

Mother and child find a fresh start

By Naima Ford

Chandra Cross knew that it was going to be a life of homelessness and poverty for her and her son, Ronnie, 3, after her release from prison, but she was determined to create a different future for the both of them.

She was able to do that thanks to the Time for Change Foundation.

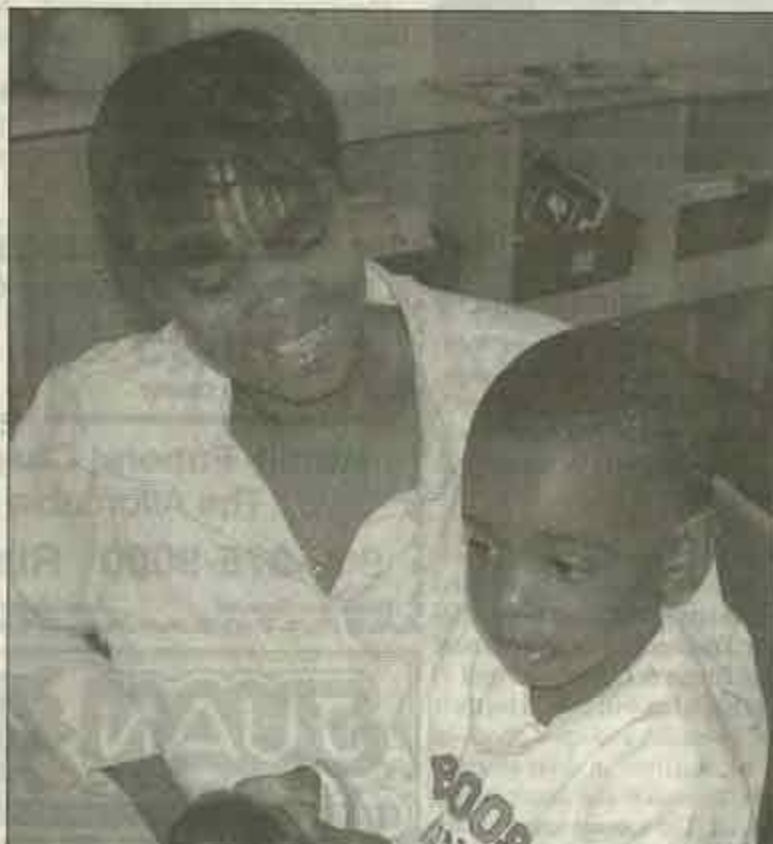
The Time for Change Foundation is a non-profit organization that provides resources and transitional housing for women and their children who are working to change their lives from recidivism and homelessness.

As her parole date was nearing she searched for programs that would help her get on her feet. Being from Los Angeles County, she knew being incarcerated in San Bernardino County would mean she would have to fend for herself in a strange city after she got out. She applied for a number of different programs provided through the prison and even went to the director of programming. However due to funding she was unable to enroll in any of them.

"I tried to do the footwork on my own," said Cross.

She then went to her family asking them to search for resources outside of the prison system. They began calling several organizations and programs that help women in Cross's situation but none had space for her, until her sister-in-law found Time for Change.

She said she did not know there would be a program like Time for



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Chandra Cross has new hope for a new life with her son, Ronnie, 3, because of the support she received at the Time for Change Foundation. The foundation was her last hope after she was released from prison to pursue a better life. She was able to take a number of classes including parenting classes.

Change, but after contacting them and being assigned a bed there, she found everything she needed for a fresh start.

"I didn't want to live the way I was living," said Cross.

When she arrived at the Foundation eight months ago she was assigned to a case worker who created a life recovery plan that included parenting classes, drug and

alcohol treatment, and life skills training. She also found the community she needed.

"They welcomed me with open arms," said Cross, "It was really astonishing for me."

She said she always had her family to support her but was never open to outside help. But it was that help which was the key to her change.

Parenting classes have proved to be the most important part of her transition. They gave her the foundation she needed to help her son transition into this new life with her. After three weeks in the program he was allowed to reunite with her at the Foundation.

According to Shonda Hutton of the Time for Change, the foundation is deeply committed to the children of the mothers in their program.

"Our whole goal is to prepare them for family reunification," said Hutton.

Cross is now studying to get her GED as well as her class A and B

driver's license.

Her career goal is to drive 18-wheelers.

"This is something I've always wanted to do," said Cross.

Before she lacked the education to prepare her and the motivation to pursue it, but today she has something she never had before.

"I have the foundation and people who are taking the time to help me," she said.

For more information on the Time for Change Foundation call 909-886-2994 or go to www.Timeforchangefoundation.org.

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