

## **Orphans of Addiction**

**Children whose parents abuse drugs live daily with fear, neglect and helplessness. Some don't survive; for those who do, the inner damage can last a lifetime.**

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Ashley Bryan lies down on the dirty carpet of her dad's bedroom where she usually sleeps. The 10-year-old girl closes her eyes, clasps her hands and raises them to her lips. Firmly, fervently, she prays.

She wishes not for a bike or Barbie like most kids her age, or to become a doctor or firefighter some day.

Every night, Ashley asks for something she believes only God can deliver. She prays for a new father. Someone kind, someone whose life--and thus hers--is not ruled by the demons of drug addiction and alcoholism.

"Just once, give me something good," she whispers in the darkness. "Please, make life get better."

It could not get much worse.

Her clothes, along with those of 8-year-old brother Kevin Bryan, are filthy. The two go weeks without a bath. They eat once a day, usually rice. Neglect is the norm.

Their father, Calvin Holloman, drinks Miller High Life beer for breakfast, sometimes until he blacks out. The kitchen of their one-bedroom Long Beach apartment is used mostly for cooking or mixing the heroin and speed he and his friends inject into their veins.

Mom has been gone for years now, Calvin says, disappearing with a man who could finance her ravenous appetite for speed. At the age of 6, Ashley ran away from home after her father punched her in the face. But with no place to go, she was forced to return for more misery.

The conditions that have led Ashley to her nightly prayer ritual are, sadly, too common in the United States, which has a higher rate of drug abuse than any other industrialized nation.

Federal surveys show at least one in five children will spend some part of their youth being raised by a parent who is an alcoholic or drug

addict. In Los Angeles County, 80% to 90% of child welfare cases involve substance abuse, rates higher than virtually any other major U.S. urban area.

By some estimates, at least a quarter of all children in Los Angeles County deal at some time with an addicted parent.

It is here, inside millions of homes, where society's most entrenched problems are born, where victimized children grow up to victimize others--a generational cycle costing taxpayers nearly \$200 billion annually in criminal justice costs, health care and social programs.

Blame does not rest only with the homeless crackhead or corner prostitute. Many of America's addicts hold steady jobs, secretly stirring speed into their morning coffee, shooting up at lunchtime in office bathroom stalls, downing six-packs as they watch TV after work.

But no matter what their position in life, the offspring of junkies and alcoholics are bound by a brutal reality: To their parents, they often rank below a shot of vodka or a rock of cocaine.

These are children who live in daily dread, compiling memories of abuse and deceit they carry into adulthood. Memories of closed bathroom doors from which parents emerge in a stupor, of days-long binges that accompany every payday, of searching for mom or dad in alleys while watching other children make their way to school.

Some never really experience childhood at all, becoming caretakers at the tender age of 3 or 4 for stoned parents and needy siblings. They change diapers and mix bottles for infants crying in the middle of the night when no one else is around. They learn to cook for the family while standing on a chair by the stove.

Once in a great while, the plight of such a life makes headlines--perhaps when a baby starves to death after being left home alone for days by a mother on a drug run.

But for every one of those cases there are a multitude unnoticed, a vast underground of children too ashamed to come forward or too intimidated by parental threats to reveal the family's secret.

Although there are laws requiring a slew of professionals--including teachers, police, doctors, even photo lab technicians--to report suspected child abuse or neglect, many don't, wrongly assuming they must have definitive proof.

What's more, studies show many people shy away from involvement because they distrust the agencies that may ultimately gain control of the children.

"Clearly, the majority of these children are flying under the radar and are never detected by government," says Nancy K. Young, who heads the research group Children and Family Futures.

Most, like Ashley, suffer silently, praying for deliverance in the night.

### A Swath of Destruction Through a Neighborhood

Addiction stalks not only families but entire neighborhoods, wherever opportunity and hope have been pushed aside by poverty and instability.

The lower westside of Long Beach is such a place, just minutes from trendy Belmont Shore, the Queen Mary and a downtown newly invigorated with upscale restaurants and theaters.

Ashley's home in Long Beach's ethnically mixed westside, which also abuts a gritty industrial area, is a lively hub of small apartment buildings filled with families and children. Battered by losses in the aerospace and shipbuilding industries in the early 1990s, the area has rebounded considerably. Still, according to neighborhood drug counselors and educators, at least a quarter of the area's residents are addicted to alcohol or drugs.

Telltale signs abound. Children as young as 2 or 3 wander the streets alone. Kindergartners sometimes panhandle for food money outside grocery stores. Mother-daughter prostitute teams walk on nearby Pacific Coast Highway. Rehab centers dot the community's streets.

This is the world Tamika Triggs has known for three years, her entire life.

On a summer afternoon, her mother, Theodora, runs into a friend at a Long Beach gas station who offers to share her drugs. Theodora and her daughter follow the woman into the drenching heat of a clapboard shed.

Tamika, her sweet face framed by golden ringlets of hair, sits silently in a wicker chair watching her 34-year-old mother prepare for her daily sustenance.

Her mother's friend, Dorene McDonald, picks several rocks of cocaine out of her belly button, then positions a milky white pebble in a pipe.

As the women alternately take hits off the small glass tube, crack smoke envelops Tamika, who blinks sleepily in her mother's arms.

Dorene, her neck raw with needle marks, hunches over a tin plate, warming a mixture of heroin and water in a spoon. Theodora, who is HIV-positive, slams the solution into an arm marbled with track marks. Then, intent on smoking the last crumbs of crack, she gently lowers her girl onto a mattress moist with urine and semen. As mom inhales, Tamika sleeps, her pink and white sundress absorbing the fluids of unknown grown-ups.

Theodora insists she loves her daughter. She holds her hand when they cross a street. She rushes her to the emergency room when Tamika gets sick. When they sleep in near-strangers' homes, or with a new boyfriend, she slings her leg over her little girl so no one can molest her.

But love for Tamika arrives in brief moments, when her mother is not zoned out or so consumed by her body's convulsive cry for heroin that she can think of nothing else.

"When I'm using, I'm chasing my drug. I'm not paying attention to her," Theodora tearfully confesses. "I hate myself every day. It's a disgusting habit. It's a disease."

Theodora--who used to be a nurse's aide and waitress but now subsists on welfare and food stamps--assuages her guilt by pointing to children worse off than her own. "I see drug addict moms who make me sick," she says, referring to a friend who beat her son's head on a porcelain sink when he accidentally spilled a spoon of heroin.

While not physically abused, Tamika, like most children of addicts, is emotionally starved. Often, she is left alone in an apartment shared by her mother's boyfriend of the moment, Johnny, and a changing cast of other addicts.

One afternoon, while jumping on the bed in a filthy nightgown, Tamika suddenly realizes her mother--and everyone else--has left. Flinging open the front door, she cries, "Mommy! Mommy!" There is no answer. Without so much as a goodbye, Theodora and Johnny have gone to score drugs with food stamps he was paid with for doing some mechanical work.

Tamika passes the time alone spinning the spokes of a bicycle in the kitchen, where she steps on shards from a broken jar. The toddler hobbles to the sofa, sits down and digs two pieces of glass from her bleeding feet. Not a tear is shed.

Sitting by the apartment's front gate, Tamika finally sees her mother, shuffling by in pink fuzzy slippers. After helping a friend inject heroin into his arm, she is delivering drugs for him in exchange for her own small hit.

"My dad's in prison," Tamika says as she waits patiently by the gate. "And my mom is sad."

When Theodora disappears like this, Tamika fears she will be gone forever, a fear compounded by her roustabout life. Tamika has lived in at least nine places this year alone, including a crack den, the home of an ex-boyfriend's mother, a garage, a hotel and the apartment of a druggie who talks incessantly about putting a bullet in his brain.

"I want my own house," she tells her mother, who harbors her own fantasy of kicking drugs and settling down. For now, it is only a pipe dream.

Late on a Sunday afternoon, Tamika hasn't eaten for 24 hours. Theodora, pacing the apartment, is focused on her own hunger--and her empty pockets.

"I gotta get some dope," she mutters, growing irritated by her daughter's repeated pleas for food. "Tamika! Hush! God you're driving me nuts today," she yells. "Go play!"

Signs of withdrawal have risen to the surface. Theodora's pockmarked face is pale and sweaty. Her nose and eyes run. Her stomach churns. Desperate, she grabs Tamika and heads to the Lovitt Hotel, where the two stayed earlier when she was living with another man. Theodora scours Room 20 for money.

Lit by a bare fluorescent bulb, the room is filled with flies. There is a sink, but no toilet. A plate of chicken leftovers and an empty can of Magnum malt liquor are on the floor. Tamika's cotton panties are still strung along a rope on one wall, alongside a pair of men's boxer shorts.

The closet is empty, save for a syringe and spoon stored on a tiny ledge. Tamika begins to scribble on the sheets with a marker. Theodora, her patience now wafer-thin, smacks her hard, then tells her to stop crying and wash her face.

They leave as poor as they came.

Downstairs, at the neighboring La Colonial Market, an employee barbecues chicken in a black kettle on the sidewalk. Tamika devours the

feast with her eyes. A trip earlier that week to a medical clinic for several infected spider bites revealed that the girl had lost 10% of her weight in a week, dropping to 36 pounds.

Theodora sees Johnny up the street, bums a little change, then heads to a nearby liquor store. Inside, Tamika presses her nose against the pastry case. Her mother reaches in, grabbing two pieces of sweet bread at 25 cents each.

Standing barefoot in the liquor store's parking lot at 5 p.m., Tamika eats her first meal of the day. Her mother leans against a wall, complaining of weakness.

"I really don't know what I'm doing today," she says. "It sucks."

Tamika, happy to have something in her stomach, begs: "Hold my hand, mama!"

