

*"Because of Lang's there is one less criminal on the streets. They transformed me back to an upstanding member of the community"*



Francis had a difficult childhood. Issues in her adopted family brought her under the care of children's aid. A car accident in her teenager years put her on the opioid OxyContin. Despite it all Francis managed to get her education. She worked hard and she and her daughters were looking forward to a brighter future.

Until one night changed her entire life.

Francis was violently raped by an acquaintance. Traumatized Francis kept the details from her parents and her friends. Unable to work she ended up on unemployment insurance. *"Then I kinda thought I was going to end up taking my life,"* admits Francis, *"but I didn't want my children to be bounced into a foster home. So I gave my kids to my parents. My oldest was about 6 and my youngest was about 2 and a half. Since then every day that I didn't have my children I felt like my rapist was still winning."*

Francis continued to stumble and within a year she was in jail. Her parents refused to let her come home. She had no money and no support. *"I took a bunch of those pills that I had left over from my accident and I woke up in my puke. I wanted to die,"* she says, *"I had nowhere to live. I stayed two weeks in a stairwell. I still had the same clothing on. I didn't see my kids again. I was angry."*

Life spun further out of control. Desperate to get off the street and into a room, she sold the one thing she had left to get money, her body. Still suffering the trauma of her violent rape drugs helped her do what

she felt she had to do. *"I started doing the pills more regular. It led to crack. Once I was on the drugs and on the streets...I don't want to go into too much of my criminal past but I got involved in crime and I was high."*

For the next few years Francis lived a life in and out of jail and couch surfing. Being high kept her awake and away from her night terrors. *"I was just killing myself,"* she says. It felt like everywhere she went for help, even welfare, she was turned down. *"Every day that I went without support I got worse,"* Francis admits. *"I did more damage and caused more problems when what I needed was to heal. Even in jail. Unfortunately there are drugs inside a jail, so each time I always came out sicker."*

Francis somehow managed to never give up completely, she kept going to program, working hard, not just doing her time but doing something with it. Finally a social worker noticed Francis and took on her case. A conditional sentence got Francis into detox. A Canadian Mental Health program for those with concurrent disorders helped her prepare to reintegrate into the community prior to discharge. Her discharge plan put her in touch with Lang's. Fast tracked into Lang's system she was assigned a family doctor, a social worker, a psychiatrist, a counsellor and a therapist. To Francis' relief, all of them came to a joint meeting to review her case. They even included her boyfriend. *"It was amazing,"* relates Francis, *"it was like a two hour meeting. Before it seemed like I could barely see a doctor for ten minutes, but my Lang's doctor came. So I'd only have to say my stuff once instead of repeating it every time. And also so that they could all work together and be on board. Right then and there I knew I had quite the support system."*

From their office space inside the Lang's building Canadian Mental Health staff helped Francis get a health card and her birth certificate. Her Doctor, counsellor, even volunteers at the Resource Centre helped Francis apply for government support programs. According to Francis their advice, encouragement, and even much needed typing skills made all the difference. Incredulous to this day Francis says, *"Now I could afford to live. I could get my medications. Lang's gave me the hand up and I felt like I could trust them. So I grabbed it and I*

*pulled myself out with them together. ”*

Francis has been sober for over three years now. She has also left her life of crime behind. The night terrors are still with her but she is learning healthy ways to deal with them. Therapy helps her work on her social anxiety. A therapy dog called Jayjay (recommended and facilitated by Lang's) is a big part of her success. She even repaired her relationship with her parents. *“Things have just been going up and up but I never would have been able to do it without Lang's.”* says Francis. *“And no matter what life throws at me now I will not relapse because every day that I'm sober and I do my counselling, and I do my groups, and I talk to my parents, and I walk my dogs, I'm no longer a victim.”*

*“Langs found me again. Francis was dead. I had become some other person and because of them I came back. They transformed me and saved my life.”*