



SOMETIMES THE WRONG CHOICES BRING US TO THE RIGHT PLACES.

My name is Sydney, and I was born in Jacksonville, Florida. I'm the youngest of four kids. Some of us are from different marriages, but that didn't stop us from acting like full siblings. I was the stereotypical little sister, running around and terrorizing my siblings. I was really attention seeking, so I did anything I could think of to get my parents and siblings to pay attention to me- which mostly involved getting into trouble. I'm also extremely headstrong. If I want something, I'm gonna do it right now and you can't do anything to stop me. I'm still like that.

My parents argued a lot. Mom was a teacher, and one day she slipped and fell in the school cafeteria. It was bad enough that she needed back surgery, but it never fully healed. The doctor prescribed pain medication, and once she started taking the pills, she never stopped. After the injury she spiraled. She couldn't work anymore and completely lost herself.

I didn't understand then why my Dad was gone so often, but I know now that he worked so much to keep the roof over our head. In his absence, I stood by my mother's side to take care of her. The constant pain meds were turning her into a zombie. She would often fall asleep with a bowl of cereal in her lap or a cigarette in her hand, and I became the one to look after her. By the time I was 10, I would watch her sleep and make sure she was still breathing. Looking back now, I can see that it was too much responsibility.

I became extremely independent by the time I was 16. We moved to Buford, Georgia and I got a job at Nordstrom. One night, when I came back after sneaking out of the house, I had to crawl through the broken window I had left open. As I was coming in, the window broke on top of me and fell into the house. I looked up and saw my dad sitting there watching the whole thing. I thought I was caught red-handed. But he didn't even get up, he just looked at me and asked if I was ok. I said I was, "Ok, goodnight. Love you" "Love you too, Dad. Goodnight."

Another night when I got home late, my dad wasn't home. I went upstairs to check on my mom who was sleeping. When I found her, she wasn't breathing. I realized what was happening and the whole world started to slow down. I managed to call 911, and when they got there everything swirled around me. The whole world moved around

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*I started to see how my past weaved together and got me to where I was...
I got to rebuild my life.*

me, time moved, but I stayed still. There was nothing the paramedics could do, she had overdosed on her medications.

My dad remarried a while later and I had a hard time adjusting to my stepmom. Her heavy hand motivated me to get out of the house. My boyfriend, Trevor, at the time had a good job and just bought a house. We broke up a few times but we always got back together and it felt like a stable relationship, so I moved in with him. Soon enough I got pregnant with my son Jack. It was scary, I was the youngest of my siblings and soon to be the only one with a child. I was the baby, going to have a baby. And I had no idea what it looked like to be a mom.

While I was pregnant, Trevor's father got extremely sick. We were constantly in and out of the hospital, and it strained our relationship. His father ultimately passed, and he started drinking to cope with the loss.

I kept trying to create this idyllic life. I felt like Wonder Woman after having my son Jack, I had no idea you could love someone so much. But my boyfriend kept drinking. It went from a social activity to all day, every day-

fast. I tried to hold him back and keep our relationship together, but it wasn't working.

Soon enough we were both drinking and arguing a lot. It got so bad that I lost custody of Jack. Trevor's mom was granted custody in court. I still remember the feeling I got that day when I saw the papers. I walked out of the courthouse not knowing who I was anymore. I had lost my mom, my relationship, and my son.

I spiraled out of control, and it was my dad who saved me. He never left my side. After losing my mom, he couldn't bear to lose me too. He couldn't go back and save mom, but he could sure try to save me. He's the one who found The Extension and drove me there for treatment.

When I got to The Extension, I sat there, and I did the work.

It was transformative for me. I started to see how my past weaved together and got me to where I was. The burden of taking care of my mom, the hyper independence, trying to create the perfect life with Trevor- I managed it all for a while, but I never took the time to process any of it.

I got to rebuild my life. I'm already seeing the effects on my kids. Just the other day, my son told me he was upset and he would talk to me in a few minutes after he calmed down. All of the work I did is worth it, and it's worth seeing my kids learn healthy behaviors from me- I never had that.

I love coming back to The Extension. I kept the job I got while there and got promoted. I spend a lot of time with other alumni, they are some of my best friends in the world, and I even met my boyfriend today through the Alumni Association. We get the chance to create a new life together- it's certainly not idyllic, but it is real, and it's sober, and we owe that to The Extension.



Please post at your church or place of business. Thanks!

Help us keep warm this fall!

