



## Resident Testimony - Jazmin A Hopeful Future

*“Nothing about this has been easy, it’s been very difficult. But I just want to learn to be a good mom to my son.”*

Jazmin’s addiction started when she was 14, “I was stealing alcohol from mom’s cabinet. My addiction has cost me a lot. It’s caused me to spend some time in Monterey County Jail and worst of all, be separated from my son for two years.”

**When I first got to The Bridge I felt like I was somewhere really safe.**

When asked why she chose to come into The Bridge program, she noted that her options were limited. “I came to the Bridge because it was the only program that accepted me.” Her charges restricted which program she could get into. Bob Langley, the chaplain at the Monterey County Jail, told Jazmin about the Bridge. “When (Bob) told me about the Bridge program - I knew I wanted to go there.”

As she reflected on the beginning of her time at The Bridge, she remembered feeling secure. “When I first got to The Bridge I felt like I was somewhere really safe. Coming from jail and homelessness before that, I thought The Bridge was really fancy. It was beautiful and I felt safe.”

As Jazmin graduates the program, she reflects on how things have changed. “I feel like I’ve gotten stronger mentally. I have grown to see that I can do hard things or things that seem hard.” She has also felt her faith grow stronger and has learned to lean on God to give her strength day to day. “I feel like God changed me completely. I just feel like He’s with me and everything I do is through God. He keeps me going.”

Jazmin went to church before coming to The Bridge, but lacked a deep relationship with the Lord. “When I graduated high school, I worked really hard to transport myself to church. I lived in King City at the time but the church I liked was in Salinas. So, I would take a bus to go to church every Sunday. But I didn’t truly understand having a relationship with God until I came to The Bridge.” In month 5 of her program, Jazmin surrendered her life to her savior, Jesus Christ and got baptized.

Jazmin has gained valuable experience and skills during her time in The Bridge. “I’ve learned and gained job experience, how to coexist with others” in the workplace and in the house. “During my time in the program, I’ve gained some job experience working at the Second Chance Thrift Store. I’ve also enjoyed my time working in the Culinary Program. I’ve learned patience in the kitchen while they taught us complex dishes with multiple steps - it’s not simple like making ramen.”

When looking forward towards her future, Jazmin sees hope. “I started parenting classes and have had a couple job interviews over the past few weeks. I also look forward to going up to Second Phase and starting my life over.”

“One of the things I struggled with was feeling hopeful about my life and seeing a good future for myself. But now I feel like my future seems hopeful, that I can have a job and have my son with me soon to spend even more time with him.”

Jazmin’s story is similar to many of the residents, both men and women, that we have had over the years, with a strong desire to reunite and reconnect with their children that their addiction brought to an abrupt end. The typical reasons causing separation between parents with addiction and their children is usually through homelessness or time spent in jail or prison.

One of the most challenging things for these residents, who are also parents, is the fear of rejection from their kids, and it keeps them from reaching out. The most common question asked is “So what do I tell them?” We, The Bridge, encourage our residents to just be honest with them, since most kids desire a relationship with their parents. Sure, there will be a season of rebuilding - it takes time to restore any relationship. We encourage each resident to start that process by reaching out to their children, and become a stable figure in their life. We urge them to do this while they are in a safe place like The Bridge.

Executive Director’s Corner  
**Mike Casey**



## Gleaning From Homeboy Industries



Homeboy Industries was started by Father Greg Boyle in 1988 to offer services to improve the lives of former gang members and get them off the streets in East Los Angeles, California. “We imagine a world without prisons, and then we try to create that world” – Father Greg Boyle. As the largest gang rehabilitation and re-entry program in the world, it helps former gang members get off the streets, assists with court hearings, and provides access to various education opportunities.

A couple of staff members of The Bridge recently traveled to Homeboy Industries to see the services they offer to the men and women in L.A. coming out of the gang lifestyle. It is our desire at The Bridge to similarly offer multiple services to our residents, so they can be better prepared for the future. Such services include parenting or anger management classes, computer education classes as well as working with the court system, probation and parole. In fact, many residents are currently enrolled at the PG adult school to obtain their High School Diploma or HiSET.

