

My Life With

METH

FORTY TENNESSEANS SHARE THEIR STORIES

**METH
DESTROYS**



PUBLISHED BY THE TENNESSEE DISTRICT ATTORNEYS' GENERAL CONFERENCE

This book has been published by **Meth Destroys**, an anti-methamphetamine education effort supported by the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference.

Since the launch of the new www.MethFreeTN.org in November 2005, hundreds of Tennesseans have shared their stories, detailing how methamphetamine's destructive nature has affected their lives.

The following pages contain just some of these stories. All real. All from Tennesseans.

**"I HAVE A STORY TO TELL, I'VE JUST NOT BEEN READY
TO TELL IT. BUT I KNOW IF IT WILL HELP ONE PERSON
AND GIVE ONE PERSON HOPE, THEN IT WILL BE WORTH IT."**

– April, Hamilton County

Amanda

Dyer County

I began meth when I was about 15 years old. I stopped when I was 19. I first was around it when I was at a party, and was offered it. I tried it. I fell in love with meth the very first time. I thought to myself, 'This is the way that I want to feel forever.' The first month I hardly slept, hardly ate and became so dependent on this drug. I began dealing meth to get the money I needed to buy it. Finally it was like I became so accustomed to it that I was unable to sleep, eat and function just like everyone else. When I wasn't high, I was going into a deep depression; I was violent and I would have done anything to get meth. I tried to quit a few times, but always got sucked back in. The truth is, I never wanted to quit. Why would I want to give up something that made me feel so good? I went from 140 pounds to 100 pounds in a matter of months. It was a regular thing that my friends and I would go rent a hotel room for the weekend and have an ounce of dope to smoke.

I finally came to my mom and told her that I was using meth, and I couldn't quit without some help. After not being on it for a couple of days I was kicking myself, thinking, 'How stupid am I to tell my mom that?' I was dying just to have a smoke. Now that I'm 20, I am no longer on that stuff; I have a family now. The cravings still have not gone away. I still have a huge paranoia of the dark. I still think that I see some shadow people when I'm outside at night. I can't even imagine what my mother went through with my rehab. I pray to God that my son will never get into that.

Michelle

Knox County

I first used meth when I was 18 years old. I had already left home and almost dropped out of school. By my 20th birthday I was in jail for the second time on meth charges. I didn't know how to stop. I had no control over my life any more. My relationships with my family were non-existent. I was being abused by my boyfriend. I tried suicide, but I failed at that. I was ready to die and only after a little over a year of using meth. Someone far greater than me needed me to stay in this world. I was put in a drug court program and given a chance at recovery. It opened my eyes to a world that I was dead to. I was awakened to a new light. I have been clean for two years now, and I wouldn't trade it for anything. If you know someone who is on meth, just pray for them. Let the police know your suspicions.

Anonymous

I'M 14 YEARS OLD, AND I USED METH FOR ABOUT THREE MONTHS.

I never thought that it would destroy my life, but soon I was stealing money from my parents and shoplifting, often selling the things I stole to support my horrible habit. I was never at home. I was always lying to my parents. I was so violent. I didn't care about anything – even myself. The only thing I cared about was meth. Then one night I started seeing and hearing and feeling things that weren't there – and I picked at my skin for hours. It was the most horrible feeling in the world. I thank God every day that my friend helped me quit.

Monique

Bradley County

I was recently on meth, and it took me to some horrible places. It made me hurt people and steal from my family and have bad judgment. Sad to say, but I'm still addicted to it, and I've been trying to stop but I can't. Doing it made me eat my skin and have holes in my skin.

Karen

LAST YEAR MY 19-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER WALKED INTO THE HOUSE AND SAID, 'IF I DON'T LEAVE THIS PLACE, I AM GOING TO DIE.'

I was blown away. Who was this person masquerading as my sweet, tender-hearted daughter? Was this actually the same girl who used to take naps on my chest in the afternoon as "Mr. Rogers" would lull us both to sleep? The same little girl whose tiny hand used to creep across the front seat of my car and grab mine and silently hold it as we drove down the road? The same little girl I had read bedtime stories to and taken to the park? The one who was so proud to have me be the room mother of her class?

The person standing before me was telling me she was going die! How could this be my daughter? What world had I entered? I had entered the world of a meth addict, and the world of my denial, which in spite of many signs of trouble, I chose to ignore.

