



Hi! My name is Rachel. I am 31 years old. I am a mother of three children: Landon, 15; Ethan, 10; and Madilyn, 4. I have never been married. I lost my virginity at the age of 14; I also started smoking weed around the same time. After I had my first child at the age of 16, my drug use increased. The following year I was introduced to prescription pills and used cocaine. My addiction continued for the next 14 years, with occasional periods of sobriety. By the time I was pregnant with Madilyn, I was heavily addicted to oxytocin and crystal-meth, and I didn't quit using the drugs during my pregnancy. I know now that it was only because God had His hand upon her life, that she was born healthy and beautiful.

Rachel

My drug use robbed me from being the mother that God had intended me to be. I became very selfish and put my needs first. My children went four years without their mother. I can only imagine how this affected them mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Coming into YCMW, I experienced guilt and shame thinking about the people, places and things that I had my children around.

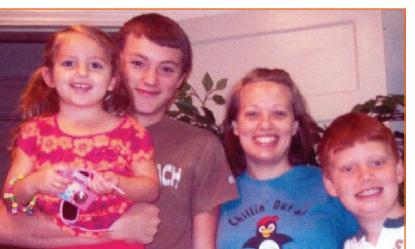
I was at a crossroads in my life. I had lost my job, my car, and my boys. All I had left was Madilyn, and I felt pathetic. I wanted to change, but didn't know how. It was at this time my family staged an intervention. My brother, who had been in the Youth Challenge (YC) program in Florida, told me about the women's program in Connecticut. My family encouraged me to go, but I was undecided.

Finally, one night I was in the bed trying to sleep, but I didn't have anything to take! I began to think about how messed up my life was and how I failed my children. I felt the need to reach out to the Lord, got down on my knees, and prayed—especially for my children. It started to storm with thunder and lightning. Shortly after that I fell into the best sleep that I had had in a long time. Over the next week God spoke to me through T.V. commercials about The Hartford Insurance Co. That crazy deer was everywhere! I gave in and agreed to enter YCMW. When I arrived, what should I see but that crazy deer on top of a building! The Hartford Insurance Co. is located right down the street from the women's home.

I will be graduating this October. I am constantly amazed at how God is changing and restoring my life. I am forever grateful to Him for never giving up on me!

I am also grateful to YC for the administrative training and experience that I received working at the business office after I completed my 18 months in the program. Now that I am back home with my children, I have a job that allows me to utilize the training that I have received at YC.

As I continue to move forward in the new life God has given me, I look forward to growing closer to the Lord each day. As each new trial comes, I will stand on the promise He gives us in Philippians 4:6-7 (KJV), "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." God Bless You!



CONGRATULATIONS—GRADUATES OF 2010

**BRANDI WOODRIDGE
CELESTE ELMAN**

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32 ATWOOD STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06105
(860) 527-2000 - FAX (860) 525-5790
EMAIL: mfwyc@youthchallenge.org
THE REV. MARVA DOWNES, DIRECTOR

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15-17 MAY STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06105
(860) 728-5199 - FAX (860) 524-0418
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DR. PAUL ECHTENKAMP, EXEC. DIR.

YOUTH CHALLENGE BIBLE TRAINING CENTER
111 STERLING ROAD
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YOUTH CHALLENGE HELPING THE HURTING

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(Mission for Women Edition)
www.youthchallenge.com

Dear Friends and Partners,

Youth Challenge Mission for Women is Breaking New Ground!

We are at the threshold of new things developing at Youth Challenge Mission for Women



Rev. Damaris and
Rev. Downes

(YCMW), and it is exciting! For the past 29 years, children visiting their mothers on weekends could not stay overnight for lack of adequate accommodations. This year, we were afforded access to an apartment in the Missionary House owned by Youth Challenge. Brandi and her sons, Amir and Gabriel, are the first ones to participate in this blessing. We are grateful to the Executive Director, Dr. Paul Echtenkamp, Pastor Guillermmina González, and the Board of Directors who have made it possible. The new privilege will allow women who have completed 12 months in the program to enjoy overnight visits with their children for at least six months before graduation. It should also provide an informal environment for the mother and her children to interact and connect in a family setting. In that way, the mother would be able to acknowledge areas of concern in herself and her

BREAKING NEW GROUND

children that need to be improved. Another wonderful thing that occurred at YCMW this year was the opportunity to train women who are interested in making an impact in the

lives of hurting women internationally. The Reverend

Damaris Hernandez, Director of The Deborah House, a Youth Challenge Substance Abuse Women's Program in Guatemala, spent two months of intense training to become more effective in her efforts to meet the needs of the women who come for help. Reverend Damaris returned home in the month of April, excited to implement the knowledge, skills and experience that she received at YCMW. We were also able to train and transition Amy, a 2009 YCMW graduate, to Guatemala for six months to assist Reverend Damaris.

Then, I received a phone call from a young woman from Romania who identified herself as Anca. She was interested in doing a six-month internship at our facility to complete a degree program. Anca turned out to be an excellent trainee, and we were honored to be part of her education here in the United States of America.

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For years, we have considered operating a thrift shop as a fundraiser, but we had limited space and we could not afford to rent. Well, recently someone donated several pieces of brand new clothing with the tags on them. My first instinct was to use the clothes as a fundraiser. I began to send the clothing to be sold at consignment shops and at a



The Rev. Marva Downes

friend's store. The project has been successful! We are now looking for someone to donate some building space in a convenient location where we could open up our own Thrift Store in the future.

