A San Bernardino native, Acevedo played the hand she was dealt, growing up in a home where both parents were addicts. But now she has been dealt a new hand and a new chance by the Time for Change Foundation, which is also dealing new hands for other women of similar background.

Acevedo was drinking alcohol by age 9, doing meth by 11, was sexually and physically abused. Addicted to alcohol and methamphetamines, she spent 11 years on the streets of San Bernardino.


Imprisoned so many times, she said, the Police Department knew the name Acevedo.

She would get cheap motel rooms or stay in abandoned homes with her baby daughter, Faith, sharing cold canned chili with her.

She was destroying herself, she said.

Acevedo had given her sons away to a stepfather and her older son, Michael, wouldn’t even call her mom - a reality check for her.

In and out of rehab and jail, Acevedo prayed for a second chance.

Enter the Time for Change Foundation and Kim Carter.

"I know what it's like. I've been there," said Carter, founder and executive director of the nonprofit. "I was homeless, abused and incarcerated. The only thing offered to me for years was handcuffs."

Carter, too, received some help and got that second chance.

"It was a hand up, not a hand out," she said.

Time for Change Foundation has launched its new Homes of Hope program for women coming out of prison, needing substance-abuse and mental-health treatment.

"I realized how often people are diagnosed as bad when they are really sick - and with some help they can heal," Carter said.

Acevedo qualified for the program and gets emotional when she remembers how Carter gave her that second chance.

Acevedo and Faith, now 6, spent six months at the foundation's Sweet Dreams residential home with the self-help group, learning leadership and advocacy skills, self-esteem and empowerment.

In December, they moved into their first apartment - a clean, two-bedroom place provided for them for a year by Time for Change Foundation's Homes of Hope program.

Sponsored by HUD, Homes of Hope is a program in which Time for Change Foundation partners with apartment owners to put women in an apartment, paying their rent for a year.

The program is designed for women coming out of prison who have graduated from the transitional housing program or meet the criteria.

Acevedo's case manager, Phyllis Scott, says Acevedo is doing great.

"The program pays for the home for a year, until the women have become self-sufficient and can maintain the house in a clean and healthy environment," Scott said.

"They also attend workshop classes to increase their skills for employment. Tracy proved she is responsible - she just needs support to help and guide her."

Acevedo has her learner's permit and will soon get her first driver's license. She's writing resumes and looking for a job.

She hopes her story can help turn around someone else's life.

At Christmas, Acevedo's sons Michael, 19, and Justin, 12, came with their aunt to visit.

It was a wonderful visit, Acevedo said.

"And my son called me 'mom.'"