"I don't want to hold your hand," Theodora snaps. "Leave me alone!"

As always, Tamika takes the rejection in stride, using the store's hand railing as a monkey bar to play on. On the way home, she holds Johnny's hand instead.

Johnny has spent more than half his 44 years in prison. After getting out of Lompoc federal prison a few days ago, he has stayed up for three days on speed, obsessively picking at his body. Bloody sores the size of dimes cover much of his heavily tattooed arms, chest and face.

Tamika doesn't mind. His arms may be raw, but they often are the only ones to reach out and hug her.

Tamika has adapted to living in a world devoid of lasting affection and friendship. She has become her own best playmate.

One afternoon, her mother runs into a prostitute named Pumpkin on Long Beach Boulevard. "You got any black [heroin]?" Pumpkin asks, hugging Theodora, who shakes her head. Pumpkin, who has flowing blond hair and bad teeth, flags down a customer, promising to return with cash.

As Theodora paces, waiting for Pumpkin's return, Tamika stands on a blue bus bench and plays patty-cake with herself. "Miss Mary Mack Mack," the girl sings, patting her hands against the air. "All dressed in black, black, black."

Sometimes, the 3-year-old becomes a mere prop for others to duck the

law or hustle small change.

At 8 one morning, another prostitute, wearing very tight jeans, white stiletto heels and days-old makeup, arrives at the apartment. She gives Tamika a big hug.

Theodora met her at the Lovitt Hotel. The woman, who confesses that she is pregnant with her ninth child, offers to watch Tamika. Theodora declines. She later explains that the last time the woman baby-sat, she took Tamika onto the streets with her so police wouldn't suspect she was looking for tricks.

Later that same week, however, Theodora exploits Tamika's charms herself. At an hour when most kids are getting into bed, she takes her daughter's hand, grabs a child-sized plastic chair and heads for the Arco gas station.

"I don't want to go, mama," Tamika says, crying.

"I need you," her mother responds.

Theodora once again is broke, and panhandling with an adorable kid like Tamika always works better than going it alone.

Tamika is well-rehearsed and practiced. She perches herself on the tiny pink chair near the gas pumps, making sure customers can see her. Each time her mother shuffles up to a car, Tamika--loud enough for all to hear--asks: "Did he say yes, Mommy?"

A man in a blue van drives up. "Hi there!" Theodora says in an overly cheerful voice. "Can I pump your gas for some change?" All he gives her is the brushoff.

Another customer pulls in. "Mama! Ask him!" Tamika coaches. Eyeing the youngster, he hands over a few coins.

Between customers, Tamika sings songs or plays peek-a-boo with herself using a church handout she found on the pavement. By 9:10 p.m., with \$1.56 in hand, Theodora buys a few loose cigarettes and some cookies for Tamika.

The girl's sad predicament is not lost on neighbors, who sometimes try to help. But they don't call the police--unwilling to get involved or fearful that she might end up in an abusive foster home.

Sandra, the apartment manager where Tamika lives, notices how filthy

and alone the girl is one day. Holding out one of her own daughter's new pink Aladdin outfits, she offers: "Wanna get all pretty and clean?" The last bathtub Tamika was in had black mold, spiders and cold water.

"Is the bathtub dirty?" Tamika asks.

Sandra assures her it is not and says that if Tamika wades in, she will get a very special surprise. Sandra displays an unopened pack of tiny underwear. Within minutes, Tamika, squeaky clean for the first time in days, is proudly pulling the clothing on.

If only such touching gestures were not so fleeting. For Tamika is about to lose the hint of stability she had found in the past few weeks: Theodora and Johnny are splitting up.

Untethered, Theodora leaves Tamika with Johnny's neighbor, Irma Molina, whom she has known for only two weeks. Promising to be back soon, Theodora goes on a drug run. By the second day of her absence, Tamika begins to call Irma "Mommy."

When Theodora returns a week later, she dumps her daughter with the mother of an old boyfriend and disappears again.

At her new home, Tamika sits in a playroom aglow with morning light filtered through pink lace curtains. There is a blackboard; stuffed bears and monkeys crowd the top of a dresser. Although some in the house use crack and heroin, it is the best place Tamika has been for months. Her 70-year-old caretaker, who does not use drugs, says she is intent on protecting the girl from the "child stealers" and "baby snatchers"--terms she uses to describe social welfare workers--hoping against hope that Theodora will clean herself up.

"She promises me she will do better," says the woman with a curly blond wig and watery eyes, puffing on budget menthol cigarettes.

As a reporter rises to leave, Tamika stands. Looking up, she asks simply: "Are you taking me with you?"

### Chaotic Childhoods Inflict Lasting Damage

Even for children exposed to drugs in utero, often born with smaller heads or shaking uncontrollably from withdrawal symptoms, many researchers now believe that the greatest damage occurs not in the womb but from spending years growing up in chaotic homes with parents who remain addicted.



Sometimes, the children don't make it to adulthood. Almost all of the 2,000 cases of children who die each year in the United States from child abuse involve drug or alcohol abuse by parents or guardians, according to Deanne Tilton Durfee, chairwoman of the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect.

More typically, the children are emotionally scarred, feeling abandoned, neglected, unloved and helpless as they watch those dearest to them self-destruct. Too often, the children blame themselves.

"You think: If your mom and dad don't love you, why would someone else love you?" says Yvette Ruiz, rehabilitation program director at Tom Redgate Memorial Recovery Center in Long Beach. "If you can't trust your parents, why would you trust anyone else?"

The psychological gashes are usually deepest when children are sexually or physically abused by relatives, boyfriends or others who prey on unsupervised children--an all too common occurrence.

"Drug dealers say, 'I don't want you, but I want your daughter,' " says Ruiz.

At Long Beach's Woman to Woman Recovery Center, children offer testimony to the painful images forged in their minds.

Mary Harris' 11-year-old son, Juan "Johnnie" Ortega, vividly remembers that awful night a few years ago when he was shot in the face with a BB gun on a Long Beach street corner. He ran home, blood trickling down his left cheek. His mother, smoking crack, wouldn't take him to the hospital. "I was waiting for my connection," says Mary, who is now in recovery.

At age 7, Johnnie would escape to the downtown Long Beach Plaza mall. Walking along the shiny marble aisles, he would dream about living in the White House, or just a better home. He would pluck coins from the mall fountain for food money and steal shoes from Payless Shoe Source.

"I dreamed that my mom was nice, not on drugs," Johnnie says, "that she would go to the bank and pull out money and we'd buy stuff."

Now in the seventh grade, Johnnie says he was too ashamed to share his anguish. "I didn't want my friends to know about it. I was afraid. I thought they wouldn't like me anymore."

Such fear is a constant companion for children who watch the people entrusted with their protection--those whom they love most--spin out of control.

Fear, for example, kept Brian W., a skinny, studious boy, sitting for hours each day at the top of the stairs of his house, right outside the door of the bathroom where his mother would shoot up 6 to 10 times a day. Each night, Brian kept his lonely vigil, doing homework and listening intensely to what was going on behind the door. Once, when his mother's heart stopped, he dragged her downstairs, where a friend helped get her to the hospital.

Several times, he faked falling down the stairs to interrupt her drug sessions. "I was really scared for her," Brian says. "I'd do anything to get her out of there."

The anxiety is amped up even higher when a child not only has to worry about a parent but has to be one, too--a burden so great that drug counselors say it has turned grade-schoolers into junkies.

Guillermo "Willy" Parra, 7, is the man of the apartment. While his mother shoots speed, he plays father to his 5-year-old brother and 7-month-old sister, making sure they are fed and safe. "I'd rather play," Willy says. "I do it because I have to."

Willy says his most terrifying moments are in the middle of the night when he awakens to find that his mother is gone and that he is alone with his brother and baby sister.

"I'm scared somebody could steal us," he says. "Someone could kill us."

In very young children, such as Tamika, the psychological devastation of living in substance-abusing families is not overtly evident. For the most part, they still see the world as a playground, the hard truth cushioned by their innocence.

But as these children grow older, the cumulative abuse and neglect begin to soak in, saturating their psyches. They begin to seethe with anger that manifests in inappropriate and destructive behavior. Lying, cheating and stealing become more common. Some simply withdraw into an impenetrable depression.

Ten-year-old Ashley and her brother Kevin, 8, are an example of how steep the slide can be--and its implications for the future.

Learning Violence, Anger at an Early Age

Ashley and Kevin are opposites.

He is aggressive, belligerent, always in trouble. She is sullen, a peacemaker pushed to tears when the yelling inevitably starts. In their own ways, they are coping with the same problem: Calvin, their father, a raging speed addict and alcoholic.

Ashley and Kevin live in a one-bedroom apartment on Long Beach's lower westside with their dad, his girlfriend, Rita Green, and an ever-changing crew of addicts. Rita, whose 4-year-old son was placed in foster care last year, says she does not have a drug problem, but she frequently snorts speed.

The apartment's bathroom walls are peppered with black mold. The toilet leaks, leaving the floor awash in slime. The tub brims with dirty clothes alive with fleas--one reason Kevin and Ashley go weeks without bathing.

The visiting addicts--"the bad people," Kevin calls them--sleep on the kitchen floor, which has become more spacious since the stove and refrigerator were sold for drug money.

By mid-June, Ashley and Kevin have missed the last four months of school. Calvin pulled them out when he was thinking about moving from Long Beach. Re-enrolling them, he worried, might bring too much attention to them--and to him--from campus officials.

Sometimes, Ashley walks to a nearby elementary school so she can watch the children spill out onto the playground.

"I just want to go to learn," says the would-be fifth-grader. "What's 3 times 3? I don't know." Students with whom she used to attend school already have mastered long division. "I wish I were them," she says. "I'm so behind."

