

The Day that Changed Everything

Hello, my name is Jeanette and I'm here writing down a significant step toward the light in my life and I have the warm inspiring staff at the Hutt Street Centre to thank for it.

I have had some major road changes in my journey and I'm pretty thankful I've made it through to be here and to be able to see that I have some purpose still amongst the community.

I'm a recovering methamphetamine user and can say it pretty much engulfed the last ten years of my life. Before the craziness started I was a mum of two extremely resilient children, both in private school, owned my own home and my husband and I owned a successful butcher shop in the Central Market. Then my marriage broke down and I found myself distanced from my family and socializing in circles well beyond my previous life experience, and trying to find a place to fit in. I found gear, whatever you want to call it, and within a few years I had spent my whole working life's proceeds and still had the drive to get to my next shot.

Over the last ten, eleven years I have been pretty isolated from the world. I found it a scary place and full of people that were extremely different because of my lifestyle. So I spent an awful lot of my time in my own company for my emotional wellbeing and safety.

I coped quite well and just lived day to day in my cave as I called it. My magic cave, safe and secure for the most part.

Then on an April night at 3am we woke up to our house on fire. Shit! And everything changed, my partner went home to his Mum and I went to my parents with the hope that I would get off the drugs. I lasted seven weeks which is my longest period getting clean. But I was still not ready to let go of what had become my friend, my release and a place where I was free. My parents found out and packed me on my way with much disappointment. I ended up at Catherine House and then onto the Terrace, a boarding house, almost like a halfway house for those of us that had lost our way. I personally think everything happens for a reason and I have found my time there a soft place to land whilst really belonging nowhere. I spent my first 6-8 months in seclusion, not really coming out of my room. I knew no one and had spent so much time by myself that my skills and confidence interacting with other people were really rusty!

I slowly came to realise and hope that it was time to face my demons and trust that the world had a place for me still. And it was then I discovered the Hutt Street Centre. I started going down to do my washing and have my lunch. It took a bit of determination to begin with I felt a bit apprehensive and didn't feel like I fitted in there either. But I persisted and slowly the locals started saying hello and the staff got to know me and even remembered my name which was the nicest feeling. I had found a new family and people that took an interest in me. On meeting Nav I started coming down for some computer

tuition with a gorgeous lady called Louise that saw that maybe I was looking a bit further ahead than today, and collectively we started looking into something that I could do with my time. We decided on Cert III in Aged Care and I enrolled with the Red Cross College and had a start date. I was excited, apprehensive and wasn't entirely sure if I was ready to break the pattern of my life. I did and started the course in early October. It took me about a week to get over my feelings of 'Oh, can't be bothered getting out of bed' but then found myself looking forward to getting up and loving having somewhere to be and really enjoying being involved with my class mates. Our trainers had said at orientation that meltdowns were common in about week three, and I was right on schedule. Feelings of doubt in my ability to keep up with the homework and my years on the drugs meant that needing a police clearance may well present a problem.

I took myself down to Hutt Street after not showing up for class for three days and felt I had to face Nav. Thank God I did. After a pep talk and some wise words that left me thinking I wasn't ready to be a quitter, I set my alarm for the next morning. I had a chat to my trainer and she also encouraged me to keep going and that it was pretty normal. Then came week four and I think I finally started to get into the swing of adult learning.

I found homework comforting and a great way to stimulate my sleepy mind. Things went really smoothly from then on and I managed to complete my assessments in the required time (others didn't) and started receiving certificates of my achievements, real evidence of my effort and for the first time in ten years something to show for my time. I feel like I'm waking up and my mind is looking for stimulation from more than just television. So I have enrolled in Cert II in Community Services in the New Year and think that this might be my passion, and finding something that excites and stimulates that doesn't come from a syringe is awesome and has come up in a great time in my life. I've just turned 40 and have decided my new life is beginning now. And I have the great staff at Hutt Street as the instigators in helping me find some direction. The great kitchen staff packed me a lunch every morning and the words of encouragement when I picked it up every morning were a great start to my day. They are an inspiring group of caring staff and I think all of the clients that use the centre as a place to start their day appreciate how caring, welcoming and hard working they are.

I'm hoping there will be others that take the big step and look forward in their lives with hopes and dreams for the future, because I know how excited the staff are to see the progression and defiant steps forward that take place within yourself and I guess that's what makes your days worthwhile.

Thanks heaps Nav, Louise, Sr Gwen and the sponsors that helped fund our courses. Let's hope the Education program is off to a great start and bigger and better things in the New Year.

Jeanette L