Meth is unleashed evil which seduces its users into believing it means them no harm, 'it's all right to do it just this one time.' Well, 'just this one time' is all it takes, and meth rubs its hands in glee as it claims another victim.

We sent our daughter away – two thousands miles away, where she lived with her aunt and uncle for several months. She needed more than a geographical escape from this drug. Moving to California was simply the beginning.

Dealing with the physical aspects of the drug was imperative. Her body was a wreck. God bless my sister-in-law and her husband. She was physically nourished back to health with healthy food, vitamins and rest. But her soul needed nourishment as well.

I am convinced that true recovery is spiritual in nature. A change of heart is necessary in order to truly change a life. I do not discount other aspects of recovery, but I believe too little attention is spent on replacing this drug with something worth living for.

At the risk of being branded a fanatic, religious nut, I must say KNOWING the love of God, His grace and acceptance is what saved our daughter. She has a joy that does not come from drugs, but one that lives inside her. It is visible. Her face glows with the love of God. Meth tried mighty hard to take her life away, but instead she is a beacon of hope to others facing this horrible addiction. In the last year, she has helped many others who have been drawn to her because she understands them.

She has told me stories of when she was using that make me cringe. Her simply being alive is a miracle. We prefer not to live in the past and relive all those dreadful memories, but we visit them from time to time to remind us how close meth came to robbing us of our beautiful daughter and to ensure that we never forget what it can do and what it is still doing to so many others.

Stacy

Henderson County

I am a 29-year-old wife and mother of two. I started using meth about five years ago and watched it destroy my family and take away some of the people I loved most. My husband of 10 years was federally indicted two years ago for conspiracy to distribute meth and was sentenced to six and a half years in federal prison. It has caused me and my children a lot of hurt, but it has also made my husband a better man and saved his life.

He now knows what meth can do, and he hopes to talk to other people about the effects of meth and how it will destroy everything you love and can ruin your life. For anyone who may think of using this drug, please think differently. It will destroy your life.

Lyn

Davidson County

I was addicted to meth for several years. I got so caught up in it that I lost my children, my home and my car. I went to jail and lost everything. Last year I got my children back; I have been clean for over two years now. Recovery is possible from meth. There is hope. Get help. It may just save your life!

Anonymous

Bradley County

I was heavy into meth use for two and a half years. I was using around one-half to one gram daily. I have been clean now for five months. There is help out there. There is a much better way to live than simply surviving from hit to hit or from line to line. Seek the help you need. I did, and I am happier than I ever was when I was using.

Cody

Clay County

Hi, my name is Cody, and I'm a recovering meth addict. I had been on meth for two years and clean for six months. I started using when I was 15. At first it was the best thing in the world. I was strong, confident, untouchable and most of all, happy. Or so I thought. After about eight months, I started dealing meth. I smoked more than I sold and couldn't make a profit. Meth was my life. I kept it a secret, and I thought that nobody knew I was on it except me. I once stayed awake for 18 days on it. On my 17th day I was seeing "shadow people" and was so paranoid I locked myself in the closet in my bedroom with sheets on my windows and the lights off. After I came down, I slept for two days. When I woke up, I was so depressed I ate a bottle of sleeping pills to try to kill myself; I ended up in the hospital getting my stomach pumped. After that, my parents made me get help. I was a chronic addict. I didn't think I was, but everyone else did. Turns out I was the only one who didn't know I had a problem. I went to treatment for 45 days and when I got out I was a

changed man. But after two weeks of being subjected to temptations and old friends, I was back into it. I lost my parents' trust again. My parents would cry because they were losing their son to something that was killing him. After I relapsed, I got back on track, and now I am doing pretty well.

Jessica

I was a meth user for five years, and all it ever brought me was pain and sorrow. During my time using the drug, I was enrolled in a number of rehabilitation programs and juvenile detention facilities throughout West Tennessee, in an effort to kick my habit.

Meth made me fly into fits of rage with people I loved most. And one time, after two weeks of tweaking, I couldn't remember who I had let borrow my car.

My first child was conceived when I was using meth. I continued using until I was two months pregnant, and as soon as I had my child I started using again. I missed the first year of my daughter's life because I was too busy doing dope and tripping.

