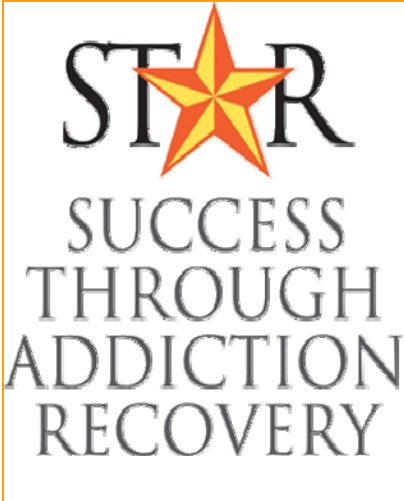


# STELLAR SUCCESS

“When it is darkest, men see the stars.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson

September 6, 2007

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## Been There, Done With That

For over a year and a half, The Been There Done That Foundation has been helping Houston-area women involved in prostitution and the sex industry transform themselves into a very special kind of “PIMP” – a Professional, Important, Motivated Person.

The group, founded and led by STAR graduate Kathryn Griffin, is an intensely focused group of 12-20 women who once worked in the sex industry. Been There Done That consists of a two-hour session twice a week for twelve weeks at Bonita Street House of Hope. Many of the women return for additional groups after completing their twelve weeks, and little wonder — the group is one of the few that address the emotional needs of women involved in the sex industry and one of the only of its kind in the nation.

As Griffin explains, she has truly “Been There Done That”; she draws from her own experiences to help the girls in her group.

“I started The Been There Done That Foundation because I knew that there was a desperate need to address the prostitution problems that we have not only in this city but in this country -- and there was no [one] addressing the issue of prostitution,” says Griffin.

“If you ask any woman who has ever been involved in the sex industry . . . I doubt you will find one who said ‘when I



**Nena Alexander and Kathryn Griffin pore over paperwork for Been There Done That at Bonita House of Hope.**

grow up I want to be an addict and a prostitute.’ Most of their problems start from child molestation when they were little girls, verbal, mental, spiritual, and physical abuse, or abandonment issues. As these women grow up they end up with addiction, eating disorders, and alcoholism and they have to prostitute themselves to pay for their addictions, to take care of children, or whatever the case might be.”

The program focuses on addressing those underlying problems, and on helping women who might otherwise disappear into the legal system. “Right now, in the state of Texas we’re a ‘three strikes you’re out’ state,” Griffin says.

“It is very possible for a woman to strike out on prostitution cases and face 25-life. People can be treated for their addictions — drug addictions and all of that —

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### Special Announcement

Congratulations to all of our September graduates: we are incredibly proud of you and all of your accomplishments. Good luck in your new lives, you have worked hard for them!

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# STAR

## SUCCESS THROUGH ADDICTION RECOVERY

### Program Management

Mary Covington

Laura Flynn 713.755.4610  
(Fax): 713.368.3941

### Case Managers

Alisa Bishop

Bernadine Gatling

Gary Valenzuela

Beverly Robinson

Felicia Lucas

### Stellar Success

DCA Interns

## Thank You, and You, and . . .

### STAR Style

While at the NADCP Conference, the STAR Court Team proudly wore t-shirts made by STAR court client Robert F. Robert has a definite talent in this area, and many people at the conference asked us where we got such unique and creative shirts. Thank you, Robert, for your artwork—we hope we do your shirts justice!



*L-R: Hans Nielsen, Mary Covington, Judge Wilkinson, Laura Flynn, Deborah Keyser, Judge Cosper, Kyle Johnson, Carolyn Allen*

### Back to School

Thanks to Councilman Peter Brown for purchasing school supplies for STAR client children. STAR provides basic school needs for those children whose parents cannot secure supplies before the school year begins. This is one less stressor for parents focusing on their own recovery.

**Mission Statement** To build the community's confidence in the criminal justice system through more effective judicial and public intervention based on changed perceptions of addiction. The drug court will seek to more efficiently utilize all available resources to save money and to save lives.

