



I basically gave myself to Troy.

Trafficked: A Young Woman's Story

Alexis* met the man who would become her pimp when she was 15.

She walked by his house every day on the way to school. She lived in a friendly Westchester County neighborhood, and she'd often see him sitting on his stoop, chatting with neighbors. His name was Troy, and he was in his early 30s. He seemed friendly, so one day she asked him if he knew someone who wanted an abandoned kitten she had found.

That conversation led to an invitation to a party. Alexis was flattered to be asked out by an older man, particularly one who dressed nicely and had a car. When he said he needed a photo for the party's guest list, "a sexy one, where you look older," she just thought he was trying to make her look old enough to get in. They looked through her Instagram feed and picked one together. Only later would she find out that Troy had posted that photo to Backpage, a notorious sex site that was recently taken down.

"No disrespect, but are you still working?"

Alexis was drugged the first time she had a paid encounter, but when sober she found the money (which they split 50-50) to be too good to pass up. Her family was struggling financially and facing eviction, and selling her body a few times would get them back on their feet.

"A few times" turned into years of sex trafficking, drug abuse, physical assault, and arrests. She would go to various hotels in Westchester, stay for two or three nights, and see nine or ten "Johns" each night. Most of the time she was high on cocaine, "Mollys," or Percocet, or a combination of all three.

"I basically lost myself," she says. "I basically gave myself to Troy. I let him do what he wanted with me."

The turning point came when a friend told Alexis about the Sanctuary, CV's teen homeless shelter. "Deep down," she says, "It didn't feel right. I was disgusted, but the drugs made me feel good."

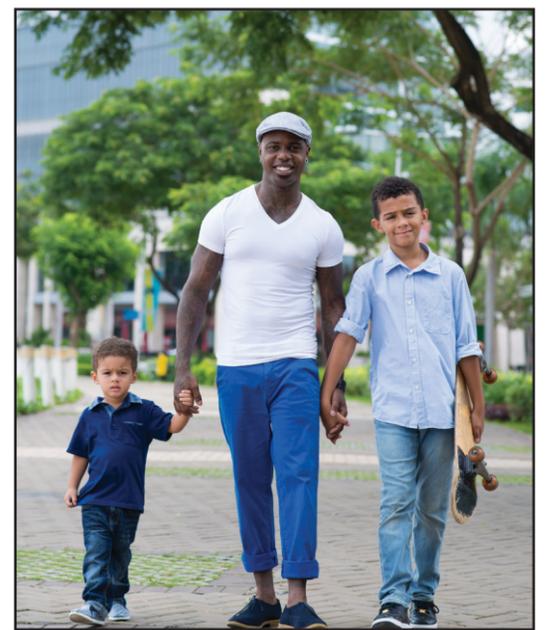
At the Sanctuary, she began to believe that she wasn't a bad person, that she was a victim and could take charge of her life. She got help to get off drugs, and eventually re-enrolled in high school upstate. But she had several setbacks – it wasn't easy.

Now 22 and in a healthy relationship, Alexis works full-time and has a 2-year-old daughter, but her past still haunts her. "People message me to this day on Facebook and say, 'No disrespect, but are you still working?'" She deletes the messages without responding.

The Sanctuary is the only teen homeless shelter in Westchester and Rockland counties. It is a voluntary program for girls and boys aged 12 to 17. If you know a teen who needs help, please share our hotline number: 1-888-997-1583. We'll take it from there.

* Name changed to protect privacy.

Major Foster Care Reform Passed!



This does not happen often, but in February Congress passed the most progressive piece of family and child friendly legislation that we have seen in decades – the Families First Act (FFA).

The Children's Village was part of a small group that built the model and developed bipartisan consensus to achieve this. Until this legislation, federal funding was only available after a child was removed from the family. Often, children are needlessly separated from family and placed in foster homes, institutions, or hospitals.

By 2020, federal dollars will be available to help struggling parents who are at risk of having their children placed in foster care. We applaud this change as it will give us more resources to keep children safe and families together.

“It’s time to go to work, Mama!”

It was brutally cold the night Tabitha arrived at the homeless shelter, but she still hesitated before going in.

This wasn’t what she wanted, but she and her newborn daughter Rylee truly had nowhere else to go. She planned to stay for a night or two and then they’d get their own place.

They stayed – in that shelter and a series of others – for three years.

Tabitha and Rylee have left the shelter and are now living in their own apartment. Tabitha has a steady job working in security, and Rylee is enrolled in the City’s Pre-K program.

Tabitha prides herself on being a good role model for her daughter. In fact, she talks so much about how important it is to have a job and go to work that every morning Rylee says, “It’s time to go to work, Mama!” – even on weekends.

I made it my goal to take advantage of everything I could to give Rylee a better childhood.

