

A New Leaf: Telling Untold Stories, Amazing Grace

Written by Karah Van Kammen

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by Candy Thompson

Some people are born to nurture others. It is their life's passion. For more than 50 years, Grace has shared this virtue with family, friends and those around her, especially the other women living with her at the East Valley Women's Shelter. Here, it was her turn to be nurtured while she got back on her feet.

Grace dedicated years of love and commitment to her husband and two children while pursuing her passion in the nursing field. It wasn't easy to complete her secondary education while working but her positive, driven attitude helped her accomplish the goal.

Occasional verbal abuse from her husband was interpreted as his way of handling things. As their two little boys grew older, she noticed his verbal abuse coming into play more often and more rigorously. After their grown children moved out of the house, she realized he would wait up for her to come home from a long night at the hospital, just to give her a piece of his mind. The verbal abuse quickly proceeded into physical violence.

Thinking that perhaps she could help him through his life changes, Grace stayed; but the abuse continued and she finally made the decision to leave after 25 years of marriage. For the first time in a very long time, Grace was alone and needed to create a new life for herself. Still helping her adult children, she had taken on a title loan for her youngest son's car. Any assistance she could offer helped her feel needed and loved.

Within a few years, Grace learned from her ex-husband's family that he was terminally ill. Due to his continued abrasive nature, the family wanted nothing to do with the in-home care he required. With her background in nursing and a nurturing heart, Grace felt obliged to offer full-time care for his final months and moved back in with him.

Upon his death, she lost the home and her savings were depleted. Grace started a night time nursing job almost immediately but still needed a place to live. She was desperate.

Grace soon found the miracle she needed – A New Leaf's East Valley Women's Shelter. Although she could never have imagined herself at the Women's Shelter, here she was. It was her intent to make the most of it. The meetings and work with her Case Manager offered insight as well as opportunities to share her story and discover more about herself. Grace's caring, giving heart had a new home and the residents fell in love with her charismatic smile and compassionate ways.

On-site access to computers at the Women's Shelter is one of the key benefits for those reaching out into the community for a fresh start. While there, Grace was able to continue her education online. Between the new resume she created with A New Leaf's Workforce Coordinator, and her highly sought after medical background, Grace was ready to find a second job. She worked with the Goodwill Career Center at A New Leaf's MesaCAN where she also received much-needed financial coaching. Much to her relief, Grace was able to save money and pay off the exorbitant title loan on her son's car, leaving her debt free.

Within a short amount of time, Grace obtained a new job as a live-in, care facility Manager with the promise of a promotion to Director within the next few months. Finally being able to utilize her specialized skills and compassion in the field of her choice has been Grace's life-long dream. Her exuberant smile will now be shared with those who need it the most.

For more information about A New Leaf programs including tours and how you can help, please contact 480-464-4648 or visit us at www.TurnaNewLeaf.org.

Arizona Foothills is proud to partner with the comprehensive, non-profit, and human service agency, [A New Leaf](#), for an incredibly special

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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 to help families and change 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 nearly 21,943 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.