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but when the prostitution issue came into play there was no one to go in and get to the root of what caused [these women] to do what they were doing. My mission is to go in, take them all the way back to childhood, clean out all of the skeletons in their closet — the things that they were going to take to their graves — and free them from all of these things. There are programs in place for GED and job

training, but some of these ladies don't even have a sixth grade education and have no job skills whatsoever but there's too much hurt and pain packed down in their lives that needs to come out before we can even think about what to do career-wise. So I focus on hurt and healing and the 'poor old me syndrome . . . I've messed up, I'm a felon, no one will hire me' and try to change that mentality and way of thinking so we can reach that place where we can focus on

building a new life."

"[Kathryn] is not going to sugar-coat anything," says one client.

"There's a lot of things I can say to her that I can't say to my counselor," says another girl. "The counselors can only tell us what they've learned from a book, not what they've learned from the streets . . . but Kathryn has been there and done that."

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## Meet and Greet: The New Faces of STAR Case Management



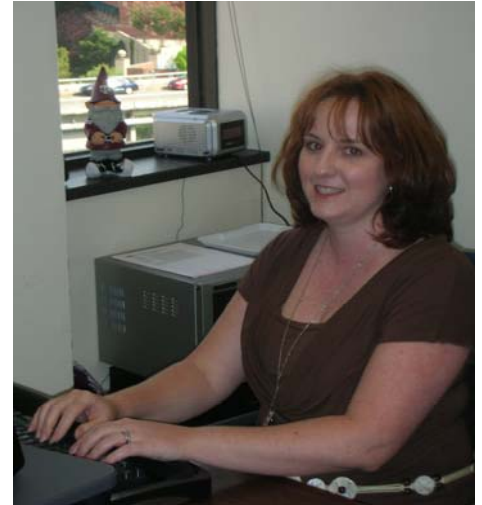
Bernadine Gatling

**Why She Came to STAR:** “It gives me an opportunity to be more involved with my clients. It’s more meaningful.”



Gary Valenzuela

**Favorite Thing About STAR:** “My favorite part is that we all — the coordinators, the attorneys, the counselors, and the supervisors — communicate for the betterment of the clients.”



Alisa Bishop

**Why She Came to STAR:** “I worked in a drug court in Oklahoma, so when I got the chance to come here I was excited about working with such a positive program.”

**“Reach high, for stars lie hidden in your soul.” - Pamela Vaull Starr**

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The program’s current clients have seen the dramatic effects of the program in their lives. “Since coming [to Been There Done That] I feel like life has so much more to offer. Now that I love myself, I can love my kids,” says one client.

“I’m not afraid to go and get an HIV test today,” says another girl. “The [medical service providers] have been here before a lot of times, but I never was able to ask.” The girls aren’t the only ones noticing the difference the program is making: The Been There Done That Foundation has recently received both media attention and their first grant award. “Kathryn

hosted a July 4th barbeque for [the girls] at her house. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Councilman Peter Brown came, as well as the owner of Frenchies, and the owner of the Red Cat Jazz Café,” said Nena Alexander, director of the foundation. “Each one of [the guests] shared a little bit of their experiences and gave some inspiration to the ladies. And they were all in tears. [Kathryn] had the whole thing catered and for some of those ladies it was probably the nicest thing anyone had done for them. It was awesome. Fox news came out and covered the event.”

Been There Done That has also garnered national media attention. “Kathryn was nominated to

participate in an HBO documentary that is going to highlight Been There Done That. They’re also sponsoring us with a webpage to give us a little national exposure,” says Ms. Alexander. “What they discovered is that her program is one of the few of its kind in the nation. I just think the work she’s doing -- and the work she’s started on -- has some far-reaching ramifications. We’re also working with an organization that wants to take this program to West Africa, which has one of the highest rates of prostitution in the world.”

In July, the foundation was awarded its first grant: \$2,800 from the Dryfus Health Foundation.