OUR AMAZON LIST HAS PLENTY OF ITEMS TO CHOOSE FROM



ONLINE:

Find our **WishList** on Amazon



IN YOUR OFFICE:

Second Floor Team: Laundry detergent

Third Floor Team: Dryer sheets



AT YOUR CHURCH:

Challenge your small group to compete with another with "Undie Sunday" new men/women's underwear or "Sock It to me Sunday" new men/women's socks



Email Betsy@theextension.org or call 678-410-7520



Make a donation to The Extension: **SUPPORT SOBRIETY.**

Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____

I pledge \$ _____ per month quarter year

I would like to be sent a reminder of my pledge.

I would like someone from The Extension to contact me.

I made an online donation at www.theextension.org

Please mail to: The Extension, P.O. Box 793, Marietta, GA 30061

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The Extension is a non-profit, tax exempt organization as described in the internal revenue code in section 501(c) (3). The Extension, Inc. is governed by a volunteer board of directors.

Comments or questions about this newsletter or any of the functions of the Extension, Inc. are encouraged, please send correspondence to the information below.

The Extension | 1507 Church Street Extension
P.O. Box 793 | Marietta, GA 30061 | 770-590-9075

David Schwickerath, Board Chair

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A member of our staff or Board of Directors would love to come to speak to your group about issues related to homelessness, addiction and recovery. Give us a call at 770-590-9075.



THE LUCKY DOG WALK HAS BEEN A STAPLE OF THE EXTENSION FOR A FEW YEARS NOW - but who better to champion the great works of the Alumni Association than Lucky the Recovery Rover!

Thank you to all the Sponsors for sharing their resources with the group that tells our story best...the Alumni. Funds raised support fun things for our current residents that include Lake Day, offsite trips to local venues, equipment for The Lucky Dogs softball team and much more.



With over 1200 individuals completing the program, the community is stronger, and the Extension is better because of them. No one gives back more than they do.

IT WORKS!

#WeDoRecover



Burnt Hickory Baptist Church

ONE OF OUR PRIORITIES AS AN ORGANIZATION IS BUILDING COMMUNITY. We all need it, and not just among our residents, but a wider community within Cobb County and beyond. One of the ways we do this is by inviting volunteers to be a part of our work, and truly, we couldn't do it without them. Volunteer partnerships are vital to the health of The Extension. We are eternally grateful for each of our volunteers who take time out of their busy lives to invest in our mission.

One of our longstanding volunteers groups is Burnt Hickory Baptist Church. For many years, they faithfully and generously served dinner every month to our Women's Campus. Through thick and thin they have been at the ready to assist wherever we needed.

When the Women's Campus flooded around Christmas of 2022 and our residents had to move, there were many reasons that volunteers, understandably, paused their service. Logistics were constantly evolving and needs were ever shifting. But the Burnt Hickory group remained steadfast, and took their service to the next level.

While the campus was being renovated, the cabinets and counter in the dining hall that were used for serving dinner had to be demolished from the water damage. Now, if you're familiar with who we are, you know that dinner time is one of the most sacred things at The Extension. It's a time of connection, celebration, fellowship, and hope, but without a space to serve dinner this becomes nearly impossible.

When the group from Burnt Hickory learned this, they knew what they needed to do. Not only did they provide the resources for the custom cabinets to be re-built, they also had them installed in the dining hall. Rebuilding the cabinets and serving counter didn't just let them continue serving dinner when the ladies returned to campus, it opened the door for other groups to restart their service as well. Without their generosity, the women wouldn't be able to receive the support from the community that we need to thrive as an organization.

Recently, while serving dinner at the Men's Campus, the group from Burnt Hickory passed around a prayer box for residents to put in any prayer requests they had. When the group went to pray for slips in the box, they realized one of the requests didn't have to wait to be answered by God. It read, "Please pray for us to get some guitars. I've always wanted to learn how to play." Again, they saw an opportunity to provide for in a tangible and impactful way. Before their next date to serve dinner, there were 5 brand new guitars, cases, and tuners

anonymously donated to the Men's Campus.

Thank you, Burnt Hickory Baptist, for your ceaseless support of the men and women in our care. Thank you for understanding the impact small things like cabinets and guitars can have on someone in recovery. Knowing that people care, people love them, and want to help them sets our residents on a path so that one day they will care for, love, and help others in their lives. Thank you for your compassion, and thank you for your service.



Hospitality!



It looks really different for all of us, even day to day.