AS LONG AS YOU KEEP RUNNING WITH THE SAME CROWD, YOUR ROAD AS A DRUG ADDICT IS GOING TO BE LONG AND DREADFUL. UNTIL YOU CHOOSE TO GIVE UP OLD FRIENDS, OLD HANGING PLACES, OLD HABITS AND OLD WAYS, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO QUIT. YOU HAVE TO WANT IT FOR YOURSELF, AND YOU HAVE TO MAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

Brittney

Lincoln County

I'm Brittney. I'm 15 years old, and I'm a meth user. I started about three months ago, and I can't let it go. I started it because my friend cooks it. I thought it was harmless when I first tried it. Boy, was I wrong. I just recently lost my best friend; he didn't want to put up with my problems any more. My entire family has given up on me, and I got kicked out of school. I have nobody left. I know this is only the beginning, but I can't

stop. It's like meth has taken over my life. Like a slow death, I'm scared of what it's going to do to me, but I can't stop it. If anyone reads this, please take my advice and never do meth.

Alesia

Davidson County

I lived in Cumberland County when I was first introduced to meth. The drug is well-known in that area, and it seemed that everyone was doing it. So, as a young, rebellious girl, I tried it. It is a very addictive drug. I continued using the drug for about a year until I almost lost my life. Because of the drug I was physically abused, I was almost raped, my health went downhill, and I almost lost my son. I am proud to say that I have been drug-free for four years and proud and fortunate to say that I did it all on my own.

Misty

At 17, I married my childhood crush. Everything was good – until my “perfect man” began using meth. Soon, he became a monster. He stayed gone all the time. He lied. He was always paranoid. He was spiteful and abusive – and I stayed, thinking I could change him.

For five years I watched him grow older, sicker, meaner and more demanding. It wasn't until my 5-year-old daughter begged me to leave him that I realized just what his addiction was doing to our family.

I took my children and a bag of clothes and left the state. For the first year I was gone, I kept my location a secret. My husband called every day – some days making death threats, some days making empty promises.

My daughters and I soon moved on with our lives, and only heard from him sporadically. However, he always called on my birthday – until this year. This year, on my birthday, I buried my husband and my children's father.

Candace

Bradley County

I am 26 years old and a former meth addict. I have been clean for 15 months, but in the time I was using, meth cost me everything I had – including my child. People don't realize that meth isn't just another drug. It isn't something you lay down and walk away from. It takes complete

control of your life from the very beginning and destroys everything. I have watched meth destroy my friends' lives and almost destroy mine. But I am testament to the fact that you can overcome this addiction. I now have a great job, and I have my son back. God is so faithful.

Anonymous

Bradley County

Meth changed my life forever. I lost my children, suffered brain damage and damaged my relationship with my family. Half of the people I considered friends for years are in prison for meth-related crimes, and the other half are still cooking and using the drug. I had to get out of the state to get clean. And after 12 months of being clean, I still don't have custody of my children. My hope is that this will get through to a mother using meth before it's too late.

Michelle

I AM A RECOVERING METH ADDICT. I HAVE BEEN CLEAN FOR ALMOST THREE MONTHS, AFTER USING METH FOR TWO YEARS. AT FIRST, IT DIDN'T TAKE MUCH TO GET ME HIGH, BUT AS TIME WENT ON AND MY BODY BECAME IMMUNE TO THE DRUG, I HAD TO TAKE MORE AND MORE. I FINALLY GOT UP TO TAKING ABOUT 23 GRAMS. THAT'S WHEN I ALMOST DIED.

My heart was so swollen it almost exploded. I had not urinated in five days, and when I did, it was the consistency of Jello – that's when my kidneys shut down.

If it hadn't been for the local sheriff's department, I would be dead.

Meth takes control of your life. You feel numb, and you don't care what happens. My children were taken away from me twice. I went to jail.

Now I have to deal with the physical effects of meth – like leaving crystals in my lungs that make it difficult for me to breathe.

Anonymous

Montgomery County

My husband was a meth user for years, and it caused damage to him, our marriage and our child. He was uneasy all the time, and he never slept. He would stay up for days at a time. Then he became abusive.

After years of abuse and depression, I filed for divorce. Realizing what his drug use had done to our family and to himself, he decided to get help.

We soon got back together, and things were great for a couple of years – then he met a user and is hooked again.

I'm scared because we have a young son and daughter, and I know how hard it is to get off of meth. He told me he was going to stop, but I'm not sure he's telling me the truth. God bless anyone who has been through this and is going through it now.

Anonymous

Anderson County

I knew nothing about meth until someone very close to me got hooked and lost everything – including everything that person had worked for for 26 years. The person had never even used drugs before.