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## STAR Announcements

### STAR IV

STAR is pleased to announce the beginning of a new docket! Judge Devon Anderson of the 177<sup>th</sup> District Court will preside over the STAR IV docket beginning Tuesday, September 18, 2007. Please come to our opening dockets during the first few Tuesdays. Because the STAR IV docket will start small, there will be no experienced clients there to cheer our new clients. Please join our STAR Alumni members and other STAR staff in welcoming our new clients and our new judge.

### National Recovery Month

September is National Recovery Month, and STAR plans to celebrate with a safe, sober event for clients. The STAR Alumni and several current clients will attend the Houston Astros Game on September 14<sup>th</sup> to cheer for the home team while supporting all those in recovery.

### Stellar Siblings

STAR and Big Brothers Big Sisters agreed to work together to help STAR clients' children get mentors that will help build sober and healthy lifestyles. Children from the ages of 6 to 15 are matched with an adult mentor that works with that child for a minimum of one year. Mentors can help children with homework, participate in athletic activities, go to fun events around town, or just hang out and talk. There are lifelong benefits to having a mentor, as the skills learned and the bonds formed during a child's early years are vital to shaping the person they will become. For more information about Big Brothers Big Sisters or to become a mentor, please contact Linda Spencer at 713-271-5683

## The Quarter In Review

### Nation Association of Drug Court Professionals Annual Training Conference

The STAR Program Judges, program managers, ADAs, defense attorneys, and the STAR CSCD supervisor attended the June conference in Washington DC to enhance their knowledge and skills about operating a successful drug court. The conference included tracks on "Monitoring Alcohol Abstinence," "Incentives and Sanctions for Co-Occurring Disorders," "The Guiding Principles of DWI Courts," and "It's a Brain Disease: Beyond a Reasonable Doubt."

The STAR Drug Court team attends conferences as often as possible to update their training and increase their knowledge about the expanding Drug Court concept.

### MADD-Take the Wheel Houston

The STAR Program manager attended the Mothers Against Drunk Driving Summit on August 21<sup>st</sup> to announce Harris County's plan to start a DWI court next year. The conference featured Mayor Bill White and the MADD CEO and was an effort to link community resources to end drunk driving. With the advent of the DWI court on the horizon, Harris County hopes to make Houston roads safer by getting offenders into recovery, and thereby reducing repeat offenses.

### 1st Annual Drug Court Retreat

The first ever STAR Program Planning retreat took place August 3, at Judge Cosper's farm. Planning covered incentives, sanctions, case management, and future expansion of the program. A big thank-you to Judge Bill Burke and to Beverly Burke of New Choices for providing insightful and innovative 12-step training for the STAR team.

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“We’re using it for seed money to get things rolling,” says Ms. Alexander.

The money will be used to hire an attorney to write bylaws so the foundation can receive 501(c)3 status, and to take the girls out on various field trips including health seminars, makeover days, and seminars on the political process.

Today, Ms. Griffin maintains that the problems Been There Done That addresses stretch further than many realize. “I’ve found that when I started this I was focusing on street prostitution but it’s bigger than that. You have your strippers, you have “kept” women -- you even

have women who married wealthy men who didn’t love them just for their money, which is also a form of prostitution, or [women who are] addicted to dating online, and chat lines.”

Regardless of the exact nature of their past, Been There Done That holds out hope to women involved in prostitution and the sex industry.

“Everyone has struggles in their life, but its dealing with your own life, and coping [that counts],” says Ms. Griffin. “I don’t tell [the girls] once a prostitute always a prostitute whereas a lot of programs teach once an addict always an addict. If God can forgive me, why

should I hold onto it? It’s about freeing yourself to be the person God intended you to be. The most important thing is learning the art of true forgiveness of oneself. And my whole thing is for every one of my clients to be able to take their own life back. Because I have been there and done that and I’m one of the blessed ones who came out alive and healthy. Even the ones that have been infected with HIV and Hep. C and other incurable diseases still have a chance as well – and this is something I give back: As long as you have breath you have chance.”