So is her brother.

"OK, what's 2 plus 2?" one of Calvin's friends quizzes the boy one night. Kevin, staring hard at the ground, responds in a voice marred by a speech impediment, "I don't know how to do that." The friend then holds up one finger on each hand. "What's one plus one?" Kevin grabs his head. "A hundred!" he blurts out.

Spell "cat"? Kevin's face clouds with frustration.

Calvin describes his young son as violent and angry--a description that suits him just as well. In kindergarten, Kevin poked a girl in the

eye with his pencil. Later that year, he was suspended twice for biting his teacher on the ankle. Kevin says he likes being unsupervised. "I can hurt people," he explains.

Calvin usually responds to his son's destructive high jinks by yelling: "Boy! You're on your way to prison!" No one disagrees when he says it. Calvin also calls his son "bag of bones" or just "retard." Other times, the father hauls back and lets his hand fly.

Kevin, pointing to his head, says his dad "beats me all the time. He don't give me no toys."

"I don't want to be like him. He's nasty. He'd be nice if he didn't use drugs." Asked if he loves his father, Kevin hesitates, then says, "A little bit."

Kevin's soft spot is his sister.

One day, he overhears Ashley pine for some new clothes; she has been wearing the same dirty pants for a week. Kevin runs outside into the alley, crawls into a metal dumpster and madly tears open bags of rotting food. Flies swarm around him. Finally, he fishes out a pair of canvas tennis shoes. Proudly, he presents them to his sister but they are too small. A familiar look of disappointment crosses her face.

Once, years ago, there was money in the family, before drugs stole it all. For 18 years, Calvin worked as a welder, even had his own shop.

His second wife introduced him to speed, which, Calvin says, she started using to lose weight. Calvin says he started dropping some into his morning coffee. Over time, it became an \$800-a-week habit, costing him a lucrative welding job, his home, the Cutlass, the boat. After his wife left him, Calvin says, he consoled himself with heroin. Kevin became his emotional punching bag.

At 10 a.m. one day, Calvin rises from his platform bed, reprimanding Kevin for hitting a neighbor's boy. "Get over here, you asshole!" Calvin screams. "Let's see how you screw up today." Later, when Kevin disobeys an order to keep a speed addict out of the apartment, Calvin whacks the boy.

"You're mean to me! I want my mom!" Kevin sobs. Calvin yells back: "Your mom's a tramp! I'm all you got. You're my worst nightmare. You don't think I'd get rid of you if I could?"

Kevin covers his head with a filthy sofa pillow, cups his hands over

his ears and bawls.

Violence and abuse are not the only traits Calvin has imparted to his young son.

One day, the two hop on a Metro Blue Line train without paying and head for the mall in downtown Long Beach. After buying Kevin a cheap pair of shoes, they go to Carl's Jr. for a hamburger--and a lesson in larceny.

As father and son make their way to a table, Calvin swings by the salad bar, for which he has not paid, and swipes some hot peppers. He goes back for some cantaloupe.

"Daddy, should I take that?" Kevin asks, looking for his father's approval. "Quickly!" his dad instructs.

With that, Kevin darts to the salad bar and dips his grubby fingers into the crouton jar. Calvin, beaming at his son's prowess, instructs him to get some cantaloupe. Before long, Kevin has made more than a half-dozen brazen trips, finally catching the eye of a Carl's Jr. worker. "Now we have to throw the whole thing out!" she yells at the boy with dirty hands, who slinks back to his seat.

"Shut up, bitch," Calvin mutters to her. Then, in the lecturing tone of a father sharing pearls of wisdom, Calvin tells Kevin: "It's all right to steal, son, just don't get busted!" When Calvin, who spent four years in prison for burglary, gets up to leave, he takes the salt and pepper shakers with him.

It's no wonder Kevin turns to outsiders--such as Pastor Bill Thomas of the nearby Long Beach Rescue Mission--for comfort. Thomas offered food to Kevin after noticing the skinny boy scavenging in the mission's dumpsters earlier this year.

"Will you take me home?" Kevin began asking. "Will you make me your son? They don't feed me."

Pastor Thomas, who says Kevin is "a child crying out for love and attention" through aggression, worries about the boy wandering the streets alone because pedophiles sometimes hang around the mission.

"It's a matter of time," Thomas predicts, "until something will happen."

At 5 p.m. one night, while Calvin drinks beer on the apartment sofa, the children complain of hunger. "It's a never-ending problem of being a

parent," Calvin grouses. "Food." He tells Kevin to go to the mission.

Ashley, wearing a "D.A.R.E. to Keep Kids Off Drugs" T-shirt, is not allowed to go with him because of the danger of sexual predators. She will go to bed hungry.

Calvin, for his part, doesn't miss a sip. "Ha! I'm getting a buzz. Feeling better!" he says, kicking back.

But four hours later, an irritating crimp ruins his high: One of Calvin's friends realizes that the boy has not returned from the mission. It is the same week a 7-year-old girl, left unattended in a Nevada casino, was found raped and dead in a toilet stall.

"Shit, where could he be?" Calvin says, clearly annoyed. Prodded by his friend, Calvin heads outside, finding his son blocks away. The time is 9:40 p.m. "Kevin, get your butt over here!" his father screams. "Where are you going, stupid!"

Ashley, unlike her brother, is more depressed than hostile. Quiet and well-behaved, she fantasizes about a stomach filled with candy or taking a trip to Target to buy a Bugs Bunny T-shirt.

Asked about her father's drug habit, the girl with willowy limbs wrinkles her nose. "He goes crazy," she says. "He gets mad, even when we don't do nothing."

To survive her stormy life, Ashley has glommed onto her father's girlfriend as an anchor. Rita's shrill, loud, berating voice is a test of anyone's patience, but to Ashley it is music.

"I loooooove Rita," Ashley says several times a day, practically swooning. "She's a good mom. She makes sure there is dinner for us. Sometimes, my dad don't remember to do that," says Ashley, whose real mother hardly ever visits. "She just took off," Ashley says harshly.

Fearful that Rita will do the same, Ashley becomes near-frantic when her father and his girlfriend fight about drugs or money, which is constantly.

"Hey bitch!" Calvin yells as Rita arrives at 6:30 one evening. He is peeved that she has spent some of her welfare check on speed, food for herself and on a motel room to shower. "Get the hell out of here!" demands Calvin, who earlier that day had grabbed her by the neck and slammed her against the apartment wall.

Ashley breaks into tears, trailing Rita out the door. Calvin threatens to beat his daughter with a belt when she returns.

The next day, the squall has passed and Rita is back, cooking over a hot plate on the floor. Ashley, squatting alongside her, whispers into Rita's ear. "If he keeps drinking, you'll take me away, huh?" Rita smiles, enjoying the power that comes with knowing that Calvin's own daughter would rather be with her.

All Ashley knows is that Rita seems to care.

The youngster opens a small cardboard box and removes a hospital bracelet, a treasured keepsake, reminding her of the day she was rescued by Rita.

Although she was vomiting and could barely walk earlier this year, she says her father wouldn't take her to the emergency room.

He recently had gone there with Kevin to find out why his neck sometimes twitches from side to side. Social workers questioned Calvin after noticing bruises and scratches on the boy. They later visited the house at least three times, neighbors and others say, but allowed the children to remain.

Although Calvin did not want to risk a repeat, Rita insisted on taking Ashley to the emergency room. "If Rita wasn't there," Ashley says, "I'd be dead already."

The five days Ashley spent in the hospital with pneumonia, she says, were the best of her life.

"I had my own bedroom, an IV in my arm. My own bed. A TV. I could play. Put my clothes in a bathroom."

When it was time to leave, Ashley cried. "I wanted to go back," the girl says. "It was my home."

And now she and her brother must adjust to yet another one. Calvin and Rita, facing eviction after paying no rent for half a year, have decided to leave for Bakersfield, 140 miles away. There, Rita says, she will take parenting classes to get her son back from foster care.

She and Calvin say they will leave behind their problems with drug addiction. "We need to change our environment. No one knows you. No low-life friends. It's so easy," Calvin says, waving his hand. In Alcoholics Anonymous, this type of denial is so common it has a name:

"doing a geographic."

After shooting up speed in the bathroom, Calvin packs the family's few remaining possessions for the bus ride they will all take that night.

Ashley, cynical beyond her 10 years, is resigned to more disappointment.

"He says we'll leave and he'll stop doing drugs," she says, sitting on her apartment stoop. "But I don't believe him."

### In School, a Brief Taste of Normal Life

Given the choice, many schoolchildren would prefer watching TV or playing with a prized toy at home. But for the vast majority of youngsters whose parents are full-blown alcoholics or addicts, classrooms are their refuge--their only connection to a normal life, a sense of blending in, getting at least one meal a day. They try their best, as if their lives depended on it, to show up.

In the process, however, they pose special challenges--and problems--for teachers and classmates alike. These children, despite their earnestness, too often are warming the seat more than learning. The extra attention they require robs other students of learning time.

At Washington Middle School in Long Beach--where a purple banner proclaims "Be Drug Free"--seventh-grade health teacher Ann Rector estimates that nearly a third of her 185 students live in substance-abusing families.

"They are so behind the other kids," Rector says. "They get frustrated and angry because they feel stupid."

Some come to class with their jackets reeking of crack. Others talk about how they put to bed passed-out parents and about fathers who get drunk and mean.

Without alarm clocks or anyone to wake them up, the children often wander into class late. Once there, many drift off.

Rector remembers the time two girls from the same home fell asleep because they had been up until 5 a.m. taking care of a baby sibling while their mother, Rector believes, was on a drug binge. When the mother arrived to retrieve her girls--after being summoned by the school--she promptly pummeled them to the sidewalk with her fists.



