

# The WellHouse: “A place where women never have to thirst again.”

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(Photo courtesy of The WellHouse)

## The WellHouse: “A place where women never have to thirst again.”

The WellHouse is a rescue and restorative residential program for female victims of human trafficking and includes programs such as faith-based therapy, equine and art therapy, according to Debby Haralson, chief administrative officer.

But one of the most productive and successful areas for residents is a work therapy program called ShopWell, through which original products such as jewelry, art and candles are made and sold.

“ShopWell has given me a positive outlet while here at the WellHouse,” Barbara\* acknowledged. “The work atmosphere has cultivated healing for me on tough days.”

“I enjoy coming to work and doing something positive with my time. I enjoy crafting and creating all our beautiful items knowing that they will bring joy to our customers.”

Though it’s part of the restorative process that WellHouse provides survivors, it’s also a job training program. The women are interviewed, hired and receive an hourly wage. They do everything from designing the products and making them to managing the online store and shipping purchases, and in the process learn work skills as well as getting work experience to include on a resume.



"ShopWell is therapy to my soul," Mary\* said. "At ShopWell I have learned that quality is better than quantity in many different ways."

### 'Not just a job'

The women are adamant that it's not just a job. Many of them find the work to be healing, claiming it's meaningful, quiet work. The calming and therapeutic atmosphere makes it one of the happiest times for them at WellHouse.

"ShopWell is a place I would say, 'I get to go work at,'" Anne\* noted. "I make jewelry for our customers from my heart and consider every bead and every color, and I think of the beautiful women that will be wearing the things I make.

"I ask God to bless the women the jewelry goes to, and I hope they wear it proudly and show it off," she said.

"We are so blessed that you take time to order from us and give us an opportunity to work," Anne added. "It is a real blessing and we are incredibly happy that you like our products. It brings me joy making them."

### Partners

ShopWell has been around for about five years. They are thankful and proud to partner with Woman's Missionary Union and their WorldCrafts effort, a fair-trade store that promotes and sells goods made by artisans all over the world to help them to earn an income with dignity.

The WorldCrafts store describes one piece of ShopWell jewelry: "When you wear this one-of-a-kind bracelet, you are sharing hope, love and courage. Handcrafted by a survivor of human trafficking now being restored at The WellHouse just outside Birmingham, Alabama, and made from natural-toned agate stones ... "

Goods made by survivors at WellHouse can be bought either at <https://www.the-wellhouse.org/store> (<https://www.the-wellhouse.org/store>) or <https://www.worldcrafts.org/shop-with-worldcrafts> (<https://www.worldcrafts.org/shop-with-worldcrafts>).

What the WellHouse means to survivors:

**Lynn:** "The power of the Holy Spirit is not just present, it's powerful here. True restoration takes place here. God and the WellHouse saved my life and showed me that I have a purpose and that I am loved."

**Amy:** "The WellHouse has given me a place to heal and reflect, while teaching me how to navigate life while living with trauma from my past. The gratitude I feel towards this amazing ministry can best be said in Philippians 1:3: 'Every time I think of you, I thank God for you.' Because of the love I have received from the WellHouse and all the healing they have cultivated in my life I have high hopes for my future."

**Jessica:** "The WellHouse has given me hope. I was in dire need of hope, love and restoration the day I arrived. I thought I was broken and not normal. I really believed I was beyond being fixed. Little did I know ... through this ministry God showed me how to have hope — that I could be what I thought would be impossible — being a normal person and being able to function in society.

"This beautiful ministry gives me a solid foundation on which I've grown and continue to keep growing in my faith through Jesus Christ. It has prepared me to get back into the world when I graduate. They encourage me and have given me a firm foundation. More than anything, God restored what was broken and made me whole, strong and open to trusting and loving others again. I now can be free in God. He led me beside still waters and green pastures. Now I know and believe anything can be restored. You just need hope.

"Thank you, WellHouse, for believing in a young woman like me, to become what I thought I could never be — a woman of God, a mother again, not 'normal' but more-than-normal — a thriving woman who is capable of anything in this world. I am now thriving, shaped for success, I am loved."

WellHouse 2020 Annual Report: "The WellHouse provided a place of rest. A place where I could know who God is ... in stillness. In peace. With true hope for the future. The staff earned my trust and helped me become someone I wanted to be. Almost 5 years after leaving The WellHouse, I make a living being anything but still.

"But it's a different kind of movement now. Instead of frantic, survival-based, day-to-day chaos, it's focused. I'm on a sustainable, long-term, successful career path. My relationships with my family and children have been renewed and are growing in love. God has even allowed me to be in a position to help others on similar paths that I've had to walk."

(\*Names changed for privacy)

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