

A New Leaf: Telling Untold Stories, Kelli

Written by Christina Tetreault

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**Hope...
New Beginnings,
Growth &
Change**



**Domestic Violence
Emergency &
Shelter Services**



Arizona Foothills Magazine and Azfoothills.com have partnered with the comprehensive, non-profit, and human service agency, [A New Leaf](#), for an incredibly special series; one that is very near and dear to our organization's heart. "**Telling Untold Stories**" will illustrate multi-dimensional and raw stories of real men, women, and families within our communities who have been dealt a tricky hand of cards. These stories are ones of despair - ones of defeat - and, ones of fear. However, these stories become ones of faith - ones of determination - and, ones of hope.

When someone is in an abusive relationship or homeless, they often find themselves struggling to find help, not aware of the community resources available to them. [A New Leaf](#) is one of those critical resources. The agency has been a beacon of hope, supporting women and men who experience domestic violence and homelessness.

The mission of [A New Leaf](#) is Helping Families . . . Changing Lives. A New Leaf inspires and supports individuals and families in their journey to lifelong independence. The agency operates Autumn House, a domestic violence facility in the East Valley, as well as Faith House, a domestic violence shelter and transitional housing resource in the West Valley as well as a number of homeless shelters for those in crisis.

Last year, [A New Leaf](#) served 17,519 individuals with resources, from immediate shelter, transitional housing, basic needs, job assistance, counseling and after school programs. Victims of domestic violence are able to start a new life due to the care and support of A New Leaf's staff and volunteers. Founded in 1971, A New Leaf is dedicated to making lives better and fighting against domestic violence and homelessness in our state.

Kelli's Story



My name is Kelli Lynn Stout. I am 50 years young and am currently housed in a New Leaf's Autumn House domestic violence shelter, which I chose to enter on November 1, 2014. I have eight incredible children and 5 grandchildren. My children and I have excellent relationships and they support me in all my endeavors. I accepted employment on November 24, 2014 at the McDonald's on University and Mesa Drive in Mesa, Arizona. I work approximately 35 hours a week and have yet to miss a day's work. I am actively involved with the programming required and provided by Autumn House. I attend all scheduled case management meetings, focus meetings, and house meetings. I am a responsible resident who follows protocol in all areas and completes my chores. February 28, 2015 was my exit date and on March 1, 2015, for the first time in a very long time, I moved into my own apartment.

I am strongly convinced that I am taking the steps necessary for self-sufficiency. Each step I have taken has been facilitated and guided by Autumn House and its incredible staff.

Domestic violence has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. My father was abusive to my mother, my siblings and myself. Leaving home as I knew it did nothing to end the cycle of abuse as I continued to choose relationships that were much like what I had always know. There was a certain comfort in the chaos of violence and so I found it easier to stay in abusive relationships. Each time I left an abuser, I

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believed I could handle the new struggles. I was wrong. I was already struggling and the new struggles of homelessness, unemployment, broken family, poverty, etc. were too much to handle, so I resigned to go back and suffer the abuse...what a terrible resignation to a life of pain and potentially my own death.

Everything has changed. Today I welcome new struggles because my stay at Autumn House enabled me to find Kelli. Not victim Kelli, not abused Kelli, not struggling Kelli, but Mother Kelli, productive member of society Kelli, better friend Kelli. Just better Kelli all the way around.

Thank you Autumn House for providing me a home to live in, a kitchen to cook in, a bed to make-up, a bathroom to clean.

Thank you Autumn House for providing nourishment so I didn't have to go hungry or thirsty.

Thank you Autumn House for providing bus passes and transportation so I could become employed and regain self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

Thank you Autumn House for providing me with a case management team to iron out the wrinkles of my life and press on with better decisions and choices.

Thank you Autumn House for providing me clothing and toiletries as I was bare and in need.

Thank you Autumn House for providing me a safe and sound atmosphere in which I could begin healing and transforming.

Thank you Autumn House for loving me enough to care where I am and what time I will be home.

Thank you Autumn House for the Christmas gifts, New Year's party, Valentine's Day dinner and flowers. The aforementioned truly being the sense of normalcy yearned and longed for.

I know today that successfully escaping and recovering from an abusive relationship involves more than just leaving and getting an abuser to stay out of my life. Autumn House has enabled me to re-discover myself and believe again in the most basic beliefs that many may take for granted-

*My life is mine.

*I deserve to be happy.

*I have value as a human being, as a woman, as a mother, as a friend, as a worker, as a partner.

*My actions did not cause his actions.

*Violence and pain are not part of a loving relationship.

*My body is mine.

*I am not defined by the trauma I have experienced.

In conclusion, thank you Autumn House for giving me a hand up, not a hand-out. 120 days has not been a set-back in my life, but a set-up to come back.

Penelope Cruz and I thank you.

If you would like to learn more about A New Leaf or to make a donation today go to turnanewleaf.org or call 480-464-4648.