Such experiences understandably make children distrustful of adults, including teachers, further complicating the educational mission.

Ritchie Eriksen, program facilitator for safe and drug-free schools for the Long Beach Unified School District, remembers a picture one 5-year-old girl drew of her father. "This is my dad and he likes to drink beer and smoke pot," she wrote on the top.

One hot morning, Eriksen noticed the girl was wearing a blue turtleneck. Eriksen pulled up the girl's sleeves and found a bruise in the shape of a belt buckle. Further inspection revealed that she was black and blue from her waist to her knees. Eriksen says she called the police, who summoned child welfare authorities. Counseling was ordered for the father, Eriksen says, but the girl was allowed to remain in the home.

A more subtle sign that youngsters may be living in substance-abusing homes is their attendance record.

Recovering addict Valerie Gipson, a counselor at Long Beach's Woman to Woman Recovery Center, says her two school-aged children missed half of every week for an entire year. If the school called, she would claim the children were sick. She coached her children to stick with the same story, threatening that if the truth got out, "we'd all be in trouble."

Since 1991, in an effort to prevent a similar fate for other children, the Los Angeles County district attorney's office has joined forces with a number of schools to put a scare into parents.

The district attorney notifies them by letter to attend a meeting at the school auditorium. There, a deputy district attorney lays down the law: Parents with chronically truant youngsters can be fined \$2,500 and spend up to one year in jail.

If things do not improve, then parents are summoned to a private meeting with school and district attorney officials. They are warned that the next step is prosecution.

Still, while school is crucial, it takes a special kind of determination for these neglected children to overcome their circumstances. Amazingly, many do.

"The shame drives them to be perfect," says Van Nuys substance abuse counselor Hillary Treadwell. "They have to prove to themselves and to the rest of the world that they are OK."

That's what Tina Moraga is doing. Her past and present offer hope for little girls like Tamika.

Tina, 27, is sitting on a velour couch in her Long Beach apartment. Alongside her is her mother, Rosario Moraga, the woman who two decades ago had turned her daughter into an \*orphan of addiction\*.

Tina remembers being left alone for long stretches, or with a relative who regularly forced her to give him oral sex. Tina says her mother's drug friends used to feel her up. Often, in fights during drug crazes, Tina says, her mother would call her "rape baby." Tina says she called herself "the shield" because her mother often used her as a buffer against drug dealers bent on beating her up.

When Tina was 7 and Rosario was turning tricks, the youngster accompanied her mother and a customer into the Ho-Hum Motel. There, Rosario lay Tina down next to her on the bed and covered her daughter's eyes with one hand. Through the cracks between her mother's fingers, Tina watched the encounter in a ceiling mirror.

As Tina recounts the story of her formative years, her mother mostly remains quiet, sometimes shrugging her shoulders and offering a few words about how she was oblivious to much of the damage she was causing.

Today, at 46, Rosario says she no longer sniffs paint, and she stopped shooting heroin when the veins in her fingers and toes collapsed from overuse. She is on methadone and still smokes crack, but only outside the apartment--under orders from her daughter, now head of a household with strict rules and everyday routines.

Tina managed to veer from her mother's twisted path, finding her way to higher ground, with a simple but sure vow as a child: to never use drugs or alcohol. Although her journey into maturity has been bumpy--her four daughters have three dads--Tina has remained resolute.

Each morning, she rises at 4 a.m. to drive a big yellow school bus. Smiling pictures of her daughters, immaculately dressed and coiffed, line the apartment walls, along with track medals won mostly by her oldest, Brandi, 10, who has qualified to race in national competitions.

Tina attributes her resiliency to the power of her memories. "I always remember that drugs tore my family apart," she says.

Although her children are young, Tina is planning and saving money for each of her four girls' Sweet 16 birthday parties.

"I'm trying to make their life like I wish my life would have been."

## **ORPHANS OF ADDICTION**

### **Healing Shattered Lives--and Families**

**In unusual rehab program, women learn to be mothers--and their children learn to trust.**

**By SONIA NAZARIO, TIMES URBAN AFFAIRS WRITER**

**Los Angeles Times Monday November 17, 1997**

In a two-story apartment building in the core of Compton, something magical is happening.

Children are playing. Moms are cooking. Souls are healing.

"We're like the damn Brady Bunch," says Beatrice McClendon--amazing words from a woman who not so long ago was spending more time with her crack pipe than with her children.

Beatrice and dozens of other mothers have found redemption inside the 86-unit apartment complex known as Keith Village, where parents and children are taught to resume their respective roles, once warped by drugs.

Eleven-year-old Ladonna Grant used to care for seven younger siblings while her mother, Jacqueline, was chasing cocaine around the clock. Now, when Jacqueline asks her daughter to watch the kids for a few minutes, Ladonna says simply: "Uh-uh. I got to play now." She dashes outside for a date with a jump rope.

While such mother-daughter exchanges may seem unremarkable in most households, they are practically a miracle for the families at Keith Village--one of the nation's most novel and successful residential recovery programs.

Keith Village specializes in the toughest cases: long-term addicts, some of them third-generation substance abusers, each of whom has up to 10 children, many of them troubled.

The program's premise is that to make families whole, they must be mended as a unit through intensive counseling for mothers stunted by years of addiction and children brimming with anger from the neglect they endured.

On average, about 50 women and 250 children receive two years of treatment and may continue living in the facility another two years while they head into the working world.

About 40 graduates, whose chief job used to be scoring drugs, now work at AT&T, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the post office and elsewhere.

"There are incredible things that happen to families here," says Kathryn S. Icenhower, executive director of SHIELDS for Families Inc., the nonprofit organization that purchased and runs Keith Village. "We teach folks they can be whoever they want to be."

During individual and group counseling sessions, mothers dissect the painful events that have often fueled their addictions--physical abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse and the resulting low self-esteem. They also are coached on the more mundane, but wholly unfamiliar, details of daily survival: how to pay bills, run a household, do laundry.

The children, meanwhile, participate in their own counseling. From tots to teenagers, they discuss how to feel good about themselves, how to control their tempers and how to avoid becoming addicts, halting the ruinous cycle that has cost them and society so dearly.

"They won't become sitcom-perfect," senior child psychologist Donald Jackson says of the Keith Village youngsters. "We try to fertilize that natural resiliency children have. We bombard them with affection and consistency."

Some have rebounded so well they have become honor students. Even the littlest ones have rallied--to the degree they can.

Ronnie Simmons, 2, was nearly lifeless when he entered the world. His mother, Sheila, smoked crack daily during the latter part of pregnancy, following the death of her twin brother and after catching her husband of 14 years in bed with another woman.

Of the infant growing inside her, she says: "I was trying to kill him and me."

When Ronnie was born at home, it took 15 minutes for him to gulp any air, leaving his brain permanently damaged. For months, his voice box didn't work. When he cried, there was no sound.

Now Ronnie tries to pull himself up and flashes his mother a huge smile, a monumental breakthrough. Thanks to therapy, Ronnie no longer lies all day with his eyes rolled back. Today, he is a more physically active, verbal boy.

"He like a flower," his mother says. "He just blooming."

So is she.

### 'You Gotta Stop Being Selfish'

The fears women confront in the clarity of sobriety--and the deep understanding they get at Keith Village--are evident one Monday morning as 28 mothers sit in a circle around the living room of apartment No. 1736, the main meeting room for group sessions.

Counselor Rafik Philobos throws it open to discussion.

Hattie Wilson, 47, who has been abusing drugs for three decades, says she's having problems with one of her four sons, a hardheaded 12-year-old currently in the care of her sister. The boy irritates her, Hattie says, and she's not sure she wants him back. "I just want to shake him," she says.

"At some point you have to be a mama," one of the women says. "At some point you gotta stop being selfish."

Another woman--a mother of three with one more on the way--chimes in: "I ain't never been ready. But I have to do for these kids because no one else is going to do for them. I know I'm their mother. I laid down and had them babies."

Yet another ex-junkie, this one with seven children, says she is immensely thankful to have been reunited with five of her youngsters--for their sake and hers.

"I have to get up," she says, "get them dressed, take them to school. I'm real grateful."

"Why keep putting it off? Make yourself ready," another woman demands.

Sobbing now, Hattie rocks back and forth in her chair, her hands covering her eyes. "I want my baby. I'll have to get ready."

Then comes an offer from a woman who, like everyone else in the room, could once think only of getting loaded; she says she'd be happy to baby-sit the boy whenever Hattie is feeling overwhelmed. Hattie nods in appreciation.

One Tuesday morning, eight women, with their babies and children in tow, gather for a "Mommy and Me" class. Topics include discipline,

patience, verbal abuse, even brushing teeth. But no matter what the subject, child-care worker Edith Ward says the women must be guided by one divine realization.

"The Lord has given you another chance to be mothers, truly mothers, not just give birth," she tells them. "You have enough love for all of them. Teach them the right way. Read to them. Dance with them.

"Instead of the curse words, teach them the ABCs. Just enrich their lives with knowledge. . . . Enrich your life too with all these things."

The results of this advice, when translated into action, can surface in ways subtle and spectacular.

It can be seen in the genuine joy that ripples through the complex when a woman reclaims her child from a relative, the hospital or foster care. It can be heard in the voices of moms talking about going to a child's open house at school, of making breakfast without getting stoned first, of paying the rent on time.

Tracy Mills used to tie up her six children so they wouldn't bother her when she was smoking crack. Now listen to her as she cradles one of a dozen babies in the nursery, amid the faint strains of Beethoven: "I'm gonna fill you up," Tracy tells the boy, gently patting his back. "Then, I gonna burp you."

### An Impressive Record of Recovery

Keith Village was the brainchild of two women, Icenhower, who had worked for Los Angeles County's Alcohol and Drug Program Administration, and Xylina Bean, head of the neonatal unit at Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center.

