

Beautify the Meek helps area women to help themselves

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Staff Reporter

October 8th, 2008 - After facing an abusive first marriage and the painful symptoms of several autoimmune diseases, Katrina Currie was tired. She was tired of feeling horrible and she was tired of looking horrible, she said. She was ready to make some changes.

Having grown up in a loving, religious family raised by her aunt and uncle in Moss Point, Currie said she wasn't raised to be abused. She was active in her Catholic church as a youth, won Miss Black Teen in 1989 and had big plans for her education after graduating from Moss Point High School.

In college, Currie met "the man of my dreams." A nice, pre-med student, he seemed to be the marrying type, she said. Instead, as a teen bride, Currie was verbally abused, dragged down a flight of stairs and abandoned by her drug-addicted husband. She kept her husband's abuse "really hush-hush," she said, "because there's so much shame that goes along with an abusive relationship."

"You tend to have an inner war, especially because marriage was sacred to me," she said. "But I wasn't raised to be abused. I was taught I deserved more and I finally came to my senses and realized I couldn't change him."

After divorcing her husband, she struggled to take care of her first son while going to school at William Carey University in Hattiesburg. Some days, she said, she would have nothing but water and a few crackers to eat.

But she was determined, a trait that led her to eventually hold degrees from multiple universities, including a bachelor's degree in literary works from the University of North Dakota, a religion degree from Excelsior College in Albany, N. Y., and a paralegal certificate from Colorado State University-Pueblo.

Once she had the education, however, a few other hurdles appeared. In 2000, Currie began to suffer from Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, a painful disease that attacks major organs, tissue and joints, and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. She was also diagnosed with Myositis, Degenerative Arthritis and Myalgia, or muscle pain.

Her failing health and the medications she took to control them left her unable to work or socialize. The medicines also caused her to gain weight, which left her feeling unattractive.

One day, though, God spoke to her, she said. "I was laying in bed, and I *was* looking horrible," she said. "I wasn't feeling too terrific, either, but I was thinking about salvation. And then I just heard 'beautify the meek' and knew what I had to do."

After some encouragement from her second husband, Malcolm Currie Jr., she founded Beautify the Meek from her home in Gautier. The non-profit's mission is to encourage self, spiritual and personal improvement, while providing life skills training and the tools for cosmetic, skin, beauty and personal care.

The organization provides business attire, skin-care classes, beautification consulting and products for disadvantaged and under-served women who are entering the job market.

"I may not be able to go out into corporate America, but I can do this," she said. "I can help women look good and feel better about themselves and I can give them the skills and products they need to go out and get a job so they can be self sufficient."

So far Currie has worked with about 125 women, some of which "seemed like they were on their last breath," she said. Going through the physical and spiritual makeovers, though, can reenergize their spirits.

"You're not only changed on the outside," she said, "you're empowered." Beautify the Meek accepts clothing and product donations for its makeovers. To learn more about the organization or to make a monetary donation, visit www.beautifythameek.org.

Gulf Coast Neighbors

Hometown: Moss Point

Spouse: Malcolm Currie Jr.

Children: De Vaughn, 15; Isaiah, 11; and Joshua, 6

Occupation: Running her non-profit, faith-based organization, Beautify the Meek, which offers "spiritual and physical makeovers" for disadvantaged and under-served women

Church: Victory international Christian Center in Ocean Springs

Hobbies: Planning vacations for her extended family and fun activities with her family