

I'm inspired by the growth I get to see

Charmaine's Story

I had been through plenty of treatment programs, as well as psychiatric wards throughout my adolescence and early adult life. Nothing helped, until the summer of 2011. That season marked the end of my drinking career.

I was a single mom to three beautiful children, whom I would have given anything for, only I could not get sober. That summer in 2011, I went to AFM's Parkwood in Brandon for 28 days and it was there that I found the courage to pray to a higher power even though I had no idea who, what or where 'it' was. All I kept asking for was to be given a teacher to help me better understand it.

“Tamarack gave me the tools to be able to move on..”

Based on past experiences I knew that 28 days treatment would not be enough, so there I was 28 days later in Tamarack's treatment centre getting ready to start their 60-day program, sitting across from the first person who would teach me about the higher power I had asked for guidance about. Some would say a coincidence, I understood it as being one of many spiritual experiences in my recovery journey.

In all honesty, Tamarack felt like a last resort, since I'd not had success with shorter programs and I was desperate to make treatment work

this time. I came to Tamarack a broken woman from the years of shame and guilt I had been carrying. I did not know who Charmaine was as a person (only that I was someone's girlfriend, and a mom) but I did know that I did not want to ever go back to the life I had come from. Tamarack gave me the tools to be able to move on from the false guilt I had felt all my life. I learned that it was ok to forgive myself, and to forgive those who had harmed me, directly and or indirectly. I was given the opportunity and a safe space to start loving myself, and figuring out who I really was. That was when the real healing began.

“That feeling of being connected like a family has always been important to me..”

After a period of time I had the opportunity to come and work at Tamarack. The role of Residential Care Worker (RCW) felt very natural for me. As a former participant I understood all the many emotions those first 60 days bring up and I felt able to connect and support our participants. That feeling of being connected like a family has always been important to me and to how the program is run here.

Fast forward a few years and one of my proudest moments was to be given the opportunity to become the Aftercare Counsellor and have a part in The Branch

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second stage sober living home. To me, The Branch is a safe space for all to find out who

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they are and start to love all the little quirks we were at one time ashamed to show. We work to live a life where we are honest, reliable and trustworthy, where we can accept each other in their journey and encourage and celebrate the little wins. That is The Branch family support system.

I have worked at Tamarack for nine years now and it is a true blessing to stay connected to our many graduates through the aftercare program as well as being able to work with our participants and walk with them for up to two years. The growth I get to see in them is inspiring and I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else. Tam Fam for life.