Bean became increasingly frustrated as she watched the hospital deliver more than 1,000 crack babies in 1989. By 1993, about 20% of all babies born there had been exposed to drugs in the womb, their bodies shaking from withdrawal in the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit.

That same year, in response to the crack epidemic and the woefully small number of treatment facilities for women, dozens of pilot programs were funded. Keith Village decided to focus as much on the children as on their addicted mothers.

When scouting locations, Icenhower and Bean came across the almost new Compton apartment building named Keith Village. At the time, its garage was a drive-through crack market.

Dealers slashed the tires of employees of the SHIELDS organization as the purchase neared. Icenhower received a note warning that the same would happen to her body if the South-Central Los Angeles group did not back off.

She would not be intimidated. Familiar with the underpinnings of South-Central street power, she mobilized members of the Crips gang whose mothers worked for SHIELDS. The threats abruptly ended.

A federal allotment of \$1.2 million--which will end next September--provides the bulk of Keith Village's operating funds, with the rest coming from five other government grants. Tenants use their welfare payments for rent.

Since opening four years ago, Keith Village has compiled an impressive record of recovery. About seven in 10 women graduate drug-free, a number eclipsing many other residential treatment programs, according to one study. Among such programs in Los Angeles County, about one in four graduate.

Keith Village's methods also represent a break with the more traditional, male-focused programs that use "attack therapy," in which patients are placed in the middle of a room while counselors and others try to punch through years of denial.

"People in addiction have been through enough demeaning and demoralizing things," says Keith Village senior case manager Da-Londa Groenow. "They don't need to be attacked. They need to understand that if they change their attitude and behavior, they can lead a successful life. . . . We pick them up, dust them off, and show them another way to do it."

That attitude extends to relapse. Although many programs give patients the boot after one slip, some Keith Village residents have relapsed as many as four times.

"How do you learn if you aren't allowed to fall and make mistakes?" says senior counselor Patricia Wallace. "We allow them time to grow, to learn that they are someone."

Julie Rogers, 33, entered Keith Village a prisoner of PCP and crack. She was so obsessed that when her father had a grand mal seizure, a chronic problem, she pulled his wallet from his pocket, grabbed a \$20 bill and headed for the dope man, leaving her father convulsing on the ground.

After she entered Keith Village in June 1996, the obsession continued. In the ensuing weeks, she logged five dirty tests. "The drug puts your brain in a fog so thick you cannot see," Julie says.

But by then she could feel the faint glow of recovery. In the darkness of a drug den, she would call Keith Village Executive Director Deborah Harris, sobbing, "Lord help me! I can't help myself!" Deborah would retrieve her, even though other tenants wanted her ousted.

Julie says the staff's persistence saved her life. "They saw hope. I didn't see any."

Unlike many treatment facilities, which are locked, Keith Village preaches freedom, forcing women to confront the worldly temptations that helped bring them down. The underground parking structure, where women must venture to take out their trash every night, still remains a hangout for neighborhood youngsters who sell and smoke drugs.

Despite its openness and leniency, the program is not without rules. For example, women in their first 30 days at Keith Village must be escorted by a peer when they leave the grounds. In surprise midnight raids, counselors troll for drugs or boyfriends hidden in closets or under beds. Everyone is subject to random weekly drug tests. Curfew most nights is 10 p.m.

Husbands and boyfriends must attend Thursday night counseling sessions before being approved for weekend overnight visits.

Keith Village's approach isn't for everyone; those who need a more structured, locked-down program are sent to one. But for most, Keith Village's strong sense of community is enough, providing the kind of support and honesty missing for years in the women's lives, if it ever existed.

When a very pregnant Sabrina Calbert recently arrived, she was greeted by women offering their own blankets, clothing, food and something much more valuable--sobriety.

Thinking about a trip to the liquor store--but not wanting to flunk the chemical test--Sabrina asked one of the women how long alcohol would stay in her system.

"I told her if she want her baby she better go sit her ass down and stop thinkin' about that beer," recalls Keith Village resident Patricia Haley.



The lecture stuck. "I went home and went to sleep," says Sabrina.

### Children's Anger Is Deeply Rooted

While success stories abound at Keith Village, they are not easily achieved--especially among the teenagers who are deeply distrustful of their mothers.

Some take sips of every glass of water or soda their mothers drink to make sure they're not spiked.

When Richella Glover, 29, goes to the bathroom, her three oldest children line up by the door and knock to make sure she's not reverting back to old dope routines.

Patricia Haley, 38, has given up trying to get the five children who live with her to sleep in the apartment's three bedrooms. She puts padding around the living room couch where she sleeps, surrounded by her kids on the floor.

Many children are not only distrustful, but deeply resentful about their mothers' past conduct and about being forced once again to adapt to their mothers' lives.

Some have been hustling on the streets for themselves and their siblings for years. It is hard for many to dredge up respect for a parent who sold herself for drugs or who neglected or physically abused them.

Tina Zayas, 12, complains that when her mother was drugged she always wanted the kids out of the house. Now that her mom is at Keith Village, she won't let them outside alone. "She keeps us in the house all the time," Tina grouses.

This anger spills into the center's programs for children. Some refuse to follow directions, heaving objects and throwing tantrums. "They have the most primal, basic thing wrong with them: their mom," says psychologist Jackson. "They know their mom is damaged and flawed."

The gnawing guilt that many mothers feel further complicates the recovery process.

Lydia Zayas, 40, who is training to become a medical assistant, pulls three Polaroid snapshots from an envelope--haunting reminders of the bottom she hit.

Three years ago, while five months pregnant, Lydia says she could feel something going terribly wrong with her body but could not stop smoking crack to go to the hospital. When she did, the next day, her baby boy was stillborn.

Outraged, the hospital staff gave her the gruesome photos, an imprint of the dead infant's footprints and the blanket in which he was wrapped, to remind her of the real price she paid for crack.

"I think about stuff like that more than ever now," says Lydia, who has six living children. "I think I was a sick person."

Some children play heavily on such guilt, demanding that their affection be bought with material possessions long denied--a demand with which numerous mothers readily comply.

In reality, however, the wounds often are too deep for such superficial treatment.

Damantha Morris, 32, hadn't seen her two sons for eight years. Driven by guilt, she retrieved the boys, ages 16 and 11, from their father, who had been drinking a lot.

Damantha took them to movies and indulged them with presents, especially her younger son, Daymeon. For two months, he was an angel, arriving home well before his curfew. Then all hell broke loose. He called his mother a bitch to her face and got suspended from school.

"He said: 'I don't want to be with you. I can't stand you. If I have to steal in the liquor store to get away from you, I will,' " his mother recalls.

He began running away, and kicked a Keith Village staffer. "I don't know my mom. How dare she say she's my mom," he angrily told Keith Village counselor Patricia Wallace.

Finally, his mother snapped, hitting Daymeon with a belt several times. Early this year, he was placed in a foster home.

Meanwhile, the older son, Terrance, was convicted of stealing a car. By then, he had been stealing for some time, including food to feed himself and his younger brother. "I thought it was the thing to do," he said during a conversation one summer day. "The people I hung with were doing it."

Although Terrance says he is trying to love his mother, "I'm not sure

she'll be there for me."

A few days later, Terrance was picked up by police for allegedly participating in a drive-by shooting.

More often than not, however, the endings at Keith Village are happier, despite rocky starts.

Before Beatrice McClendon's daughter had turned 2, she was being left alone all night while her mother was out smoking crack.

As the girl, Kemia, grew older, she would spend hours searching alleys for her mother, including on the night of her junior high school graduation.

One night, pregnant at 14, Kemia went hunting, hoping that her mother would be moved by the impending birth of a grandchild.

"Mama, if you love me, you'll come home now!" Kemia screamed as Beatrice sat by a trash bin. Although Kemia repeatedly told her mother that she loved her, "it didn't help none." In fact, when Kemia went into labor, her mother showed up and swiped the girl's gold hoop earrings from her lobes and removed a chain from around her neck, selling them for drugs.

Eventually, Beatrice strung together 17 months of sobriety, but relapsed. "She had just started to trust me, and I went and got loaded on her," Beatrice says of her daughter. In a parenting class at Keith Village, Kemia, staring into her mother's eyes, said: "Sometimes, I wish you were dead."

The tables had been turned. "I would ask her to do something," Beatrice says, and "she would suck in her teeth and back-talk." The mother responded one night to Kemia's disobedience by whipping her with a telephone cord.

"I wasn't used to her being there as a mother," says Kemia. But she knew that to save their relationship, she too "had to change."

With the help of Keith Village counselors, both have given a mile.

Kemia now volunteers to baby-sit her mother's new baby so she can attend Cocaine Anonymous meetings. Beatrice, for her part, curses less and treats her daughter with more respect and appreciation for all she's been through. Both savor the moments when they play cards together or paint their fingernails.

As mom steps outside one Saturday night on her way to a "sober" dance, Kemia shoots her a motherly look, eyeing Beatrice's low-cut blouse. "You showing too much there," she says, smiling warmly, and then fastens a few more buttons.

"I'm starting to see a glow in my daughter," Beatrice boasts. "Like she's happy."

Inspired by her mother and Keith Village counselors, Kemia has returned to high school, where her grades have shot up from Fs to Bs. Kemia has promised her mother she will work hard to become a nurse or doctor. "She's my inspiration. I want to graduate. I want to go to the prom for my mama."

#### On Graduation Day, a Round of Advice

One Friday, 37 women are arranged in a large circle in the community room, ready to begin a Keith Village graduation ritual called the "coin out."

The women pass each other a silver coin. One side says, "One Day at a Time." The other is inscribed with a prayer: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

As the coin moves from hand to hand, each woman offers advice to several graduates, who have completed their recovery program at Keith Village but will live there as alumni.

