

**Recovery Spotlight:
Savanah Miller**

“One of the biggest miracles in my recovery is the ability to look at myself and not feel shame today.” -Savanah Miller

Born and raised in Littleton, NH, Savanah Miller is a local face in the North Country. Her family owns a well-known business in Littleton and growing up, she felt the pressure to be “perfect” but with pressure came doubt. Savanah never felt that she could live up to the expectations that were placed on her. Her biological father struggled with Alcoholism and Substance Use Disorder (SUD). Today, she realizes that his disease controlled him, and in a sense, controlled the feelings that she experienced in connection with his disease, Savanah felt abandoned due to the lack of relationship with her father that appeared messy when it was present.

In her teen years, Savanah began experimenting with substances, as many teens do. She started to consume alcohol, started smoking, and that led to experimenting with other substances that she was exposed to. Through this experimentation, she learned that when she was using, she did not have to feel the negative emotions that caused her so much anxiety. Using became an escape, and her disease of SUD was a slow progression for many years, which gave her a false sense of being able to manage her own disease. Soon after falling into the cycle of addiction, Savanah found herself in an abusive relationship, enduring physical, emotional, and mental abuse, she continued to use as a way of coping with the stressors in her life. At this point, Savanah was blessed with a child, a daughter, her determination to change how her daughter experienced life gave her strength to leave this relationship but it did not change the feelings of shame and worthlessness that she continued to experience. The next few years were filled with ups and downs, she lost a close friend, gave birth to two more beautiful daughters, had more failed relationships, and went through sporadic periods of heavy substance use and took on the consequences of that use.

In 2016, Savanah was arrested while intoxicated on charges of domestic violence. The fight had triggered her Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and she reacted without thinking. Now, she was unable to see her infant daughter and the pain of this separation became unbearable. Savanah, once again, turned to substances to help her take the pain away. She had lost all hope, the one purpose that she had found in life, motherhood, was now lost. The years that followed were difficult, she completed a residential treatment program, experienced relapses, and more arrests followed. There were long periods of time, where Savanah did not speak with family and friends due to her own shame and fear that they would not understand what she was going through, she barely understood it. Savanah did not want to use but she had to use, withdrawal continued to steer her in the direction of continued use and more poor choices. Savanah states, that at her lowest point in active addiction, she was homeless in Boston, MA, running from everything and ready to welcome death.

Her addiction had been hard on her, and in the beginning, her recovery would be hard. Savannah was arrested on an outstanding warrant and transported back to NH to complete her sentence. She credits this arrest with saving her life. She had the opportunity to see things with a clear head but as her release date approached there was an overwhelming sense of fear. Savannah was scared, scared that if she were released, she would die, and now she no longer welcomed death. She needed a plan before walking out that door.

Now that you know the story of her addiction, she wants you to know the story of her recovery.

Savannah was able to coordinate with the corrections staff to establish aftercare and she began to take Vivitrol on the day that she was released. She began to attend local Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings. This is where she met some of the most beautiful people in her life. She was surrounded by others, that for the first time, made her feel understood. There was a sense of belonging and it kept her coming back for more meetings. Today, she works a 12 Step Program, has an encouraging sponsor, has rebuilt damaged relationships, and feels a passion to guide others in their recovery.

Savannah is living her best life. Employed as a Community Health Worker/Recovery Coach (CHW/RC) within the AskPETRA Program at the North Country Health Consortium (NCHC), she is working directly with people that struggle with SUD and in all stages of recovery that live within the community that is so dear to her heart. She is a present and fully functioning mother, daughter, and friend. She is a productive member of society. She is a volunteer, sits on the Board of Directors for North Country Serenity Center, and is regularly in service to NA. There were factors that could have held her back, but she overcame. She overcame guilt as the mother of a child with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) that was caused by a desire embrace change and while participating in an MAT program, she overcame infection as a woman diagnosed with Hepatitis C, she overcame craving as an intravenous substance user, and she overcame the shadow of addiction to become the person that she was meant to be. She is a survivor! Savannah has survived domestic and sexual violence, loss, overdose, and her disease. Today, she lives by principles of honesty, willingness, and an open mind. She cannot change her past, but she can do better with every passing day. Savannah has not used substances since October 19th, 2018.

"If I can lose the desire to use and discover a new way of life then anyone can. I truly believe that." -Savannah Miller