This person's meth use has destroyed our trust, hope, dreams and family. The hurt is so unbearable – so indescribable.

Gayle

Sequatchie County

My son and his wife have destroyed their lives by using meth. My son is in prison serving seven years for making the drug, and his wife lost custody of their two children because of her meth use.

Mama

Hamilton County

My 20-year-old son passed away as a result of his smoking meth. The ephedrine used to make meth opens up the sinuses, and it caused a hole to form in my son's. A common sinus infection spread to his brain causing him to lose the use of the left side of his body. He was admitted to the hospital and placed in intensive care where he was put on a

ventilator and underwent brain and sinus surgery. Tests also showed he had severe, permanent lung damage. The doctors didn't expect him to make it. After 11 days he awoke and was taken off the ventilator and it looked like he was going to come home. Three days later, he pulled his knees to his chest and said he was having a panic attack and began vomiting blood. He died from a blood clot. Meth does kill.

April

Hamilton County

I have a story to tell, I've just not been ready to tell it. But I know if it will help one person and give one person hope, then it will be worth it.

My name is April, and I am a mother of three. About 8 years ago meth came into my life. I was married, and my husband and I worked 50 hours a week. We had it all — the big home, new cars — the good life. I had never done a drug in my life, and hated them and anybody who had anything to do with them.

My husband drove a truck and that's how our relationship with meth all started. In the beginning, he just used meth for work so that he could work harder and longer, and make more money. I didn't even know that he was using it, and then we started to fight. That's when I knew something was wrong. I loved him so much. He was my best friend and my world, but within a year of me trying meth at a friend's party our marriage was over.

My life went downhill from there. I wasn't working. I wasn't talking to my family. I was all alone; but the drug made me feel good, and I just didn't care about anything or anyone else. I left my kids places I would never have left them before I started using. I was everything in life that I had always hated. I hated myself, but as long as I stayed high it didn't hurt.

God gave me chance after chance to stop and to get it together, but I just didn't. I ended up in jail for one year. Never would I have thought that I would spend time in jail; but I did, and it saved my life.

I do wish there had been a long-term rehabilitation program that I could have enrolled in, but it wasn't available. So I did my time and thanked God every day for saving me.

I have been home two years in April – that's three years that I've been clean. I got an award from my local recreation center for being team mom for my son's football team. I have all three of my kids, and they love me

so much. If I can do it, anybody can do it. I just want people to have hope and to know that there are people who do stop doing meth and that they can rebuild their lives.

Anonymous

Henry County

I am almost 25 years old, and I am on probation for possession of meth.

I was a hardcore user, high for days and days on end. Being arrested was the best thing that ever happened to me. It saved my life! Who knows where I'd be or what kind of condition I would be in right now if I kept going on thinking I was living the right way.

I am 5 foot 7 inches, and at the time of my arrest I weighed in at about 95 lbs. - if I was lucky. I was wearing a size zero, and those clothes were falling off of me. I am a fairly attractive person, and when I was arrested my face, arms, and legs were covered in scabs from me picking at myself. The father of my son didn't even recognize me when he came to see me in jail. Oh yes, and as for my son, I still don't have visitation rights to him yet!

That's right; above all else, I lost the one thing that should have been the most important to me and I didn't care. My son was given to the custody of his father. I have now been clean for almost three years. I am going to court next month and hope to get visitation rights with my son, and I have a beautiful baby girl who is my pride and joy. I am remarried, and life is good. But I never forget what sitting in that jail cell felt like, and how deep down in the bottom of the world I was when using. If I choose to forget those things I could go back any day. But I DID MAKE IT!!! And I am only 25!! So for all of you out there who are young and thinking you can't do it, I am proof that yes you can!!

Gunner

Monroe County

About five years ago I got custody of my son (he was 3 years old at the time). I pulled him out of a situation and from a very bad mother. By the age of 3, my son saw more than most of us will ever see in a lifetime. It is a wonder that his life did not end at a young age. His mother has been involved in drugs for some time now. She has gone all over the country looking for something to feed her need. Up until about three weeks ago, I hadn't seen her for about a year. She called my house and I thought

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since I hadn't seen her in a while, I would go hang out with her before I went to work. So we decided to meet in town and chat for a little while. When I finally saw her I didn't know who she was. The last time I saw her, she weighed about 115 to 120 pounds. When I saw her this time, she looked like she weighed about 85 pounds and looked like she was 40 years old. She is only 25 years old. I knew that she was on meth when I saw her because she just looked so bad. I asked her if she was on meth and she said she was not. I knew she was lying to me. I just don't know what I will tell my son what is wrong with his mother or what I will tell him what she died of when that happens. It is a really bad and sad situation.

