

Victorious Woman Essay Contest 2011
Kelly Saello
First Prize

LIFE IS TOO SHORT NOT TO LIVE

I am 44 years old. I take a look in the mirror and it isn't that I don't like what I see, but I don't like where I am or how I live. How can I change this? I have been with the same man for 20 years. I have four beautiful children. While they are the core of my soul, let's face it, they are the only thing that keeps me going. My life totally revolves around them. I cook for them, clean for them, taxi them. I have dropped my life for them. I have lost myself. I am stuck in a miserable marriage, drowning, and don't see any hope or future. It wasn't always like this. There was actually time when I was happy. I was independent. I lived by myself, had my own rules and I was proud of my accomplishments.

I didn't rush into marriage. We took it slow, and to be completely honest, I didn't even want to get married. I was content to just live in the same house. But he wanted differently, so we did it his way. Then the kids came. I probably could have handled it better if there was some more space between them. They were all on top of each other. It was too much responsibility for me to handle alone. I tried. I really tried. But running from work to nursery school, to Kindergarten and then home to make dinner, give baths and put to bed....it was all too much to dump on one person. I asked for help, I made it clear to him that I needed help, but help never came. It was substance abuse. You know, that little thing that helps you escape from your life. His use grew every year and I was left to parent, by myself. The funny part is, I did. I did handle it all. I worked, I was Mom and Dad and I did it all, 90% of the time. Looking back, it amazes me what I was capable of and how much I did. But it wore on me, day after

day, and finally, I had enough. My life was worth more than being a maid, I mattered. I wanted more for my life,

I wanted to achieve things, and this wasn't how it was going to turn out.

So came my realization, and the day that I finally was able to reach deep down inside and pull out enough courage to make change. I finally left and took whoever wanted to join me. They all wanted to join me. They were scared too. They didn't want to live with an addict. So we packed and left and started what would become a new life for us.

I was working two jobs to keep food on the table. He wasn't willing to give me money to help out, even what was rightfully mine. When the kids were small, I had to quit my job because that was required when you had a dictator. He made the rules. So now it was two jobs and a constant worry of how we would live. There were nights when all I could do to sleep was down a sleep aid and even that would only give me four hours. I was even paying his bills, in my name that he refused to pay. It was a constant struggle. I landed a full-time job with decent pay, but I had to get my license. Now on top of all I had to deal with, Lawyers, work, kids, I now had to study. It was the hardest two years of my life.

Today, I look again in the mirror. This time what I see is a woman that I am proud of. A woman, who, with the grace of God, came through the valley to the other side. I am now back in school, working toward my Bachelor's Degree in IT so that someday, I really can support us all. We don't have a lot, but we have each other and I thank God every day for giving me the strength to leave and take my kids to a better place that we have been in 15 years.