Addressing one of the graduates who has had trouble reuniting with her children, one woman says: "Don't give up on them. Fight for them." Another woman says her door will always be open.

The sniffing begins.

"Here we go!" someone yells.

A roll of toilet paper works its way around the circle.

"Don't get big-headed," another woman advises.

The graduate, dabbing her eyes, responds, "I do know one thing: I don't have to use no matter what. And I'm thankful."

Then it's time for encouraging words for another of the graduates. "I

really glad to see the mother you've grown into," says one of the women in the circle, now holding the coin. "I remember when you said: 'I just want to be a mother to my kids.' Congratulations."

The graduate rocks in her chair, a big smile on her face, tears rolling down her cheeks. Have patience, they tell her, don't worry about bonding with the son with whom she hasn't lived for eight years.

"You a good mother!" one of the women says. "Yes you are!" everyone in the crowd chimes in.

Now, half the crowd is sobbing.

Says the graduate, her voice husky with emotion: "My goal is to graduate from high school. This is about change and moving on with life."

Finally, the half-dollar-size coin comes to rest with a woman who offers some sobering thoughts to a graduate with dreams of being a nurse.

"Never be ashamed of where you been," she says. "Just be conscientious of where you're going."

For three hours this goes on, an emotional outpouring among women who only a few years back had one friend in their lives: drugs. In the end, it was their enemy.

**Impact of Parents' Alcoholism on Children Can Be Equally Damaging  
By SONIA NAZARIO, TIMES URBAN AFFAIRS WRITER  
Los Angeles Times Sunday November 16, 1997**

Although life with a hard-core drug addict is uniquely torturous, children living with an alcoholic parent can also suffer deeply--and their numbers are far greater.

According to one federal survey, 22% of the nation's children are being raised by alcoholics or problem drinkers.

Many of these children have parents who remain fairly functional--often for years. But alcoholism, like drug addiction, is a progressive disease that gets worse without treatment.

Take 12-year-old Trent Dick and his 10-year-old brother, Monte. Their mother, Stacy, is a recently recovered alcoholic who underwent rehabilitation this summer.

When Stacy began a seven-month drinking binge last December, Trent and Monte say, they would come home from school, knock on the door and get no answer. Trent would then look through the apartment door peephole. There, on the living room floor, would be his mother, a bottle of Jack Daniels at her side.

Once they managed to get inside, the boys would check their mother's breathing and then, confident she was just drunk, help each other with their homework and cook dinner, usually a tortilla with cheese or a can of beans.

Before tucking his little brother into bed, Trent would drape a blanket over his passed-out mother.

"We were both fending for ourselves," Trent says.

Trent remembers how he also had to keep a constant grip on the emergency brake in his mother's car as she zoomed down residential streets at 80 mph. Last April, on one of her wild rides, the boys were so terrified that they got out of her car a mile from home.

Monte says he kept such harrowing experiences bottled up inside. "I didn't want them to make fun of me because my mom's an alcoholic."

According to a federal survey, men are much more likely to be problem drinkers than women; Hispanics are more often heavy drinkers than whites or blacks.

Studies also show that either because of genetics or environmental factors, children of alcoholics are two to four times more likely than others to take up the bottle.

\*

Although most children of alcoholics appear to move into productive adulthood, 41% develop serious problems, one study found.

Groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous have launched weekly Alateen and Alatot sessions to help youngsters cope with and recover from alcohol-damaged childhoods.

One summer evening, a dozen 7- and 8-year-olds gather in Culver City for their Alatot meeting while their parents attend an Alcoholics Anonymous group nearby. Usually, the children recite what has made them happy lately, and what has made them sad.

"We have to convince them it is not their fault that their parents drink," says counselor Peg Seegers, who runs the meeting.

The children begin by standing in a circle, holding hands.

James, a boy with dimples and no front teeth, reads from one of the group's lessons. "We learn to cope with our feelings by sharing them with each other," he says. The youngsters then sing: "If you are happy and you know it clap your hands!"

Nathan, 8, sums up the way many of the children here feel. "The worst is when you get yelled at or beaten, or when your mom or dad is indifferent."

### About This Series

Times urban affairs writer Sonia Nazario and staff photographer Clarence Williams spent five months chronicling the tortured lives of children living with drug addicts and alcoholics. Nazario and Williams spent day and night with many of these families during the summer months--a snapshot in time intended to show the kind of existence such youngsters confront throughout their formative years.

Sunday's story focused on the personal tragedies and obstacles faced by substance-abusing families; today's piece offers an inspiring look at a treatment program that has given families a fresh start.

## **ORPHANS OF ADDICTION**

### **Officials Take Addicted Mother's Child**

**By SONIA NAZARIO**

**Los Angeles Times Monday November 17, 1997**

Los Angeles County child welfare authorities have temporarily placed 3-year-old Tamika Triggs in a new home, following a story in The Times on Sunday detailing the neglect she has suffered living with a drug addicted mother.

Social workers located Tamika on Sunday afternoon in Long Beach, where she has been living with her mother, Theodora Triggs, 34, and other heroin and speed addicts.

Sources said the girl has been placed in temporary foster care until a permanent residence, preferably in Long Beach, can be found. Typically,

children are removed from their parents when authorities suspect they are in danger or improperly supervised.

Child welfare officials must go before a judge within three days to justify why Tamika was removed. At that time, her mother will be allowed to address the judge, who will decide whether the girl should be returned or remain in foster care.

Should the judge decide that Tamika will remain in a foster home, her mother would have to abide by a plan devised by social workers--probably including drug treatment and parenting courses--to regain custody of the girl.

Child welfare officials dispatched four social workers to find Tamika and several other children after their plights were revealed in the first installment of The Times' two-part series, \*Orphans of Addiction\*.

Sources said Los Angeles officials also planned to work with counterparts in Kern County today to locate youngsters Ashley and Kevin Bryan, who recently moved to Bakersfield with their father, a speed addict and alcoholic.

--SONIA NAZARIO

## **ORPHANS OF ADDICTION**

### **The Search for Solutions**

**Los Angeles Times Monday November 17, 1997**

There is broad agreement among drug counselors and health professionals that more treatment programs must be created for addicted parents and their children. But those working the front lines believe other actions also are critical. Here are some of their suggestions:

\* Every agency that comes in contact with women and children--schools, hospitals, social service agencies or welfare programs--must work harder to identify children in substance-abusing families. A 1992 survey of 72 hospitals found that less than half had any protocol to identify children of female patients who abused alcohol and narcotics.

\* Women jailed for drug offenses should be allowed to serve their sentences in residential drug treatment programs, preferably with their children. Incarcerating such women, advocates say, does not address the cause of their problem, further harms their children and costs taxpayers more in the long run.



\* Drug treatment providers and welfare agencies should offer family planning services. A UCLA study shows that 60% of women who have given birth to one drug-exposed baby go on to have another. Some experts believe that welfare agencies should make payments contingent upon random drug tests.

\* Schools must do a better job of cracking down on truancy and of tracking children who leave one school but do not enroll in another--a sign of possible family substance abuse. More support groups and counselors are needed for children living with addicted or alcoholic parents.

\* The staffs of child protective services departments must be beefed up and better trained, so people who suspect possible abuse or neglect feel more confident that appropriate actions will be taken.

\* All children placed in foster care should automatically receive therapy, which today is rare. Even when such counseling is court-ordered, government health programs pay for only one session every two weeks.

\* Child protection agencies should ensure that drug-exposed infants taken away from their mothers at birth are returned only if the mother completes drug treatment. Today, that frequently does not happen.

\* Medicaid must liberalize its payments for drug treatment, which have been cut back in recent years as the federal program has moved to managed-care providers.

**Orphans of Addiction: The Hard Road Back  
For Ashley and Kevin, Prayers Are Answered--for Now  
By SONIA NAZARIO, TIMES URBAN AFFAIRS WRITER  
Los Angeles Times Sunday February 1, 1998**

Ashley Bryan used to pray every night for a loving father who wouldn't down beers for breakfast or smoke speed late into the night. Before drifting off, she would ask God for something good to happen in her life.

For now, for today, her prayers seem to have been answered.

By all accounts, Calvin Holloman has begun placing the needs of his two children--Ashley, 11, and Kevin, 9--above his rocky romance with alcohol and drugs.

"I don't get all bent out of shape due to my kids," said Calvin, who

has put on 30 pounds since last summer and wears a silver medallion with the embossed image of Jesus. "I'm really tight with Kevin now. Before, I thought he was the devil.... I'm paying more attention to my kids than ever before."

Calvin is convinced that he can remain sober unless something seriously traumatic invades his life--such as the loss of his children, a prospect that continues to hang over his head.

In November, when his children's tragic plight was featured in The Times, sheriff's deputies and social workers showed up at his trailer home near Lake Isabella, where the family had settled after their Long Beach apartment was overrun by addicts.

Authorities questioned Calvin's children, gave him a drug test and ordered that he undergo six months of substance-abuse and parenting classes. Child welfare officials are monitoring his compliance and progress. Last Thursday, after months of foot-dragging, he finally began drug treatment.

Although life is far from idyllic for Ashley and Kevin, it has improved in ways that most kids would consider routine.

Both now eat three meals a day and regularly attend school, unlike when Calvin was in the grip of his addiction. A gold-framed certificate that Ashley got for making honor roll is displayed on a living room shelf.

Kevin is enrolled in special education classes and is enthusiastic about school. But the angry boy continues to have behavioral problems, the residue of the neglect and psychological abuse he long endured.

"He needs to be channeled into positive activities," said Jay Barrett, coordinator of special education programs for Kern County schools.