Judy

Knox County

My son met a girl selling meth. She introduced him to the drug. He was a well-bred and moral child until he started this deadly demise. She had a hold on him because she gave meth to him. He has turned his back on me, his wife, and his 4-year-old child. All he feels is guilt. He doesn't have what it takes to do anything about it, just guilt. This is just the worst drug. We all need to rally together to get this stopped. I have lost my son, and I don't want any more mothers to go through this loss.

Sarah

Grundy County

I am a recovering meth addict.

I was using meth very heavy, up to four and five grams a day. I lost nearly 60 pounds and also lost my home, my family and everything I had. This drug will take everything you have, and you won't even realize it. You will be lucky if you get out with your life. I almost didn't. I have been clean now for 10 weeks. With no rehab and no drugs, I have done this on my own. It has been very hard. I still shake, sweat, vomit, stay depressed, crave crank and all that goes with it. When I'm feeling weak, all I have to do is look in the eyes of my two sons and it all goes away. Don't let this take your family. I thank God every day I have mine back. Stop doing this now before you don't get a second chance like I did.

Katie

Williamson County

I started to use meth at age 21. Meth took away my whole life. At first I just loved all the energy it gave me, and then it got to where I could not stop no matter what I did. I stole from my family and scammed stores to

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fill my drug habit. Now I have a felony that will haunt me for the rest of my life. I ended up in jail for a long period of time due to my addiction. My teeth are very brittle and they chip all the time. I lost my house due to meth. All of my money was used on my habit. Meth is by far the worst drug I have ever done. I became a different person. Since I stopped using meth, I have developed terrible anxiety and paranoia. I now take an anti-anxiety drug due to these problems. Getting off meth was the best thing that ever happened to me, and I am very proud to say I am now in recovery and have not used meth in almost a full year. I never thought I would see this day. Meth is the worst thing out there, and I really hope my story will be able to help.

Anonymous

Madison County

Meth has destroyed so much in my life and in my 5-year-old daughter's life. My ex-husband began using meth while we were married, not to my knowledge. He then wanted a divorce, which I now understand why; but at the time, I couldn't understand it. He began heavily using meth all day, every day for over a year. He lost three jobs. On his weekend visits with our daughter, he was always high; he would buy drugs with her in the car and he has even brought our daughter to his dealer's home (all of this without my knowledge, of course). The last three months or so I really began noticing dramatic changes in him. My daughter no longer wanted to go for her weekend visits, and I knew in my heart that something was wrong. I confronted him about it, and he denied it. I begged him to let me get him help, but he didn't let me. He finally got arrested on possession of meth charges.

He is now looking at five to 20 years in prison, all for this drug. Thankfully though, through God, he has entered a long-term drug treatment program and is slowly recovering. He will have to be away from his daughter and family for at least a year, but it is his only hope for him to get better and not have to go to prison.

I just want to say to anyone out there who may even be considering or anyone who is addicted, there is help out there, and there are people who love you enough to get you the help you need. This is an illness, a disease, but there is hope. Having to protect and shield my daughter from everything that is going on with her dad is the hardest thing in the world for me, as I know it is for him as well. He is not meant to be a drug addict; he has a great and bright future ahead of him, and through God, one day that will be possible. I don't understand what or why anyone would want to do this or any other horrible drug - it is ruining lives and families.

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April

Tipton County

I found out one week before I married my husband that he was addicted to meth. For the last three years, I have been with him in the battle to stop using. He turned into a completely different person. He has pawned everything he could get his hands on and even stolen money from my purse. His use and addiction to this horrible drug have almost broken my spirit and made me want to give up on life completely. Although he has been clean for seven weeks now, it is still an uphill battle; and I don't know if I will ever be able to trust my husband. I believe in my heart that meth is a plague and is pure evil.

William

Tipton County

My story starts on April 14, 2005. My wife and I were letting my cousin watch our kids. When we went to pick up our kids, the house was surrounded by Tipton sheriff's officers. We found out that they were cooking with a red phosphorus lab (which has no odor and is not detected easily).

