a deadly disease that is mental and physical and it takes.

“What this program does is give back. I try to assist them in getting their lives back, being productive members of society again,” she said.

As part of the 18-month program, the women get help finding a job. Transportation is provided.

Just For Today is sober living in a supportive environment, Brayboy said.

Manning has been living in a Just for Today's 1930s-style mill bungalow, with a homey feel, for a year now.



(Photo: HEIDI HEILBRUNN/Staff)

“The laughter on that front porch and the come-to-Jesus talks, that in itself is therapy,” she said.

Previously, she’d lived in an affluent Greenville neighborhood.

Her ex-husband had been in the investment industry, so “we had money,” Manning said. Manning, who has two “beautiful” daughters, worked in special education.

Her job, she said, was high stress. She’d come home wanting a drink and a cigarette.

The need for alcohol became more and more, she said. “I didn’t eat. I just smoked and drank.”



(Photo: HEIDI HEILBRUNN/Staff)

Prior to entering Just For Today, Manning said her family did an intervention. She went to detox and rehabilitation centers. She became homeless after relapsing while in a recovery house that she checked herself into.

She visited a friend at a men's recovery place. They knew Brayboy and gave her a call. Brayboy had a bed available for Manning to move into.

"It was the stability and the focus I needed," Manning said. "I'm kind of all over the place and I needed somebody to give me direction."

Just for Today has led Manning to a year of sobriety and happiness.

"It has been the best thing that has ever happened to me and I honestly can say that the hand of God is on this place," Manning said.

Alcohol used to be her "go-to." It's not anymore.

"I have the foundation and the tools to stay sober. Now I have a program. That kind of sums it up," she said. "I finally got out of my own way and started listening."

Brayboy listens and understands because her life's journey has been like the women she works with. She, too, is a recovering alcoholic, having been sober now for 14 years.



(Photo: HEIDI HEILBRUNN/Staff)

Like Manning, Brayboy said she, too, had it all. A native of New York, she had the nice house, the wonderful Christian husband and beautiful two children.

Her mother had been an alcoholic and Brayboy said she never told herself she would drink.

She was one of the first women to join the union as an electrician in New York. Many of the men she worked with in construction drank.

She wanted to fit in, being the only female.

“I can honestly say when I took my first drink, I became an alcoholic. Drinking just too off for me,” she said.

Brayboy’s “jumping off place” was when she found herself in a hotel on Wade Hampton Boulevard in Greenville, wanting to break a mirror to cut her wrists.

“I had the idea to reach out to somebody and called AA. They told me what to do and that I needed to go to the hospital because I was suicidal,” she said. “I couldn’t live with alcohol and I couldn’t live without it.”

Brayboy found treatment at a recovery house in Columbia and returned to Greenville.

When she discovered how few beds there are here for women recovering from addictions, she decided to provide some herself.

“I truly believe that I’m closest to God when I’m helping others,” Brayboy said. “I also know that helping others keeps me sober.”

She used an inheritance from her father to buy the first house for the program. Money left to her by her mother when she died was used to buy the second house.

The rest, Brayboy said, “God did.”

She’s now asking God for transitional homes for the women when they leave her program.

Many of the ladies, she said, have criminal records and bad credit reports. And, “if you notice here in Greenville, they’re building a whole bunch of condos and nothing for that lower income people can afford.

“Most of the girls here have minimum wage jobs and it’s hard to move out from here into the real world,” she said.

Her vision is to build duplexes.

“I’m telling God that, so He knows. He’ll give me the desires of my heart,” she said.

A message that Manning wants others to know is that addiction doesn’t discriminate. “You can come from Yale or jail,” she said.

She appreciates hearing or reading about how bad addiction got for others, because she now can identify with them.

“It doesn’t surprise me,” she said. “There are tons of stories about people who had it all and lost it because of their addiction.”

Visit <http://justfortodayrecovery.org/> for more information.