

Sasee® gets candid

Meet Susan Tyler

For the past 32 years, Susan Tyler has operated Ruby's Beauty Shop; a small salon attached to her family home in Pawleys Island, started by her mother, Ruby, in 1961. Most of the time, Susan lives alone. Her only daughter is married and lives in the Columbia area with her husband and two children. But, occasionally, an unfamiliar face will take up residence for a week, or a month, or sometimes even longer. Susan, guided by her strong Christian faith, has made jail ministry her calling and the women she ministers to her family. She also works with a non-profit called Martha's House, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping women who have been incarcerated become productive and lead meaningful lives. She and the other board members are currently working to find land in a rural area that would offer safe transitional housing and provide a gateway to spiritual, emotional and educational success and productivity for women being released from jail.

How did Martha's House get started?

Jail ministries have been a part of our community for many years, but my involvement came after my own personal transformation. After years of denying that my addiction to drugs and alcohol was a problem, I found myself lying to everyone I loved and at the end of my rope. Finding God gave me the strength to give it all up, and filled my life with peace and joy. It was truly a miracle. I heard about jail ministry in church and somehow it resonated with me. After I started visiting the Georgetown County Jail and got to know some of the inmates, I soon learned that the jail is a revolving door. Many of the women are afraid to get out because they know the only place they can go is back to the same situation the brought them there in the first place. It's a vicious cycle.

Little by little, I met others involved in this ministry, and five years ago we formed Martha's House. So far, we've raised \$60,000, and we're looking for a home in a secluded rural area to protect our residents. We have an account called "New Beginnings" that provides immediate help by placing women in other homes outside of our area, as well as paying for things like dental work and even helping with rent. We are also privileged to work with the Inmate Fellowship Angel Tree at Christmas to help collect toys for the children and give them New Testament Bibles and Christmas story books from Martha's House.



When we get our permanent home, we will offer a six month to one year program that provides counseling for drug and alcohol addictions, counseling for the resident's children, parenting classes, life skills classes and help getting at least a GED diploma and, of course, a job.

Where did you get the name Martha's House?

Most of us who began Martha's House had ministered to a very special woman at Georgetown Detention Center. In her mid-thirties she was quiet and sweet, but had a serious alcohol problem. She received a disability check due to a slight mental handicap and unfortunately was sometimes taken advantage of by family and friends. Therefore, Martha found the jail to be a better home and her fellow inmates a more loving family. Seriously ill, Martha's health began to deteriorate, and she was promised a visit with her children but it never took place. She then seemed to give up on life and died alone in the hospital still an inmate. It was a devastating blow to me and all who worked with her. If Martha had been given a loving and supportive place to go on the many occasions when she was released, things may have turned out differently.

How can our readers get involved?

Anyone interested in getting involved can call me at 843-237-4222 or visit www.marthashouseinc.com.