



Meet Virginia and Athea,

I had a good childhood in Decatur, with my older sister and older brother. My father worked real estate and then bought a semi and was often away for long periods as a truck driver. My mother worked at Grigoleit, raised us three kids, and studied to become an R.N. I attended Lutheran School Association through eighth grade, but became rebellious when I got to Stephen Decatur High School and dropped out after two years.

I had always loved horses, so as a teenager, I moved to Collinsville to work at the Fairmount Racetrack. I started cleaning stalls, became a groomer, then a hot walker, and then a breezer. I was training to pony the horses when I moved back to Decatur

I got in trouble with the law, but my mom made a deal with the state's attorney to drop all my charges if I moved out of state. I moved to Kentucky with my sister and her family and did pretty well there for a couple of years, working at McDonalds. Then I got in trouble with crack cocaine and moved back to Decatur.

Always fond of animals, I got a job as a kennel assistant at the Macon County Animal Shelter, where I met Dion, an animal warden, who would become the father of my son when I was 21. Dion was a very good father and so in the midst of my addiction, I let my son live with him.

My life was a blur of drugs, alcohol, and abusive men. I went through rehab seven times. Once a boyfriend became paranoid and aimed a gun at me. He fired seven times past my right ear, causing me to lose almost all hearing in that ear. At times I found myself homeless, and at one time, I had a fiancé who gave me everything I wanted, including a 20-acre farm with three horses. In 2008, I found him dead from a drug overdose.

My last arrest was in 2010. I built back my relationship with my dad, helping him renovate the last rental property he purchased. My father died of cancer on March 21, 2012, before I even knew I was pregnant with my daughter. She was born October 4 ("ten-four"), 2012, three months premature. She weighed 1 pound, 10 ounces. She is the light of my life and raising her has helped me grow up. She and I came to God's Shelter on Thanksgiving Day, 2017.

The staff member on duty that night, Christine Fonville, took us to church the following Friday and I have been going every Friday and Sunday since. I had grown up in the Lutheran Church and had been saved many times in various churches, but I had not been able to overcome the temptations of the world. Now I'm in a happy place. I have a great support system through Abundant Life and God's Shelter of Love. I can talk to everyone who works here and know that they love me and have my best interests at heart. I am building back my relationship with my son. Instead of seeking my self-worth in men, I now know that I am worthy because I am created and loved by Jesus. Thank you so much to all who support God's Shelter.

Virginia

We thank God for the churches who blessed us with financial gifts in 2017.

Decatur Churches

Antioch Christian Church
Bethlehem Presbyterian Church
Boiling Springs Church of God
Central United Methodist Church
First Baptist Church
First Congregational UCC
First Presbyterian Church
Grace United Methodist Church
Lampstand Presbyterian Church
Main St. Church of the Living God
Mound Chapel Church of God
Mound Road Christian Church
New Beginnings Church of God
Northwest Christian Church
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish
South Shores Christian Church
Tabernacle Baptist Church
West Side Church of the Nazarene

Central Illinois Churches

Assumption Christian Church
Cowden Christian Church
Elwin United Methodist Church
First Christian Church, Blue Mound
First Christian Church, Clinton
First Christian Church, Moweaqua
First Church of God, St. Elmo
Forsyth United Methodist Church
Hammond United Methodist Church
Heyworth Christian Church
Kenney Christian Church
Lane Christian Church
Mt. Zion Christian Church
Texas Christian Church

Careage House progress



downstairs shower



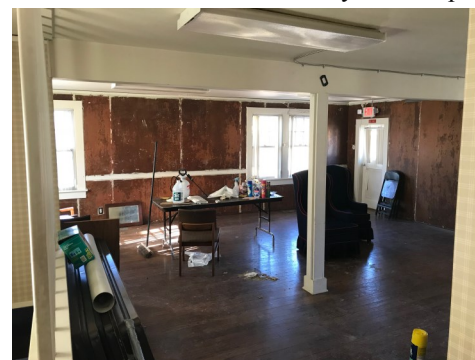
upstairs shower/bath



washer/dryer hookup



frozen/broken water line



upstairs bunk room (stripping wallpaper)

Demetria puts the “Blessing” in Blessingdales!

Many of you know Demetria Williams, cashier at Blessingdales Thrift Store. In addition to cashiering, Demetria was our Facebook editor, and she often took selfies showing off the great outfits that can be found. In the selfie pictured below, she wrote, ***“Look your best for less without the stress!!! Only at Blessingdales Thrift Store are you able to look like you stepped off of a magazine cover.”*** Last December we were sad to hear that she would be leaving us to start a new chapter in her life, but very happy when we heard that this included a greater focus on Kingdom work through speaking and writing. You can find Demetria’s most recent book, ***“Being Single Is Not a Curse”*** on Amazon. In it she “divulges with an open heart how God changed her feelings towards being single and how being single has been a vital season in her personal journey with Jesus Christ.” Pick up a copy of one of her books on Amazon and return the blessing! It’s a great read!



Once again, God has been faithful in meeting our financial needs for 2017! We were well behind budget at the end of October, but your generous gifts during the holiday season helped us close the year with less than two thousand dollars of expense over income. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting this mission! Donations tend to decrease pretty significantly during these cold months after Christmas, but our needs do not. In fact, with the opening of the Room at the Inn and the soon to be opened, Careage House, our financial needs have grown.

Work at the Careage House stalled last month when sub-zero temps in January froze and burst water pipes. The city of Decatur informed us that we are responsible for replacing the valve and curb box that turns the water off at the main. I was under the impression that the city was looking for ways to “partner with non-profits to revitalize city neighborhoods.” Unfortunately, this will be an expensive repair for us. The good news is that we were able to open Room at the Inn on those cold nights, which provided shelter for up to thirty-one people each night.

I was recently invited to be a guest on WSOY, and the host was surprised to hear that God’s Shelter of Love is the only mission in Decatur that provides emergency shelter to homeless families, women, and children. We receive no help from the city of Decatur, the State of Illinois or the federal government. Since 1991, our mission has been the same, rooted in faith in Jesus Christ to meet our needs through the gifts of churches, individuals, businesses and our resale store, Blessingdales. Thank you for your partnership—for your faithful giving, shopping and donating, which allows us to meet this great need in our community!

EQ

Needs of the Shelter



- 2% milk
- butter and cheese
- ground beef
- chicken
- toilet paper
- Washer/gas dryer, gas stove for the Careage House.



Executive Director: Ed Bacon, LCPC
Board President: Harold Batthauer
Ty Batthauer, Decatur
Larry Hughes, Warrensburg
Cody Monkman, Clinton
Brenda Pride, Decatur
Michael Reynolds, Decatur
Greg Taylor, Clinton
Dan Watkins, Mt. Zion



Jobs for Life is a comprehensive jobs skills training program to equip students with tools for employment and advancement in today's job market.

Classes will be held Monday mornings, April 2nd—May 21st, 9:00-11:30 am at Grace United Methodist Church.

No cost to attend. Download an application at our website, Godsshelteroflove.org.

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*RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Blessingdales Thrift Shop

Take advantage of our winter clearance! Come in and step up your wardrobe with new spring and summer merchandise!



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