Once a month, a social worker visits both children at school to ask how things are going, if their dad is using drugs or drinking, and if they are eating regularly. For now, they respond, things are going fine.

"My life got better," Ashley said last week as she worked on a book report.

The gangly sixth-grader said she has made lots of new friends. She said she is happy her father has begun drug treatment and parenting classes and, for the first time in years, is looking for a job.

"It's good because he'll get smarter," she said.

Kevin said he also is glad to have a more attentive father. Rushing outside, he shows off a bike that Calvin gave him. "Happy Christmas, son," he vividly remembers his dad saying.

Friends and neighbors in the small town of Onyx, where the family lives, say they have witnessed a change in Calvin's attitude toward parenthood, although they say he has seemed slow to embrace the idea of drug treatment and employment.

Candy Reynolds, Calvin's sister-in-law, who lives a few trailers down, used to worry about his mistreatment of Ashley and Kevin. Today, she said, he is less prone to outbursts, more caring, inspiring a greater sense of calm and security in the youngsters.

"They don't worry about the next meal," she said. "They have a place to lay their heads at night."

There are, of course, many lingering effects from the turmoil Ashley and Kevin experienced as a result of their father's drug and alcohol abuse.

Kevin still wets his bed--a way of ensuring his father's attention, Calvin's friends speculate. Calvin, for his part, thinks it's a biological problem and is taking his son to a doctor to find out what's wrong.

As for Ashley, she still recoils during her father's frequent fights with his girlfriend, Rita Green. "After so many years of being mistreated, you think someone will hit you every time you speak up," said Calvin's sister-in-law.

Determined to retain custody of his children, Calvin said he has applied for a student loan to begin classes this semester at nearby Cerro Coso Community College, as has Rita. Last week, she began training for a job. Calvin is looking for work as a welder.

"I want a job now, someone to put me to work," he said. "I want to feel like a person again." He complained that welfare officials are not being aggressive enough in helping him find employment, a serious concern because welfare reform ultimately could strip him of his \$534 monthly government check.

Calvin's longtime friend Lyn Miranda believes he is serious about turning his life around, even though he has procrastinated on entering

drug treatment. "He means well. He has a really big heart," she said.

She added that he was jolted by his daughter's quotes in The Times' "Orphans of Addiction" series about praying for a new father. It was, she said, "a wake-up call for him."

"Two years ago, Calvin's children could have been in his face, and he wouldn't have known it," she said. "Now, he knows they are in the room."

**Orphans of Addiction: The Hard Road Back  
A New Sobriety, a New Beginning  
By SONIA NAZARIO, TIMES URBAN AFFAIRS WRITER  
Los Angeles Times Sunday February 1, 1998**

On the outside, Theodora Triggs is a woman transformed. Her eyes are clear and her shiny dark hair is pulled back into a neat ponytail. Her jeans, sky-blue shirt and white sneakers are spotless.

Now, she is cleansing the inside--the dark impulses that fueled her obsessive pursuit of heroin, leaving her little daughter Tamika tossed in the turbulent wake.

"Sobriety is the first thing in my life," Theodora said from an Anaheim rehabilitation facility. "I don't have to wake up sick anymore. I don't wonder where my next dollar comes from. I'm working for a total life change--a change of everything inside of me."

Although her journey will last a lifetime, she already has taken some encouraging first steps. Theodora and those around her have even allowed themselves to harbor the thought of mother and daughter being together again some day.

Only three months ago, such a prospect would have seemed criminal.

After Theodora and Tamika were featured in The Times' "Orphans of Addiction" series, police and social workers found them living in the garage of a filthy Long Beach home. Within easy reach of the girl were crack pipes and hypodermic needles, some of them uncapped, one filled with a brown liquid believed to be heroin. Human waste filled a broken toilet.

"My heart sunk," Theodora recalled of that November morning when the authorities arrived. "I was scared. I was losing my daughter."

Theodora was permitted to put 3-year-old Tamika in the social worker's car. She told her daughter she loved her and then pressed a cross into

her tiny hand.

"God is doing this for a reason," she told Tamika, who responded tearfully: "Mommy! I want you!"

"It will be all right, sweetheart," Theodora said as the car drove away.

Theodora was arrested, and Tamika became one of 531,000 youngsters in the nation's foster care system. She was placed in the loving home of a woman in Bellflower, where Tamika is said to be on the mend--like the mother whom she talks of missing so much.

The progress they have made since then was evident last month at the Oasis Treatment Center, where Theodora now lives. A group therapy room was filled with pink and white balloons, Barbie plates, piles of presents and dozens of guests, most of them patients at the facility.

At the center of it all was Tamika and a big cake with four candles, the only ones ever lit for the youngster on this, the first birthday party of her life.

"I want another birthday party," she later told the center's founder. "I want to have lots of parties."

As for Theodora, the affair was bittersweet, providing a glimpse of the future while reminding her of what had led her to this place.

"What kind of mother was I? . . . I abused her," Theodora said of Tamika. "It's hard for me to grasp and accept that." But, she said, "the more the fog lifts, the more I accept."

#### A Stranger's Offer of Help Accepted

The process of recovery for Theodora began in jail, where she realized she had lost something far more precious than her freedom: her daughter. "I wanted help," she said.

Obtaining a list of drug treatment programs, she began dialing, seven of them in all. Some wouldn't accept her collect calls. Others said they were full or charged too much for the destitute woman to pay. Publicly funded programs generally have long waiting lists.

Although an estimated 67% of parents with youngsters in the child welfare system need substance abuse treatment, there are only enough publicly funded treatment slots to accommodate less than a third of those

requiring such help.

In Theodora's case, however, help came to her.

A worker at the Oasis Treatment Center was infuriated after reading that Theodora had been sentenced to serve 10 days behind county bars on misdemeanor child endangerment charges rather than being provided with treatment. She promptly beeped the program's founder, Jim Antonowitsch, 57.

"I want her," Antonowitsch responded.

A recovering alcoholic himself, Antonowitsch opened the Oasis Treatment Center nine years ago with some of the substantial wealth he had amassed through a landscaping business. Rich enough to retire in his early 40s, Antonowitsch wanted to help others find the serenity he had achieved during 16 years of sobriety.

He and his wife, Kathy, sold a beach home they owned and plowed the money into an Anaheim crack house that today has a swimming pool, a rose garden and 12 flagstone steps leading to the front door, symbolizing the facility's adherence to Alcoholics Anonymous' 12-step recovery program. Oasis has treated more than 2,000 people from all walks of life.

Many people believe that only stiff penalties will straighten out addicted parents who repeatedly neglect or abuse their children. But Antonowitsch, like most substance abuse experts, argues that treatment is substantially more effective and cost-efficient than incarceration.

"They talk about two things in prison," he said. "Getting laid and getting loaded."

Convinced he could rescue Theodora, and ultimately Tamika, Antonowitsch persuaded the judge to ask the mother whether she would be willing to undergo rehabilitation at Oasis--for free. Theodora gratefully accepted the stranger's offer. "I was stunned," she said.

The day before Thanksgiving, she walked out of Los Angeles County's Twin Towers jail and into the recovery center's foyer, decorated with a Christmas tree topped with a white angel. Antonowitsch greeted her with a tight embrace. Theodora cried.

She then was ushered to her new quarters, a sparsely decorated room with a rose and blue carpet. One resident had placed a teddy bear on her bed. On the night stand was the 23rd Psalm.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want . . .

### For Tamika, Some Stability at Last

Like her mother, Tamika also has been welcomed into a home filled with affection and concern. During her last year with Theodora, the youngster lived in nine different places--depending on Theodora's latest boyfriend or where she was getting high.

Given the high visibility of Tamika's plight, top child welfare officials wanted to make sure the girl was placed with parents with impeccable credentials and would not be bounced from home to home, as are many children in the strained foster care system.

The couple picked for Tamika has two other young foster children in their modest Bellflower house.

Five days a week, Tamika receives court-ordered "toy therapy" to help her deal with the psychological trauma of being the child of a heroin addict. Her meals no longer are dependent upon whether her mother has spent all their money on drugs. Tamika's health also is good these days. Recent tests show that she, unlike her mother, is not carrying the AIDS virus.

Every Sunday, Tamika and her new family go to church, another first for the youngster.

"Tamika is bouncing right back," said Theodora's Oasis counselor, David Warner. "Tamika has stability and peace. Children are very flexible, forgiving and loyal."

At first--and to some extent now--Tamika did not understand why she could not be with her mother, who had shared many tender moments with her between drug runs. With no frame of reference, Tamika had no reason to think she was being cheated out of childhood.

In her first telephone call with Theodora, Tamika asked simply, "Mommy, where are you?"

"Mommy's getting help," Theodora replied. She said she was at the doctor's.

"Are you getting better? Did you get your teeth, Mommy?" Tamika asked, knowing that Theodora had dreamed of replacing the two front teeth a man had punched out years ago. Yes, she told Tamika, all her teeth were back.

As the conversation closed, Theodora repeatedly reassured Tamika that "Mommy loves you." Her daughter listened quietly.

Their first face-to-face visit came two days before Christmas. Oasis founder Antonowitsch drove Theodora to a McDonald's restaurant near Tamika's new home. When Theodora saw her daughter running toward her, she dropped to her knees on the parking lot pavement and then wrapped her arms around the girl.

When it was time to leave, Tamika begged to go with her. No, Theodora said, not yet, not until she was better.

These days, Theodora and Tamika chat on the phone three times a week. Inevitably, Tamika comes around to the same wrenching question: "Are you coming to get me?"

'I'm Learning My Character Defects'

Theodora knows that, although she has made progress, she has a long way to go before realizing her hope of being reunited with Tamika by next Christmas.