Tabitha credits part of her success to CV’s IMPACT Program (Intervention to Maintain Parents And Children Together). IMPACT provides classes and support groups to help parents learn new skills to better care for their children. Although some parents are required to take

IMPACT classes to regain custody of their child, Tabitha voluntarily enrolled in the program because she thought it would help her be a better mother.

“I made it my goal to take advantage of everything I could to give Rylee a better childhood. I didn’t want her to face the same obstacles I faced... no, it wasn’t even ‘want.’ I was DETERMINED to give her a better life.”

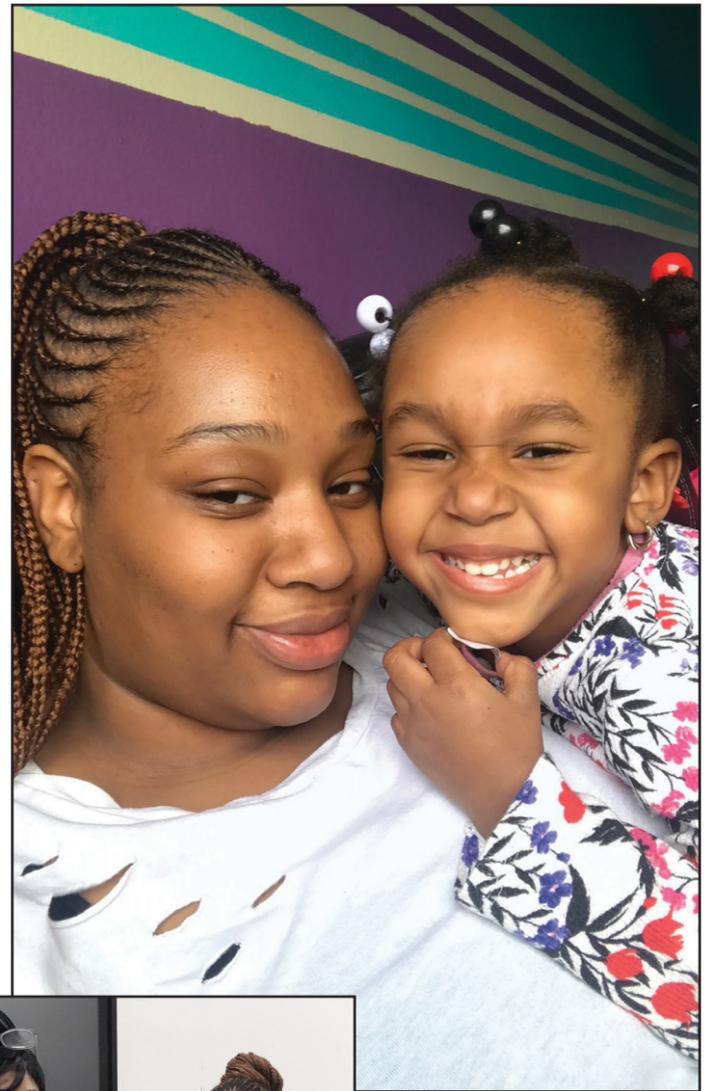
Tabitha was an exceptional student, paying close attention and asking insightful questions during lessons about child development, parent/child bonding, age-appropriate behaviors, and more.

“One of the topics I focus on in the class is modeling – being the type of adult we want our children to grow up to be,” said instructor Valerie Worthy. “Tabitha really took that to heart.”

“I’m proud of where I’m at, and I hope Rylee follows in my footsteps,” said Tabitha. “I know she’ll thank me one day.”

Tabitha was a role model for the other participants as well. Now 27, she was several years older than her fellow classmates, and willingly shared her life experiences.

Tabitha is looking forward to serving as a role model yet again, to future IMPACT participants. She has just become the newest member of CV’s Parent Council.



We are grateful to the French-American Aid for Children foundation, which has supported the IMPACT Parenting Program for more than 30 years.



Update on a CV Alum

We introduced you to Darian Slater in the winter of 2016 in an article called “Hope Takes Flight.” We are delighted to share the exciting news that Darian recently earned his private pilot’s license!

Darian overcame tremendous odds in pursuit of his lifelong dream of flying airplanes. As a child, Darian had trouble focusing in school, had a reading ability far below grade level, and was frequently reprimanded for poor behavior. But things changed for Darian while attending the Greenburgh Eleven school on CV’s Dobbs Ferry campus. In fact, he did so well that he went on to enroll in a bachelor’s degree program in Aircraft Operations at Vaughn College.

In recognition of his achievements, Darian was honored with the President’s Award at CV’s WAY Dinner on May 14.

Congratulations, Darian. We are so proud of you and your accomplishments!

Bravehearts—From Victim to Victor



“Oh. My. Goodness! I am literally speechless!”

This was the response from Jessica Grimm on learning that the organization she started, Bravehearts, was selected as a 2018 Child Welfare League of America Champion for Excellence Awardee. Jessica accepted the award last month in Washington, DC.

