

Losing Everything and Bouncing Back

Carol Bell and Amicus One to One

“As long as you can connect to the outside you’ve got a chance. They’re going to give you hope for a better future.”

- Carol Bell on Amicus One to One

Carol Bell had achieved the middleclass American dream. She was certified as a public health nurse and owned her own Home Health Care agency. She and her husband also co-owned a chiropractic practice. She had four daughters who attended prestigious schools and were on their way to successful careers. All four girls played basketball competitively and Carol was a part of that too, coaching for 11 years.

Things began to change after a major car accident in the late 1990s. Over the course of a long rehabilitation, Carol turned to alcohol and drug use and entered a period of six years on a roller coaster littered with multiple DWIs, treatment, brief times of recovery, relapses, jail sentences and sorrow.

“I was financially wiped out and it was literally because of my poor choices,” she said.

After her last felony DWI, Carol was sentenced to time in Shakopee Correctional Facility in January of 2008.

“I was pretty terrified about going to prison. I was desperate. I had a lot of fear because I just didn’t know what to expect”

Carol came across Amicus as part of her orientation and applied for the One to One Program.

“You feel so disconnected when you go to prison. You don’t hear from people – even those closest to you – even my own church. There’s that desperation to connect. I got an interview with Amicus and I just bawled the whole time. To be able to talk and not be judged!”

She was matched with Laurel.

“On first meeting Laurel, I was worried that she might think think less of me. I worried that she’d be judging me.

There was none of that. We could talk like we were equals and eventually I was able to trust her.”



Laurel’s visits kept Carol connected and motivated.

When Carol went to a more intensive “boot camp” program in northern Minnesota, visits were more difficult but Laurel faithfully sent a card every day and even attended Carol’s daughter’s basketball games at Macalester and forwarded the statistics.

“The other women knew that if no one got mail, at least I would. It gave me hope that when I got out, there was somebody there for me.”

The support continued after release too. Carol recalls many ways Laurel helped her get off to a good start on her second chance.

“My first day at work I missed the bus. I was horrified! She came and gave me a ride. That meant so much to me!”

Carol’s still on the road back, but she’s taking positive steps. She’s applied to have her nursing license reinstated and has been accepted to college in a program training her in chemical dependency treatment. She’s found an apartment and part-time work and even volunteers at Amicus.

“Amicus is a place where you can feel like you’re part of society,” Carol said. “That’s so big. I want to be part of society in a good way!”