



United Way of Greater Houston

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Meet Bryson

Hearing Bryson talk about her family, her job and how excited she is to go back to school, it's hard to believe that a few years ago, she wished she was dead.

When Bryson was nine, her mom was diagnosed with cancer. That same year, Bryson got drunk for the first time. By the time she turned 13, Bryson was drinking heavily, using drugs and watching her life spin out of control. When her mom died two years later, things got even worse.

Bryson moved in with her dad and stepmom, but they hardly spoke. She went off to college, but the alcohol and drug abuse worsened. She came home, got clean and started a job, but then she started using again and blew it.

"I couldn't stop," Bryson says. "I lost my ability to make that choice. I didn't care if I lived or died."

After two DWIs and multiple probation violations, a judge sent Bryson to a six-month behavioral modification program. It was there that she learned about United Way and, when she completed the six month program, immediately moved into a United Way residential treatment center.

"I was able to get a lot of help through grief counseling and therapy," Bryson says. "I was provided a safe place to feel things again and to grieve for the people I lost."

Bryson completed the 18-month United Way program, achieving sobriety and feeling confident that this time it would stick because for the first time, she had truly faced her demons, learned self-worth and gained the tools to cope manage her day-to-day life.

"One of the moments that really clicked for me was sitting in a class and hearing the teacher say, 'your alcoholism, your drug addiction no longer defines who you are,'" Bryson remembers. "It didn't have to define who I was anymore."

Drugs and alcohol definitely do not define Bryson anymore. She is too strong for that now. She has a job she loves, her own apartment, plans to go back to school, a relationship with her family and good, supportive people around her.

"When I look at myself now, I see somebody who is capable," she says. "I see someone who has a choice. I wouldn't be the person I am now without United Way."