

RRP 114 — Deena Feldes: Trudging the Road with Purpose — From Prison to 30 Locations of Hope

Presenters: Julie P. Lewis and Peter B. Dowell | **Episode Length:** Approximately 1 hour 42 minutes | **Release Date:** May 8, 2026

Deena Feldes grew up in a Pasco, Washington trailer park with easy access to substances and no one watching the door. Today she is Executive Director of [Transcending Hope](#), a Portland-area recovery housing nonprofit with 30 locations, 80% fully funded stays, and a 39-unit building under construction in Hillsboro. What happened in between is one of the most honest accounts of addiction, survival, and purpose we've heard on this show.

KEY POINTS

- 00:06:00** Deena grew up in a single-parent alcoholic household in Pasco, Washington — stealing marijuana from her older sister and wine from the corner convenience store by elementary school.
- 00:14:00** Pregnant at 15, she gave birth two weeks before her 16th birthday, got her first welfare apartment at 16, and began blacking out regularly.
- 00:18:00** A move to Ogden, Utah introduced her to crack cocaine. She later lived with her son in a 10-by-12 room in Oakland with no kitchen and a shared bathroom.
- 00:22:00** Back in the Tri-Cities, Deena was arrested with nine ounces of cocaine. Her daughter was born at 4 pounds 12 ounces with pneumonia. Deena went to prison, planted trees for 36 cents an hour, and saw her daughter take her first steps during a visit.
- 00:30:00** Released and attending meetings, she accepted one beer from coworkers — the start of what she calls 10 more years of misery. She moved to Portland in 1996, the year of the floods.
- 00:37:00** After losing four children to DHS, Deena stood on an overpass near the Lloyd Center and wanted to jump. A stranger on a TriMet bus challenged her: “When am I gonna see you in a meeting?” She found the West Side Service Center in Beaverton.
- 00:44:00** A nine-and-a-half-year DHS custody battle followed — seven lawyers, CASA, and DHS — all while she stayed sober. A foster parent joined the case and fought her for two of her boys for years after she won at trial.
- 00:51:00** [Outside In](#) removed 11 of her tattoos — including a teardrop from her face — through their gang-affiliated tattoo removal program.
- 01:07:00** At a Jan Pro job interview, the hiring manager turned out to be a friend of Bill's. He hired Deena despite her record. She worked there 11 years and rose to operations director.
- 01:21:00** In 2018 she was called in to save a failing recovery housing nonprofit called Fairhaven. On Christmas Day 2019, one of the houses burned down. The board dissolved. She was handed a checkbook in the negative and voted in as executive director.
- 01:22:00** At the same time, her son was diagnosed with schizophrenia, became addicted to meth laced with fentanyl, and dropped to 86 pounds in the ICU at Providence. Deena obtained medical guardianship and authorized a forced feeding tube to keep him alive.

01:23:00

Today [Transcending Hope](#) operates 30 locations with 80% fully funded stays, serves people with SUD and co-occurring conditions, and has over 50 employees. A 39-unit building is under construction in Hillsboro.

01:39:00

Deena's closing words: "I've been to hell many times. If I wanna go back, I know how to get there. And if I wanna stay out, I know how to do that, too."

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— Deena Feldes

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