

A STORY FROM A FORMER RESIDENT OF ATKINS HOUSE

April 15, 2000, I was in a very bad car accident. I was driving home from a bar with two friends in my vehicle. We were all very drunk and none of us should have been driving. I missed a curve and wrecked the car. My front passenger had a few cuts and scrapes and I was hospitalized for a few days. My back seat passenger died.

A year later I was sentenced to 2 to 5 years in prison with the option of going to Boot Camp and getting out early. I opted to try boot camp. I spent two months in York County Prison, went to Muncy State Prison for two months and then went to spend 6 months in Quehanna Boot Camp. I thought wow! This will be great! No cells, no fences, a lot of exercise to get me in shape and I would be out of there in 6 months and back home with my family!

Boot Camp was Cruel with a capital C. I think I cried every day I was there. The officers were rude, obnoxious and ridiculed me everyday. They would ask you what your crime was and when they found out the officers would throw it in your face all the time. I was called a murderer, a drunk, a waste, no good, etc. Their plan was that they broke you down and then built you back up. They forgot the build your self esteem back up part. (There were some officers that were nice and I was able to talk to some of them, but for the most part they were very cruel.)

After 6 months of torture (mostly mental) the physical part was hard but that wasn't the cruel part, I was very hateful and didn't care what anyone had to say to me. I didn't want help from anyone and just wanted to go my own way and not hear anyone else tell me what to do.

I found out about 5 months into the Boot Camp program that I would have to go to a halfway house after I got out of Boot Camp. We had been told we would go to Boot Camp and then be paroled. I was angry that they had changed the rules. The only good part was that the halfway house I was going to was in my home town.

I was not a happy camper when I came to Atkins House. I was very hateful and didn't want to hear anything they had to say to me. I thought I knew it all and I had been through enough where I had just come from. They wanted us to go out and find a job. I was not happy about this. I had my own business at home but was not allowed to go there to work. Why did I need to look for a dumb job when I already had one? I was not going to stay at a job longer than I had to. Atkins House arranged for me to work on my own company books at a CPA's office. We had to go to AA groups everyday. I didn't need help! I wasn't an alcoholic! We had to take life skills classes at Atkins House. I had a life! I already owned my own home, vehicle and business. Why were they doing this to me!! Hadn't I been through enough???

Susan and Sandy tried numerous times to talk to me, but I just didn't want anything to do with them. Because of my attitude I was almost sent back to prison. That was a

huge wake up call. That was the last place on earth I ever wanted to go back to. I finally understood what was asked of me and that they were not there to mentally abuse me like I thought they were. They were actually there to help. I started following the rules of the house and went to the AA groups everyday and actually met a lot of interesting people. It wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be and as long as I did what I was supposed to do, time went really fast. The staff at Atkins House was great! They were always there for me to help, answer any questions, or to just sit with and cry.

Before Atkins House I don't know how my life would have ended up when I got out of Boot Camp. It taught me a lot. I am not going to lie and say that I don't drink anymore because I still like to go out to dinner and have a few drinks, or have get-togethers at my house and have a few. But what I can say is that I have not and will not ever drive drunk again and risk losing my life or someone else's. It has been a very rough and long road since my accident and I will never forget what I have been through and what Jeff's family went through losing a son because I was drinking and driving.

It is now 2007 and I couldn't be happier with my life! I have a great pet care business, Morgan's Paws Doggie Day Care, a construction business, I own a Hummer, I am married and I have 2 beautiful doggies and 2 wonderful cats that I love dearly! And, I am the President of the Board of Directors at Atkins House!!!! It has been 7 years since the accident that changed my life and I will never forget it.

Susan and Sandy, I just want to thank both of you for giving me a second chance and not throwing me back in jail to spend the rest of my time. I have learned a lot from your program and I hope it helps others as much as it did me. You both are very caring and helpful ladies that make a difference in people's lives. Keep up the great work!

Sincerely
Leticia Giese