



Rhonda B. "Finally Broke the Cycle"

Ten years ago, when Rhonda Branch came to Charleston, SC from Chicago, she came seeking a better life and more opportunity. Her journey as a Single Mother, Parent, and now Parent Leader has been a difficult one, but she is happy to say that she and her two children are now thriving. In late 2012, as a single mom of two young children, 5 and 7 years old, Rhonda was experiencing an overwhelming amount of stress because she was working long hours and then coming home to take care of her two children. In Rhonda's words, "We lived in a project and I was always worried about the safety of my children but couldn't make enough money to move my family." In early 2013, Rhonda's worst nightmare happened when she found out her 7 year old daughter had been molested by her son's father. She struggled with what to do about it but felt she made the right choice by calling child welfare and making the report.

Unfortunately, because she had a prior entry into child welfare, she found herself the subject of the investigation after making the report regarding her daughter. Fortunately, in August of 2013, she was referred into the Parents Anonymous® Mutual Support Group operated by FamilyCorps by Social Services. Rhonda attended the Parents Anonymous® Mutual Support Group for 7 ½ months, and served as a Parent Group Leader during time in the program.

"While in the group, I learned a lot about myself and understood that I was occasionally using substances to mask my pain. The group taught me other ways to manage my stress and I made a lot of friends that I can call whenever I needed support."

In March 2014, the current Parent Group Leader from my Parents Anonymous® Group attended her Foster Care Review Board hearing and advocated on her behalf for the positive changes and hard work she had made towards making a better future for her family. As a result, the Foster Care Review Board agreed to let my kids come home.

In December of 2014, Rhonda was asked by FamilyCorps to go speak to the SC Joint Council for Children and Adolescents regarding her experiences with child welfare and the changes her family made through attendance at Parents Anonymous®. When she agreed, she went through training with FamilyCorps staff to be able to share her story effectively with others. Rhonda did a great job! At the close of telling her story to all of the agency heads and directors in the state of South Carolina, she got a standing ovation and there was not a dry eye in the room. They thanked her for the courage to tell her story. She was also asked to participate in another upcoming workgroup as a result of that testimony.

Today, Rhonda's children are thriving. Life is not perfect, but she has since married a wonderful and supportive partner and has a new job. Both of her children are doing well in school and they are stronger than ever. Most importantly, they know where they can find help any time they need it, right around the corner!!