At The Extension we have the opportunity for volunteers bring their 'hospitality' for our two campuses 365 days a year. We have 24 at the Women's Campus and 70, → (and climbing!), at the Men's Campus. As a meal volunteer you bring more than paus of food.

You bring hope, love, and fellowship to a group of folks who are incredibly grateful.

→ Last week one of the fellas was so blown away, he wrote about it in his gratitude journal!

Currently we have MANY dates available, and want need you to come be a part of The Extension community, and join us at the dinner table.

Step 1.

→ Visit the website for all the questions you may have.

Look for some dates that we have open and you will see why we desperately need you!

Step 2.

Grab your crew! Think friends and family, civic group, church group, Leadership Cobb Class (are you the best class ever? Huumm, prove it!)

Step 3.

Choose what works best for your group.

Delivering Dinner

Pick a date from the calendar and decide what you all can make to bring

Be onsite and ready to serve by 7, be sure to make enough to sit down and enjoy with them (or you can drop off as well)

Cooking Dinner at The Extension

Pick a date, decide what to make, shop for ingredients

Be onsite with your crew after 5 and spend some fun time together in our kitchen with your people preparing your meal, serve by 7pm

Catering is always welcome!

Great for teams of co-workers, have it delivered, serve the meal, and then enjoy the company of grateful guests

We even have some fabulous partnerships for you to use at all price ranges, that you can pay the restaurant, have them deliver, or make a donation to cover the cost.

Easy Peasy!

Step 4.

Make It unique FUN → now here's the best part All of these are options that you can customize!

★ Grill Out, on a Sunday Evening

★ Chili Cook Off - challenge that other department or Sunday School Class

★ Crock Pot Champions - Have your team agree on a few favorites and cook up several batches - serve over rice. → YUM

★ Week Night Wontons - Get everyone to chip in, and splurge on Chinese Take Out ...for 70!

★ Souper Bowl Sunday - You know what to do!

Tyler has long said that the best picture of community is at The Extension each evening.

→ Our clients, our volunteers, our donors and you, sharing a meal and finding that we are all more alike than we are different.

With Gratitude

you won't regret it!

Betsy

678-410-7520



the
EXTENSION

Matt Giddens



Each of our board members bring a unique perspective, valuable skills, and a passion for what we do. Our board covers a multitude of fields and backgrounds, from public health, to lawyers, and even the Braves, our diverse board members bring valued guidance to the table and help us grow into a better organization.

Matt Giddens is an Atlanta area native and resident of Cobb County since 2007. He lives in West Cobb with his wife, Allison. He earned his Master of Science in Information Technology from Kennesaw State University and a Bachelor of Information Technology from Clayton State University. Matt serves as the Director of IT Engineering and Architecture for the Atlanta Braves where he's responsible for all IT infrastructure at Truist Park and The Battery. Prior to joining the Braves, he served as the IT Manager for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia.

In addition to The Extension, Matt serves on the Board of Directors for the Dave Krache Foundation as Vice Chair, on the Computer Science Advisory Committee for the Cobb Innovation and Technology Academy, and on the Technology Subcommittee for LiveSafe Resources. He is also a graduate of the Cobb Chamber's Leadership Cobb Class of 2023.

How long have you been on the board?

1 year

What made you decide to be a part of the work of The Extension?

After spending an evening serving dinner to the residents with my Leadership Cobb class, I saw the tremendous impact that The Extension was making in the residents' lives and knew I wanted to play some part in it.

How would you characterize your experience of serving in this way?

I serve as a board member for a few non-profits, but serving with The Extension is a bit different because of the direct connection to those we are there



to help. It is truly amazing to see the impact The Extension has on their lives.

What have you found to be most impactful?

I love getting to play as a matchmaker between non-profits

and people looking to do good things. There are so many people in the community who want to help out in many unique ways. Being able to pair their talents/resources with an organization in need of those gifts is the most impactful part of this type of service.

What would you share with someone who wants to be a greater part of an organization, but isn't sure what capacity

to serve?

The only way to do it is to jump in head first. Don't hesitate because life will find ways to try to convince you that you don't have the time or energy to do it. Believe that you will have an impact, and you will.



the
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The solution for homelessness & addiction

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*We are growing
and grateful!*

IN 2024 WE'VE HAD
3,120 APPLICATIONS SO FAR...

AS OF THIS OCTOBER, THERE ARE
1,200 AND COUNTING EXTENSION ALUMNI!



*Thank you for being here and
growing with us!*