My youngest has had some problems with her liver and is just now getting better. We were told that anything can happen with any one kid for up to five years. Three of the four people are just getting a slap on the wrist. I have to pay the doctor bills and just hope and pray that nothing more happens to my kids. I feel like if we want meth to go away we need to make it harder on first-time offenders because when they get out usually they go back to making it again. Please, let's do something so that our kids are not hurt by this drug any more.

Brittany

Bradley County

My name is Brittany, and I have been clean for 19 months. Meth made me lose everything.

It started with little things like not being able to eat, buy clothes, pay my bills. It took my child from me, my family, my friends, my home - everything.

METH IS UNLIKE ANY DRUG OUT THERE. ALL DRUGS ARE BAD; BUT THE WAY METH AFFECTS YOUR BRAIN, AND THE WAY IT MAKES YOU ABSOLUTELY NUMB TO

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YOUR FEELINGS IS UNLIKE ANYTHING I HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED. THE WHOLE TIME I USED METH I THOUGHT I DIDN'T HAVE A PROBLEM. I THOUGHT I HAD EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.

I started using a little when I was 17 while using other drugs. I got pregnant at age 19, and I quit during my pregnancy and up until my son was seven months old. I went and smoked some pot with someone, and the next day I was back on meth. It was that quick. I had been clean that whole time, and all it took was one joint, and I was ready to get tweaked out on dope!!

That happened in July, and by October of the same year I had lost custody of my precious baby boy. It didn't even faze me that I didn't have him any more. I just kept using. I regained custody in January, but I wasn't clean; I just faked everyone out. I lost my home in April, and by May I had lost my son again.

I started hanging around people manufacturing meth, and was doing "side-work" for them. I got busted at a meth lab, and still didn't quit using. I just kept going and going never once thinking, 'Hey! You've got a little boy who needs you!' All I was concerned with was dope, dope, dope.

I looked like a skeleton. I weighed about 100 pounds and was staying up five to eight nights at a time. Finally one day some dope we had tried to cook didn't come out right, and I decided I was sick of using. I physically removed myself from Bradley County and starting getting clean! Two weeks later I found out I was pregnant again.

I am still clean and have two wonderful children – and custody of both. It has taken staying away from old places, and most of all cutting all ties with the people I used to party with. I give all credit to my Heavenly Father! I now run a Mothers and Others Against Methamphetamine Support Group that meets every Tuesday. I just want to help the people who want to quit and don't know how to stay clean. We are having great results!

Anonymous

A little over three years ago, my brother (now 38 years old) lost his 18-year-old son.

It was a tragedy.

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My brother was successful, married and a family man. The only thing he was high on (at that time) was life. He really was a good man. But after the death of his son, he slipped off into a depression.

He soon went through a divorce. He gave up his position at his company. He didn't want to shower, eat or sleep. He didn't want to go to any family functions. He basically didn't want to live. He totally alienated himself.

I would drive by to see him; he was all about small talk and moving you on your way (out the door that is). I would call him; all he'd do is put me (and other family members) straight into his voice mail, and never return the call. Excuse me, he would call from time to time, but only to ask me to keep his 8-year-old daughter on one of the weekends he got her. He always said his nerves were torn up, and that he didn't want her to see him in that condition. I almost always would keep her when asked.

I began to realize I did not know this man anymore. Someone I'd grown up with and known for 35 years suddenly felt like a stranger. I begged him to visit church with me and my family. I tried over and over to convince him to seek counseling. I told him I would even go with him for support, but he always opted not. I was losing my brother. Why? What is going on? I would cry out, 'Lord, please help him.'

Almost a year ago he was arrested (meth). I went and got him out of jail. To my surprise his depression had turned into an addiction. He was devoured by something I refer to as the "devil's dinner" – meth. He was arrested again just two months later, but this time there was no getting him out. The truth is, he didn't need out. Two months later he was sentenced to five years in prison and 10 years on probation.

His daughter, now nine, hasn't had a hug from her daddy in eight months. He missed her birthday, and wasn't there for Christmas. She visits him as often as possible, but that just isn't enough for a small child.

No one deserves this. Meth destroys. It has a domino effect; it literally knocks down everyone who loves you - one by one. Everyone is affected by your desire and need for a "high." Everyone ends up hurt, not just you. I understand that with just one hit you can be hooked. Is it really worth your life, your family and even your freedom? METH IS NOT THE ANSWER.

