

## *A STORY OF TRANSFORMATION*

Born in Ottawa, Dawna-Llyn Marshall (nee Phelan) started *Your Pet . . . Your Way*, a Dog Walking, In-Home Pet Care business in 2007 at the age of 37 in Kemptville, ON. Broken and undisciplined with a desire to be creative and in control, she often struggled when working for others.

Her life was wrought with repeated abandonment and pain from having a mother with schizophrenia and a disengaged father who nicknamed her 'Stupe' - short for 'Stupid'- its obvious why she became a mother at the age of 16! "All I wanted was someone in my life who loved me", said Marshall upon reflection. Three kids later, a divorce from a chronic criminal and equipped with a grade 8 education Dawna-Llyn eventually earned her high school diploma and some university courses at the age of 26.

Marshall has endured a child who survived cancer, the lay-off from her high tech job, and homelessness twice as a single parent. Fortunately, she found solace at The Kemptville Salvation Army. "It became my safe place when times got tough", said Marshall. "After dealing with so much pain I had given up. The word *cope* was the only four letter word that *did not* exist in my vocabulary but The Salvation Army embraced me - potty mouth and all."

As Marshall made her dramatic and frequently unannounced visits to Stephanie's office, she was encouraged to cry out to God. "Each time I was about to go back home Stephanie would remind me of the promise found in Jeremiah 29:11 that says, '*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*' and then I felt less alone." Things got really bad for Dawna-Llyn on many occasions until finally one day she just stopped caring and she stopped going to see Stephanie, so Stephanie went to her.

Marshall couldn't understand why someone would care about her when her own family never did. It's obvious to her now that if Christ died for her then she must be worth something. So many people want to quantify life with facts, like Evolutionary Biologist and author of *The God Delusion* Professor Richard Dawkins, when in fact it's about faith - an immeasurable privilege. "As far as I'm concerned the best verse in the Bible is Hebrews 11:1 "*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*"

"Having received the teaching of God's love through the Salvation Army, I was able to work my way through my pain, start a business which has bought its first company van to incorporate a new service, chauffeuring pets to their appointments - 47 pets and growing. I now embrace the nick name 'Stupe', because it no longer stands for stupid ... it stands for 'Stupendous'."