It is always an encouragement to see someone else doing a similar work, and glean from them to become better or accomplish more.

## The Bridge Culinary Program



The Bridge Culinary Program has an overall purpose of teaching residents’ skills that could bring them out of their old ways and into a successful and ever-expanding field. The program decided to flip the roles and

allow the residents to teach. Students from Trinity Christian High School were chosen to come be a part of their program for the day. This was the first time the culinary team had decided to let a resident teach, and they needed to pick a resident for the job. They chose Claudia, a resident of 8 months with a lifelong background in cooking. She along with Greg, a ministry assistant who assists with the culinary program and runs the kitchen, were the ones teaching the students.

The following is an interview with Claudia and Greg, as well as quotes from teachers and students.

### 1. What did you enjoy about the day in the kitchen with the students?

**Claudia** – It was a breath of fresh air actually; they were so attentive and willing to do what was taught. They were thankful they followed directions and they had fun and ate everything; (she has a gift with the kids).

**Greg** – When I first heard about the teaching opportunity with

See **Culinary** other side



## Pacific Grove Good Old Days Festival

Good Old Days is a traditional festival in downtown Pacific Grove, “America’s Last Hometown”, with live entertainment, over 200 arts and crafts vendors, food booths, carnival rides, classic car show, parade and much more!

The Bridge was happy to participate at Good Old Days this year and be out in the community helping with set-up, picking up trash, and overall cleanup at the conclusion of the festival, along with a booth featuring items from Second Chance Thrift Store and information about The Bridge Restoration Ministry. The booth was located on Lighthouse Avenue and displayed various categories including vintage items, upcycled projects made in-house by residents, Dixie Belle Chalk Paint and supplies, and a Community Corner section which showcased items made by local people who sell at Second Chance.

### **Culinary** *from other side*

students, my first thought was about safety. But immediately I realized that I didn’t need to worry. I was very impressed by them, they were polite and kind, and very attentive. Because of how they conducted themselves, we went out of our way to be interactive, so they really got to participate in what we were doing.

#### 2. Did you learn anything from teaching the students?

**Claudia** – I learned that I could be different from what I was before, 9 months ago I wasn’t allowed to see my kids, now I am getting to teach them. I learned that we need to put a lot into our kids, we need to invest in them.

**Greg** – I wanted the kids to have a positive experience. Meeting the students, it was a revival so to speak. It let me know how much hope there is for the future. It was energizing.

#### 3. How was the overall experience?

**Claudia** – I want to do it again. It was amazing. The kids were amazing, they really wanted to learn and I’m open to it, if they are willing, it’s fun. I would be excited to do it again.

**Greg** – It was great, the kids were very gracious, curious and very appreciative, I had a ball. Unfortunately, we ran out time. I was kind of disappointed how fast the time went. We were having a lot of fun.

#### **The TCHS Students were asked about what they enjoyed about working in the kitchen with Claudia & Greg.**

**Sabrina:** I liked that she shared her story with us, I thought that was kind of cool because it was like we actually got to know her. And then learning her recipe was also cool because she’d been doing it for so long.

**Xander:** I think the biggest thing was hearing how nervous they were and then as the day went on how they were kind of, changing or surprising themselves for doing so well. Especially Claudia, you’d never tell that it didn’t come naturally, for her to be teaching and instructing and leading a kitchen.

**Kaylin:** I enjoyed that Claudia shared her personal life with us, and she was comfortable with telling all of the students about it. It was heartbreaking to know what she has been through, but she taught us some valuable lessons. And she also taught us how to make tortillas.

**Mr. Hawkes (Teacher):** It was amazing to see the students, Claudia and Greg interact. I particularly enjoyed seeing how Claudia relaxed through the whole day as the students listened. You could see the joy in the students’ faces, as well as in Claudia’s, as they learned and as she saw them learning.



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