



Spring 2021

Spring is here, and so is the light at the end of the tunnel for COVID-19! We hope that you've found ways to navigate through this difficult time, and that you too are looking forward to a brighter year ahead. We are hopeful that many of the women at Gracenter who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 can begin work again in the next few months as businesses re-open and begin to hire again.

It has been a long road, and we are grateful to everyone who has made sacrifices for the greater good, including the tenacious women at Gracenter who have kept their sobriety and goals through it all.

We would like to share the inspiring story of Mary below, whose courage and willingness to change helped her build a better life. We are grateful to her for sharing her experiences with us.

*Mary grew up in Fresno with two sisters and a brother. Her parents were struggling with poverty and addiction and were separated. Mary remembers a lot of back and forth living with each parent and feeling like she didn't have a stable home. She also remembers struggling with depression.*

*"These things were why I turned to drugs," says Mary. **"I began using meth at 18 and continued for 7 years, until we lost one of my sisters to addiction. It was a wake-up call for me. I didn't want my family to lose another person."***

*My other sister started a treatment program in San Francisco. It helped her, so I went too. And after me, my mom went.*

*My sister and I both went to Gracenter afterwards, I went about a year after she did when I finished the primary treatment program. I knew I needed more time and structure to stay in recovery.*

*When I first met with Sandra to interview for Gracenter, I didn't have a job. Sandra was willing to work with me with no income.*

*Since my first day at Gracenter, it always felt like it was the right place for me. It was still scary at first to try to start learning life skills again, but they really encouraged me. **We put together a plan with goals. Sandra helped me think of long- and short-term goals, and I decided which goals to set--working on getting my GED, finding housing, getting a job.***



**Mary When She Lived at Gracenter**

Continued on Reverse

Sandra helped me with my resume and looking for and for applying for jobs. She helped connect me to training to become a desk clerk. I was able to get a permanent fulltime position as a desk clerk at Dolores Community Services, where I still work.

Sandra also encouraged me to open a savings account and start saving. I opened a bank account and started managing my money. They would have a lady from Bank of the West come and tell us about opening a savings account and a checking account. It didn't matter if you had bad credit. I had a bank account before, but hadn't had a savings account or money to save. I still bank there today. The lady from Bank of the West also helped me open a pre-paid credit card to build up my credit.

One of my goals was to get my high school diploma. Sandra told me about 5 Keys Charter School. I enrolled there, and Gracenter helped me with a tutor. I completed more credits toward my degree. I'm only 50 credits away. I take classes once a week since I'm working fulltime.



**Mary today with Gracie, Gracenter's Dog**

Gracenter also helped me with my health. They helped me schedule appointments to get check-ups with doctors and go to the dentist. They even found donors helped to pay for my dental work. Through my job I get full healthcare at Kaiser, so I still get to go to the doctor and get routine checkups. I found out that I had diabetes and I am keeping that under control, which I am able to do well because of my time at Gracenter. They encouraged healthy eating and had classes to teach us how to cook healthier and buy healthier meals. I still continue to eat healthier and make healthier decisions. We would also do walks, sometimes to the Golden Gate bridge to have a picnic, and they had a yoga class on the weekends at Gracenter."

Thinking back about her favorite things about Gracenter, Mary shares, "I liked the structured part of Gracenter. You had to do chores, sit at the dinner table as a group, pray, and say what you are thankful for. It made me feel like it was a home."

Mary lived at Gracenter for two years. **She remains in recovery and has been self-sufficient since graduating from Gracenter in 2019.** She was able to move in with her sister in San Francisco, and **still stays connected to Gracenter, which helps support her long-term recovery.** "I still call Sandra about once per month and tell her how I'm doing and see how things are going over there. And when Gracenter has their Gala or Christmas events, I will still go."

**Mary is happy to be working, living with family, and continuing to make progress toward her GED.**

At Gracenter, we are determined to provide more women like Mary with the opportunity to achieve long-term recovery from addiction. But we can't do it without your help. If you are able to, **please consider a donation**, which is **100% tax-deductible**, to provide the support needed for women like Mary to build better lives for themselves. Your support makes this program possible.

- A gift of \$1,000 sponsors one woman for a month and includes **housing, three meals each day, one-to-one recovery mentoring, job and school application support, and connections to community volunteerism.**
- A gift of \$500 **provides job-readiness mentoring sessions for 13 women as they pursue their goals, including resume support and referrals to job training.**
- A gift of \$100 provides **40 nutritious home-cooked meals that support each woman's health and foster community among the women.**
- A gift of \$50 provides **basic toiletries for women arriving at Gracenter.**

Gifts of any size will make a difference in the lives of the women we serve at Gracenter. Thank you for considering a donation.

With gratitude,



*Sr. Marguerite Bartling, RGS*  
Sr. Marguerite Bartling, RGS  
Executive Director, Good Shepherd Gracenter

**P.S. Does your company offer matching gifts? If so, please email me and I will help make sure your gift is doubled.**