We thank God for the mercy and the compassion that He has extended to us in 2010. Lamentations 3:22,23 (NKJV) says, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness." The Lord has

certainly met our needs and He has broken new ground at YCMW. We have a long journey before us, and we still need the strong support of our partners to enable us to keep moving forward in this great battle of substance abuse addiction that deprives women of their identity, self worth, families and the opportunity to function appropriately in society. Our goal is to restore as many hurting women as possible and to also train women in the US and internationally who have the same vision and passion.

(cont'd on page 3)

**A Thank You To Our Volunteers, and
A Shout Out!!!**

We want to send a "Shout Out" to Charlie and Eli Bengston who have been involved with YCMW for the past 25 years. Charlie and Eli have provided



The Bengstons

milk and juice in the early years, and later on dozen of eggs monthly and whatever else they could find to donate. God bless you both and your family for all the love and support that you have given to us these many years.

**Please Send A Legacy
Donation
Keep The Vision of Dr. Raúl
González, Alive!**



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: (____) _____ Email: _____

I commit to giving to the Legacy: (Please check one)

- One Time Gift
- \$1 a Day Challenge
- \$1,000, \$5,000 or \$10,000
- Other: \$_____

All donations are tax deductible, please make checks payable to
Youth Challenge or donate online at www.youthchallenge.org

Mail to: Youth Challenge PO Box 763 Hartford, CT 06101



Obed Rodriguez—Born on Feb. 2, 2010 to Diane and Jimmy Rodriguez, graduates of Youth Challenge

**NEW ARRIVALS -
THE HERITAGE OF YCMW**



Teelyn Jennings—Born on March 6, 2010 to Jamon and Andrea Jennings, son and daughter-in-law of Shari Jennings, graduate of YCMW

**MARK THESE EVENTS ON YOUR
CALENDAR!!!**

**YOUTH CHALLENGE
GRADUATION BANQUET**

Plainfield, CT
October 16, 2010 - 2:00 pm
For tickets please call 860 728-5199

**YOUTH CHALLENGE ALUMNI
SERVICE**
NOVEMBER 26, 2010 - 7:30 pm
221-225 Greenfield St
Hartford, CT 06112

**YOUTH CHALLENGE ALUMNI
HOMECOMING BANQUET**
February 2011
For reservations call 860 728-5199

**LIST OF
NEEDS**

- Vehicles
- Marketing
- Fundraising System Software—The Razor's Edge ®
- Pie Ingredients for Thanksgiving Pie Sale
- Office Supplies
- Household Supplies

Miracle Reunion!



Three years after graduating YCMW, Lisa had a surprise visit from her children presently in adoption. God Is Good!

Now, we are looking for people with great ideas, abilities, creativity and drive that would like to participate in raising funds for YCMW and then release the finances to ***The Legacy Fund To Keep The Vision Of Helping Hurting Women Alive***. Please send us your special financial donations and great ideas. You may give us a call at (860) 527-2000 or email us at www.mfwyc@youthchallenge.org. God Bless you and your families! **Joyous Thanksgiving!**

Sincerely,

Marva

The Reverend Marva Downes, Director



Hello, my name is Brandi, and I'm 31 years old, and the mom of two wonderful sons, but more importantly I am a child of the Most High God Almighty. You see, at the age of three I went to live with my father. I loved my daddy, but still I wanted to know why my mommy didn't love me, because she was not in my life. My father remarried a couple of times, and I gripped tight to whomever I could, longing for a mommy to love me. I have a wonderful grandmother that brought me to the house of the Lord, but the family I had at home did not support what I was being taught about family in church. My dad and stepmom were hard-working parents who wanted the best for me and tried to provide it the best way they knew how. My parents didn't let me hang out too much with the neighborhood kids, because they thought they'd be a bad influence on me. That

only infuriated my confusion and frustration as I witnessed all the violence, dysfunction, and destruction in my own family and home. At the age of 17, I left home determined not to be like any of "those people" that denied the truth of their lives behind smiles, masks, polite behavior, and overwhelming pride. I ended up doing the same things as "those people."

When I came to YCMW on December 7, 2007, I wanted desperately to "find myself." Life had tried to tell me I was created to be a lot of things: a slut, a weirdo, the crazy chic, prostitute, pothead, crack smoker, coke sniffer, bipolar, depressed, worthless, useless. All I wanted was to be a part of my sons' lives; a healthy part, someone they could be proud of, someone that would be an example of God's Word, and most importantly, His Love. Many days I thought about not being at YCMW, but then my Lord would remind me of what's at stake. I didn't know how to be loved, or how to accept love. I'm glad to exclaim that because of God's unfailing love I am being healed and restored, not only in a right relationship with Him, but with my sons.

At the present time, I have completed the program, and I am engaged in a vocational training program at YCMW which allows me to develop my skills in administrative duties, grant writing, and other personnel responsibilities. My future goals are to pursue higher education and to spend more time with my children.

I am grateful to the director and my counselor, The Reverend Marva Downes and Deacon Shari Jennings, who have sacrificed for me and many others to show a mother's love, so that I can, too. I would also like to thank Youth Challenge for making an apartment available for me to spend at least one weekend a month alone with my sons and to have access to continual parental counseling and support. My sons are also able to attend church with me twice a week as well as participate in other healthy social activities.

I thank God for our late Dr. Raúl González, Visionary and Executive Director of this great program Youth Challenge of CT., Inc. He believed "There's A Treasure In The Addict," and that broken families can be restored. I am living proof! Hallelujah! To paraphrase Eph. 3:20-21 (NKJV), Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or think, according to the power that works in us (me), to Him be glory in the church (my life) by Christ Jesus to all generations (my sons), forever and ever. Amen.



Amir, Brandi, Gabriel