

An excerpt from

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"You don't get back the time."

Gwendolyn Walters is currently living in one of The Community Place's HOST (Housing for Sustainability and Transition) Program apartments. She talks about her life, her personal battle with drug abuse, and her relationship with CPGR.

You have had a very interesting life so far.

What has been your greatest challenge to date?

Recovery. Getting over drugs and alcohol.

You were raised in a two-parent household south of Rochester. How did you get from there to prison?

Being a follower instead of a leader. Hanging out with the wrong people. Making bad choices. Trying to fit in with the wrong crowd.

Did you make friends while you were in prison?

Yes. I still write to a couple of the people today at least once a month.

What did you learn during that experience (in prison)?

That I treasure my freedom. I learned so many things. I learned what was really important to me—my family and my daughters—and that you don't get back the time. A lot of people in prison say that when they get out and go back, they're going to make up this time. You don't get to make up the time. You can't go back and make up three or four years. So you have to learn to forgive yourself and keep moving on. I had to learn how to change.

You admired your mother very much. How did your drug use affect her life? My mother had high hopes for me because I was real "book-smart." I think that when I got into drugs it disappointed her. I think she blamed herself a lot. Most parents do blame themselves when their kids do go the wrong way. Was it something that they did? I had to keep reassuring her that it was nothing that she did that made me use drugs, it was my fault.

While you were in jail relatives cared for your daughters. How do you think that affected them?

They were well-loved. My sister-in-law took excellent care of my daughters. While I was gone, they didn't want for anything. She probably took better care of them than I did. They lived in the suburbs. They went to Disney and went on trips. They went to Canada to see

—continued on page 2



