



## **Donna's Story**

Hi. My name is Donna and I'm here to tell you a short story about how fast your life can change.

In 2007 I was earning a good living working for an advertising agency. I owned my own horse farm and had money to live and do as I wished. I felt secure. I was looking forward to retirement and spending time with my horses and my granddaughter. Then, 2008 happened. I was laid off from my job in advertising and no one was hiring a woman my age. I couldn't find any jobs. I couldn't pay my bills. I was devastated and scared. First I spent my savings, then I went through my retirement fund but I still lost my farm. It was foreclosed on in 2009.

For the next 2 years I started selling off all my possessions - furniture, jewelry, riding equipment, even one of my favorite horses. Anything and everything to scrap some money together. I never knew one could go so low. By now I had sold all my possessions and was living in my car. Everything I had left could fit in one box. I couldn't believe this was happening to me. I was use to the comfortable life. This was no longer the good life.

Then my mother and granddaughter were in a terrible car crash and had to be airlifted to VCU. The next three months I mostly spent in the hospital caring for them. I hit bottom. Hard.

I came to Goochland in 2013 when friends offered me a sofa to sleep on. The only work I could find was occasional pet sitting. People kept telling me about Goochland Free Clinic & Family Services but I felt I wasn't a person that needed their help. I could make it. I just needed time. I was too proud to ask for help. But I couldn't get out of my hole. I was devastated, depressed and bankrupt. I felt hopeless, and sad. I couldn't be the role model I wanted for my granddaughter.

Finally, in 2014 I swallowed my pride and then found it again at Goochland Free Clinic and Family Services. They helped me with food, with heat and medical and dental care. They never made me feel less than. I felt that they were happy to help me out so that I could start over even at this late time in my life. Everyone was so nice.

I found someone that was willing to take a chance on me and let me use her old house to start a business. It was scary at first with a lot of cold nights. But with hard work, the help of friends and GFCFS, I have now opened a small business called Dreamshine Tack in Goochland. Hopefully soon it will go into the black and I can start paying myself.

I know there are some people out there just looking for a handout, but there are also people like me who are willing to work hard to make a better life. We just need a little help.

To be honest, without Goochland Free Clinic and Family Services, I don't know where I'd be.