Jenn

It was about three years ago when I first got introduced to "ice" or crystal meth. I had some friends from Knoxville visiting, and they brought the drug out. They kept on and on until I tried it. I did. I liked it. As time went

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by, I lost more and more weight. I got down to 89 pounds and looked like death. In the two-year time frame that I used meth, I lost my family's respect and a best friend thanks to a bad injection of the drug.

I stopped doing meth on September 20, 2004, and I have been clean for almost two years. I am happier than I have ever been, but even after being clean this long I know that I could still easily give in to temptation. I still have headaches and even have the taste in my mouth, but I refuse to give in and start using again.

Tina

Putnam County

My name is Tina, and meth took my life away from me. I lost my children, my friends, my home, myself – everything. I spent seven months in jail. I have been clean almost three years.

While using I saw that meth takes over the lives of great people. I am involved in addiction recovery efforts because I want to take this message to other addicts and to children. I have a life now. I have my children. I have a new drug-free home. I love the new life I have without meth.

I am a college graduate, and I have decided that I would like to go to law school. Currently I am serving on a planning committee with Judge Lillie Ann Sells, District Attorney Bill Gibson and others in Putnam County who support the formation of a residential drug court.

I believe it all starts with sharing my experience with others. I don't know where God will lead me from here, but I know it is going to be a journey a million times better than the one I was on before.

Deanna

My name is Deanna, and I just turned 33. My life is really screwed up.

I smoked meth for about a year with my boyfriend and thought I was having the time of my life. Really I was on a fast-moving train to ending my life.

My boyfriend and I were busted for a lab. As far as I know we lost everything we owned. We came very close to losing our babies, ages one and two, and if it wasn't for my very hard-working mom and dad, we would have.

My mom took custody of them for us and left my boyfriend and me in jail. I have absolutely no hard feelings toward her for leaving me there. If she hadn't I may still have been stupid enough to use meth again.

My Life With Meth

I've been out since the first weekend in September, and I'm still clean. It has been very hard not to go looking for trouble. It's unreal how fast this stuff grabs you. 'Death on foil' is what I call it.

Daniel

I'm 27 and first did meth in 2003. I was hooked almost immediately. At first I just snorted it, then (under peer pressure) I began smoking it. By early 2004, I was shooting up.

The first half of 2004 is a blur. I would be awake five days at a time, and I spent all my money on meth. I even borrowed and stole from friends and family to support my habit. I lost all focus and control over my life. I was going downhill quickly.

I lost a lot of weight. I looked like crap. Fillings would drop out of my teeth. I had really bad skin, psychological problems and began having unsafe sex.

I was constantly on something to bring me down and put me to sleep, or to bring me back out of the comedown. It was just drugs upon drugs upon drugs.

By the end of 2004 there wasn't much left of me. Somehow I woke up to myself and got out of where I was living and away from my circle of friends.

One year later, I'm healthy and I don't touch any drugs. My whole experience feels like a bad dream. I'm getting my life back on track. I look a lot better. I feel more confident. I save money, and when I spend it, it's on things like traveling and clothes. I've even had my teeth fixed.

I know this sounds very simplistic; but, if you want to try meth, DON'T. If you're on meth now, STOP. It will destroy you.

Michelle

I tried meth for the first time in 1993; I was 23. I used it off and on for the next seven years. The last two years of my using, I did it just about every day. My boyfriend had learned how to cook it. We were cooking and selling it. We sold to someone who was working for the police, and got busted on March 1, 2000.

Today I thank God that we got busted. I probably wouldn't be alive if it weren't for that. While I was in jail I met someone who was in the Alcoholics Anonymous program, and she gave me a phone number to

Tennesseans Share Their Stories

call for help when I got out of jail. I called the number and they gave me the Narcotics Anonymous phone number. I went to my first meeting on April 3, 2000.

I got clean on April 7, 2000, and have not used any type of drug or alcohol since. I realize that I am the exception to the rule. I cannot stay clean on my own. I still attend meetings regularly, and I have a strong relationship with God. It is something I have to work on every day to stay clean.

Gail

Four years ago, my only brother (whom I hadn't seen in a couple of years) came to visit me. The moment he walked through my door, I was speechless. My handsome brother with the perfect smile, the talented artist who had always turned the heads of every woman in town had been replaced by this horribly thin, nervous, decaying-toothed man that I didn't even recognize. I tried to hide my total shock from my mother, but she sensed something was terribly wrong.

When he left, I sat my mom down and told her that her son was hooked on meth. She didn't want to believe me, and I begged her not to send him money no matter how much he begged her, as I knew it would only be to pay for his drugs. We began to pray and pray hard.

