

Christian Women's Job Corps graduate follows where God leads

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CORPUS CHRISTI—Lori Conner sat in her mother's hospital room with her head in her hands. It was January 2008, and her mother had just had a massive stroke.

Clinging to her newfound sobriety and faith in God, Conner struggled to cope. As she stared at the floor, something suddenly caught her attention.



Lori Conner, a graduate of Christian Women's Job Corps, works as food manager at a church in Corpus Christi. One of her responsibilities is preparing a noon meal and delivering it to students at the CWJC site in Corpus Christi. (STCHM PHOTO)

"The classified section of the newspaper was lying right at my feet, and there it was—a [South Texas Children's Home Ministries](#) ad for the 12-week Christian Women's Job Corps program they offer," she said.

"I couldn't believe it. I knew that when God shows you something, it is important to act."

Four months later, Conner graduated—with perfect attendance—from a program that has been changing the lives of women for four years.

Lil Abshier, site coordinator for [Christian Women's Job Corps of Corpus Christi](#), remembers Conner's first few weeks of class.

"It was clear that life had left deep wounds in Lori," Abshier said. "She was frightened and fragile and had very little confidence. But she was also amazingly courageous and hopeful.

"There were days when I met her headed to the front door saying, 'I don't think I can stay.' But she did stay—every single day. She was determined to face her fears and began to apply all that she was learning to her daily life," Abshier recalled.

Conner recalls feeling "miserable and in a lot of emotional pain" before she entered Christian Women's Job Corps, a ministry of Woman's Missionary Union supported in part through the [Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions](#).

"I was miserable and in a lot of emotional pain," Conner said. "I had made some really bad life decisions. I started drinking at the age of 12, and as an adult, I had not been able to hold a job for the past 15 years.

"There were literally years when I never left my house. When I came to CWJC, I had a lot of growing up to do," she confessed.

Although the computer and job-skills classes were important, what affected Conner the most was the Bible study and learning how to communicate with people.

"I was so withdrawn, and just being in a community every day was so good

for me. It took a lot of commitment," she said.

As graduation neared, Conner received a call from Anita Woolsey at First United Methodist Church in Corpus Christi about a part-time job opportunity. She interviewed for the position and was hired on the spot.

"Lori has been a real asset," Woolsey said. "And she has really blossomed since she came. She is dependable, a hard worker and is willing to take direction, as well as step out on her own."

As the church's food manager, Conner plans menus, shops and prepares meals for church and community events throughout the week. She even gets to prepare and deliver a noon meal from the church each week to the women currently attending CWJC classes.

Conner has faced new trials over the past couple of years as she cared for her mother and father to the end of their lives.

She also watched her only child, Nathan, deploy to Afghanistan. But her faith continues to grow, and people who know her say she is a light wherever she goes.

"God has given Lori a very compassionate heart, and I know he will continue to use the witness of her life to strengthen others," Abshier said. "She gives back to CWJC regularly and also spends time helping others who battle addictions. As she faithfully pursues her love for God, he will take her where he wants her to go. And I believe she will follow."