



AS LONG AS IT TAKES

Debra was wandering from house to house, using drugs and depressed. Her youngest daughter was living with her father. Her daughter had started to realize that her mom was around sometimes but that sometimes she wasn't. "I wanted to change my life, my thinking, and be really serious about it. I needed to not go back to where I came from," Debra explains.

After she connected with the **Cathedral Shelter of Chicago** and moved into their **Cressey House In Chicago, Illinois**, Debra got to work. She has been sober for 2.5 years, and is no longer on parole. She also earned her high school diploma. "I feel great. I've never completed anything in my life, not even parole," she adds. Debra does volunteer work and takes computer literacy and career classes. "At first," she says, "I couldn't type a word. Now I can type!" She enjoys helping others. "That's one of my goals," says Debra. The career program helps with her employment aspirations. "They train us on how to conduct ourselves on interviews and on the work site," Debra explains. "Career management teaches us to not be ashamed of what we did in the past and to take responsibility."

Having her own apartment has allowed Debra to bring her now 13-year-old daughter back to stay with her. She also reunited with her three older daughters. Debra embraces the responsibility of having her own place and encourages her younger daughter to succeed in school. "I want her to focus on getting good grades," says Debra.

Cressey House has given Debra the chance to feel responsible, to realize that she can achieve anything like getting her driver's license, a job and, one day, maybe a car. Debra adds, "To me, it's not how long it takes. It's as long as you make it. I know today that I'm not where I used to be. I'm not living at someone else's house. I have my own. I don't have to depend on someone else all the time. I'm not saying that I don't need anyone, but now I can help another person. There are so many people out there who do not have a home [who] can use the encouragement."