"I'm learning my character defects," said Theodora, who has replaced drugs with a belief in the healing power of spirituality. "I'm not a bad person," she said. "I have an addiction."

Theodora said she is applying this same principle in accepting the fact that she is HIV-positive. Since entering rehabilitation, her T-cell count has tripled, dramatically fortifying her immune system.

Antonowitsch said Theodora's odds of staying drug-free are excellent if she maintains the commitment she has shown thus far--no easy task. For, as time passes, the exhilaration of early sobriety can often give way to complacency and relapse.

Theodora has much to overcome. She used heroin on and off for 12 years. Her constant scramble to obtain drugs turned her into a master manipulator, especially of men, whom she mostly relied upon for her daily fixes.

"She is a total con," said Antonowitsch.

What's more, unlike patients who are relearning acceptable behaviors, Theodora never learned them at all. She is starting from scratch.

Ultimately, addicts such as Theodora won't stay sober unless they work



at it every day for the rest of their days, attending 12-step meetings and employing the survival tools they learn in treatment to transform their character, not just to kick drugs or alcohol.

"Sometimes, we get the idea that if we are sober, life will be a bed of roses, and it's not," said Oasis executive director Nancy Hamilton.

The first 30 days of rehabilitation at Oasis are focused on breaking through the denial common to addicts in early recovery. During the next months the search for work is introduced into the program. Most find jobs at temp agencies, local hotels or restaurants.

Not everyone makes it that far.

Relapse rates are highest with long-term users like Theodora. One in four Oasis residents leave within three months. But of those who stay, 87% remain sober for two years, according to one study.

The strategy for Theodora is for her to undergo intensive treatment for one or two years and ultimately to bring mother and daughter together in one of Oasis' 25 sober-living homes. Already, Theodora is earning pocket money by performing cleaning chores at Oasis--a job that, while humble, has given her a sense of purpose. Eventually, Oasis hopes to employ her full time, possibly as a counselor.

Theodora, for her part, says she eventually wants to volunteer in schools, using herself as a textbook example of where drugs can lead.

Like many in recovery, Theodora has been forced to confront the painful memories she has spent a lifetime trying to obliterate with heroin, cocaine and liquor.

When she was 9, her father died in a car accident. At 10, her alcoholic mother committed suicide. Some relatives took her, while others took her brothers. Theodora never accepted the separation, and began to act out. She ended up in a procession of foster homes, finally heading out on her own.

In one group therapy session, she recalled how, when she was 11 or 12, one of her father's friends got her drunk and raped her.

Theodora has consistently hooked up with men who, in addition to being addicts, are physically abusive. She has hearing problems in both ears because of blows to the head.

Sitting by a marble fountain in the center's palm-studded backyard,

Theodora talks with her counselor, David Warner, about her past, about regrets and guilt.

"I killed a child," she confesses, referring to a baby that was stillborn because she was on cocaine during the entire pregnancy. Tears streak her cheeks.

"What are you going to do differently?" Warner asks.

"I'm going to stay sober," Theodora vows, adding forcefully, "I do have morals."

Theodora and Warner climb the steps to the rooftop of the center, within sight of Disneyland's Matterhorn. To the string of a helium-filled balloon, Theodora attaches a "grief letter" she has written to her deceased mother--one of many she has been writing to people in her past.

"I'm proud of you Mom. I love you Mom. I'm sorry," Theodora writes.

She and Warner pray together. As he puts his arm around Theodora, she releases the balloon. The two quietly watch it disappear into the blue.

The exercise, Warner explained later, helps people let go of their past, to focus more squarely on today, to release their grief to a higher power.

Warner said that Theodora's desire to adopt this new way of life--coupled with her parental instincts--should serve her well.

Oasis executive director Hamilton agrees: "I do think she can be a good mother."

### Small Tokens of Triumph

Every Tuesday evening, an inspiring ritual takes place at Oasis. About 150 recovering alcoholics and addicts, their friends and family members gather around a huge bonfire in the packed backyard patio. There, Antonowitsch hands out "sobriety chips"--coins commemorating the number of months recipients have strung together without drug or drink.

On one December night, Antonowitsch asks those new to the program to speak first.

"I hope to find peace of mind and sobriety," says one.

"I want to be clean and get my family back," says another, a

third-generation heroin user, the fourth member of her family to find help at Oasis.

Laura, a counselor at the facility, rises to claim a chip for 18 months of continuous sobriety. "This is a really big miracle for me," she says. Her parents found her passed out, her blood-alcohol level at more than seven times California's legal driving limit. When she arrived at Oasis, she weighed 85 pounds.

"I don't have that empty spot in me that I have to fill anymore," Laura says, her voice trembling. "I get on my knees every day. I want to be a productive member of society. I'm just really, really happy.

"Thank you," she mouths to Antonowitsch.

Now it's Theodora's turn.

"All right T!" the crowd cheers.

Antonowitsch lovingly places a chip for 30 days into Theodora's hand, a hand more accustomed to the feel of a syringe than a symbol of recovery.

Flashing an infectious smile, she holds the token above her head, clearly overcome with emotion.

"You just focus on your No. 1 problem," Antonowitsch tells her, "and everything else will come together."

**Two 'Orphans of Addiction' Move Into Foster Care  
Drugs: Children are placed in program while father undergoes rehab  
program in lieu of jail after failing tests for narcotics.  
By SONIA NAZARIO, TIMES URBAN AFFAIRS WRITER  
Los Angeles Times Saturday May 16, 1998**

Two children whose tragic lives were chronicled in a Times series last fall on substance-abusing parents have been placed in foster care while their father undergoes court-ordered drug treatment.

Eleven-year-old Ashley Bryan and her brother, Kevin, 9, were taken from their father in Kern County last month after he tested positive for drugs three times in six months and was charged with using amphetamines and marijuana.

Child welfare authorities would not comment on the case, including why

the young siblings were not removed after their father, Calvin Holloman, had repeatedly flunked urinalysis tests.

Rather than face three months in jail, Holloman agreed to spend 90 days in a residential rehabilitation program in Bakersfield, said Kern County Deputy Dist. Atty. Perry Patterson. Holloman began treatment this week, and said in an interview that he hopes to be reunited with his children soon.

Ashley and Kevin were initially sent to a temporary shelter in Bakersfield for abused or neglected children. Last week, they were placed in a permanent home with a mother who cares for two other foster youngsters, according to Holloman's longtime girlfriend, Rita Green.

Green, Holloman and the two children moved to the small town of Onyx near Lake Isabella last summer after their squalid Long Beach apartment became overrun with addicts--a period in the youngsters' lives chronicled in The Times' "Orphans of Addiction" series.

Back then, Holloman would down beers for breakfast and shoot speed into the night. Before sleep, often lying on the apartment's floor, his daughter would pray for freedom from this turbulent life, one shared by so many other youngsters across the country. Her brother would simply wish that his father would stop hitting him.

While packing for the move to Kern County, Holloman vowed that he would leave drugs behind, creating a more stable life for Kevin and Ashley.

In fact, the children did begin attending school regularly, something they had not done in Long Beach.

Kevin, a restless boy with violent tendencies, was enrolled in classes for children with learning disabilities and had begun to blossom, according Jay Barrett, coordinator for Kern County's special education programs. Ashley, who was enrolled in regular classes, also was thriving. Both said things were getting better at home.

Holloman had begun attending parenting classes and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. But he did not stop using drugs entirely.

"It was stupidity on my part," Holloman said this week, adding that residential drug treatment "is the best thing for me to do--for me and my children."

In the short run, however, Ashley and Kevin must now adapt to a new

school, a new caretaker and a new town--all challenges for children who have known little stability.

Holloman--whose family was subsisting on a \$534 monthly welfare check--blames his current problems on two factors commonly cited by impoverished addicts: finding affordable drug rehab and somewhere for children to stay during treatment. Most residential drug facilities will not allow children to stay with their parents.

In all, there are only 50 publicly funded residential drug treatment beds in Kern County.

"There are not enough drug treatment beds, not in Kern County or anywhere else," said Zane Smith, director of Jason's Retreat, where Holloman is receiving help.

A 1994 California study concluded that for every \$1 invested in treatment, taxpayers saved \$7 in law enforcement, welfare, public health and crime costs. A recent study by the Government Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, said that 20% of the nation's drug control budget is channeled to treatment, with the bulk going to law enforcement efforts.

Treatment advocates argue that jailing nonviolent drug offenders does not deal with their core problem, virtually ensuring that addicts will continue to inflict this cycle of crime and punishment on society.

Underlying the argument that treatment is more effective than incarceration is the medical evidence that addiction is not a moral failing but rather a progressive disease in which the brain's circuitry is essentially rewired.

The potential of this approach can be seen in the early recovery of another addict profiled in The Times series--Theodora Triggs. This week, the recovering heroin addict celebrated her sixth month of continuous sobriety.

Just last summer she was shooting up in sheds and cheap motels while her daughter, 4-year-old Tamika, was either left alone or dragged along.

Today, Tamika is in a loving foster home and visits weekly with her mother, who now is on the 11th step of her 12-step recovery program, focusing on honesty, discipline, accountability and reliance on a spiritual force to overcome her addiction.

In an interview this week, Triggs said she is working with Tamika on

anger that stems from what the girl endured when her mother was on drugs and the separation from her now that she really doesn't grasp.

"I tell her it's gonna be OK. Mommy promises it will be OK," Triggs said.

Being sober and off the streets has also helped Triggs on another front. Triggs, who is HIV-positive, recently began taking a combination of drugs that have caused the virus to diminish to near-undetectable levels in her blood.

What's more, she just registered for classes at a Santa Ana community college, hoping to someday get a degree in child development.

"I'm looking at the beauty of things rather than the ugly side," said a tearful Triggs. "I'm 35 years old. And I've got my life back."