

## Deandra's Story

Deandra Smith had been in and out of jail too many times before she finally said, "I'm ready to change my life."

"I just liked to fight, like a sport," she says. "I didn't know where it came from, and then it took somebody from N Street to really sit me down and talk."

With the support of N Street Village, Deandra learned to confront and manage her emotions instead of trying to suppress them. She began to understand that her anger came from being molested at a young age, from not being protected by her mother, and from losing her grandmother.

Deandra came to N Street Village about eight years ago, arriving first at Patricia Handy Place for Women, where she lived for two years. She then moved into permanent supportive housing at the Flagship location on N Street.

"They welcomed me with open arms and gave me the tools, resources, and support I needed to start rebuilding my life and create stability."

She learned life skills, including how to manage her money and how to prepare for a job interview. She cites three specific things that she received from the Village: support, tough love, and sisterhood.

"The person I used to be was a hurt person," she says. "I'm not hurt no more. Now I'm at peace."

Deandra considers herself a survivor and tries to be a positive role model for others. "People tell me I'm always smiling, because if I can smile each day, I might be putting a smile on somebody else's face."

While she is still haunted by her past and often wakes up from nightmares, she continues to work on healing herself. Deandra finds joy in the family she's found at the Village. She loves to do hair and make-up on her fellow residents, and she especially loves to cook. After years of suppressing her emotions, today she freely offers love and encouragement to other women.

"My hope is one day to have a salon," she says. "To have no drama in my life. To have my own house one day and help others:"

By sharing her story, she hopes to help women who have had similar experiences.

"You're gonna have your days, but if you're ready to change your life, there's help. Be honest with yourself and with the staff, because they can't help you if you're not honest, no matter what it is. If you want your life to be good, work hard on it."

### Read Deandra's Poem: Who Are You

[Deandra's Poem \(https://www.nstreetvillage.org/deandras-poem/\)](https://www.nstreetvillage.org/deandras-poem/)

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