“I have never even won a scratch off ticket, let alone such a prestigious award!”

Jessica and four other young adults started Bravehearts five years ago to give foster kids a voice. They wanted to use their lived experience to help government and nonprofits understand what kids need, and to advocate for change. Children’s Village embraced Bravehearts and their mission, and Bravehearts became part of CV in 2015.

“I know you guys see good things in me, but I would not be here if it wasn’t for CV,” said Jessica. “I am honored and humbled to even be considered for such an opportunity! I have never even won a scratch off ticket, let alone such a prestigious award!”

Currently 150 members strong, Bravehearts are young men and women who have been in foster care, were homeless, or were incarcerated. They hold weekly support meetings and offer one-one-one mentoring for kids focusing

on changing the conversation from “victim” to “victor.”

Their “Bravery Behind Bars” program is similar in scope, but with an added goal: Helping incarcerated young adults understand that their life has value and that one mistake doesn’t have to derail their dreams. Their latest project, Brave Moms, is focused on parenting teens.

CV has benefited from the relationship with Bravehearts, too – helping us to better understand the experiences of foster children. For example, Bravehearts told us they want to be treated as part of a foster family, not a temporary burden. They want to be part of decisions about their future. They crave information on their history. And much more. We’re grateful for their courage to speak out.

For more information on Bravehearts, visit braveheartsmoveny.org.



Meet the “Stars” of Our Circle of Friends Dinner

Christopher and Jameel were definitely the cutest guests at our Circle of Friends dinner, and they weren’t even on the guest list!

The boys, who live in Rose Cottage, were enlisted to present our Legacy of Service honorees with a painting of their cottage done by one of our talented young men.

The Miner family – Pam, Lee, Julie, and Charlie – adopted Rose Cottage (home to 12 children in foster care as young as 6) along with a group of friends over a decade ago.

The Miners and friends visited the cottage most weekends, playing sports (basketball was a favorite), gardening, and playing board games... basically doing whatever activities the boys requested.

They have become beloved “uncles and aunts” to the young boys, some of whom have few family connections.

The dinner was also an opportunity to honor Macquarie Group with the 2018 Corporate Award. Macquarie is a generous supporter of our work, and Macquarie team members serve on our Board of Trustees and Leadership Council.

Thanks to the generosity of our guests and sponsors, we raised \$600,000 for children and families at the dinner!

Save the date for next year’s dinner: April 25, 2019.



www.childrensvillage.org

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THE NEW YORK
COMMUNITY TRUST **NY** *NEW YORK*
Nonprofit Excellence Awards
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Know someone who may be interested in our work? Pass along this newsletter to spread the word!

Grateful for our Corporate Partners

Stepping inside a gleaming corporate office for the first time is an awe-inspiring experience for many of the young adults we work with – and it can be quite motivating, too!

CV has been fortunate to partner with some amazing corporations – Deloitte, Macquarie Group, Patterson Belknap, Ambac, and others. They volunteer with our kids and have invited them to visit their offices to learn about their companies and the work they do, and to interact with their staff members in meaningful ways.

Our latest partnership is with Rothschild & Co., which selected CV to be one of four beneficiaries of its Community Partnership Investment Program. They held a Dress for Success event for CV in their office in April. Our young men and women participated in workshops on job searching skills and interviewing techniques, and “shopped” for work-appropriate attire. Each attendee left with at least one complete interview outfit; one young woman left with six!



Make a difference in a life and earn income for life!

If you are retired, looking to turn your assets into an income stream, and care about our work, a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA) might be a good fit for you.

It's easy to set up. You make a legacy gift to CV and receive a regular check for the rest of your life.

For the first time since 2012, the American Council on Gift Annuities has approved an increase of its suggested rates for CGAs. If you have appreciated stocks or property, you can transfer these gains into a charitable gift.

If you want more information on how to make a lasting gift, contact Linda Stutz at lstutz@childrensvillage.org or call 914-648-3319.

CV to Build More Deeply Affordable Apartments



Housing is the single biggest barrier to our youths' achieving independence. The apartments we built two years ago in Harlem have allowed 12 young adults aging out of foster care to get their first real home. After more than a year, all of those young people are still in their apartments, paying rent and remaining independent.

But 12 apartments are not close to being enough.

CV was just approved by the City – along with co-developers – to begin construction of an affordable housing project at 4790 Broadway in NYC. The project, on the site of the old Inwood Library, will include a new, state-of-the-art library and 175 deeply affordable apartments.

In addition, ACTS@The Eliza – the indoor Activities, Culture, Training & Support center – will provide a multi-use performance space and education, health, and wellness programs for children, youth, and families. The building will also be home to a brand new Pre-K for All facility that will be operated by the New York City Department of Education.

Construction will likely begin in early 2019.