We decided to take a trip out to New Mexico to find him about a year later when correspondence from him had declined. What we found was even worse than the previous visit. He was living in a horribly run-down trailer with his girlfriend, who was also an addict. He became extremely violent with me and scared my mother very badly.

I told her there was nothing we could do except to encourage him to get some help, bring him some groceries and go home. I honestly didn't think I would ever see my brother alive again, but through constant prayer and his willingness to get well, he finally came home.

He had hit rock bottom, and just in time. He had moved in with his dealer, as he had nothing left and nowhere to go. My husband and I were very skeptical about having an addict living under our roof; but after four months of deprogramming, love, nutrition and prayer, my brother is on the road to recovery.

My mom, my sister and husband have been incredible. He no longer feels like we are trying to tell him how to live his life, but that we were only trying to save it. He has a good job, a nice apartment and is rebuilding his life. He realizes there is a lot of damage that may never be repaired, but he said he will never look back.

My Life With Meth

I know he suffered a broken heart when he had to leave his girlfriend behind, but he knew that she would not quit and that the environment and the drugs would soon end his life. I see the damage done to his body – his handsome face and his mind – and it makes me want to cry; but when he puts his arms around me and tells me how much he loves me, I know that my brother is alive and is going to survive and beat this horrible addiction.

He has gained about 25 pounds and eats like a pig! I am encouraging him to paint again. I beg other families out there to stand up and be strong if one of their loved ones is addicted to this horrible drug. It isn't easy, but with faith and love you can help save them.

The first thing that must be done is to get them away from the environment where the dealers, users and the drugs are. Try your best to keep them focused on recovery and give them time to heal.

I salute our governor, our law enforcement officers and this program to stop this killer drug and these dealers from destroying more lives. God Bless You All.

Sarah

I started using meth when I was 17 years old. At 19, I became pregnant with my first son. I weighed 70 pounds at the time.

I stopped using for nine years.

About eight months ago, I started using again. I lost my home, both of my sons and everything I owned. I was living from place to place with nowhere to go. I lost 40 pounds in about six months.

I have been clean now for two months. I have my home back, and most importantly both of my sons. I already weigh 125 pounds. I do have permanent scars though, like places on my skin where iodine seeped through it.

If I could only say one thing, it would be to teach your kids about meth. It can't be stopped if we don't pass the information on to the next generation. Talk to your kids.

Tennesseans Share Their Stories

Jennifer

My name is Jennifer, and I am a recovering meth addict. I am 31, and I have been clean for more than two years.

I started smoking pot when I was 16, and by 18 I was using cocaine. I was able to keep all of my drug use at a recreational level until I tried meth.

Meth took over my life. I did things I never would have done before I started using meth – I stole, I lied, I cheated.

I found my recovery in a jail cell. I had tried to get clean through the help of others and by myself, but I couldn't. I knew the only way I would get clean was through Jesus Christ. On October 22, 2003, I asked the Lord to heal me of my addiction and I immediately felt at peace.

I have a wonderful husband, whom I met at church, and we have a little boy. I had used some form of drugs since the age of 16, and I didn't know I could live without them until I met Jesus. He has given me unspeakable joy.

Mariah

My father is a meth addict.

Before my parents divorced, my father would be gone for a week at a time, and he couldn't keep a job. My mom worked three jobs just to keep the bills paid. My father would steal money from her purse, and take money from mine and my brother's bank accounts. He would steal stuff from family members and pawn it. He would stay awake for days, and then sleep and sleep. He would wave guns around and threaten us.

THE PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS DON'T REALIZE THE EFFECT THAT THEIR DRUG ABUSE HAS ON EVERYONE IN THEIR LIVES. EVEN THOUGH MY FATHER ISN'T IN MY LIFE ANY MORE, HIS DRUG ABUSE IS SOMETHING THAT WILL AFFECT ME FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.

**Meth Destroys Educational Efforts
are brought to you by**

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Thank you to the hundreds of courageous Tennesseans
who care enough to share their stories with others.
If you have a story to tell, visit **www.MethFreeTN.org**
and click on "Shared Stories."

If you suspect someone of making or selling meth, call the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation at **(877) TNN-METH**. **If you suspect someone of using meth**, call the Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug & Other Addiction Services' (TAADAS) REDLINE at **(800) 889-9789**.

www.MethFreeTN.org