

# Healing for Arizona's Infamous Polygamist Town



Aerial view of Short Creek Dream Center, Warren Jeffs' compound (foreground) and El Capitan mountain on horizon. Comprises 29,000 sf, three buildings, two commercial kitchens, a chapel, 44 bedrooms, and three floors to treat men, women, and families who are desperately needing help.

BY JENA JONES (IRISH ANCESTRY)

Colorado City, or Short Creek as the locals call it, sits on the border of southern Utah and northern Arizona. Although it's a beautiful place, there are no grocery stores, no malls, no banks, no stoplights, and most of our roads aren't even paved.

This is a town hidden from the outside world for generations due to the secrecy of a polygamist group called the FLDS, which stands for the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

The town is best known for its child brides, prairie dresses, polygamy, and their imprisoned prophet Warren Jeffs. It's a town filled with children, who significantly outnumber the adults. The average median age is fifteen.

Warren Jeffs is currently serving life in prison plus 20 years in a Texas state penitentiary, but at one time he was listed on the FBI's Most Wanted list right next to Osama Bin Laden and Whitey Bulger. Jeffs is said to have up to 87 wives with his youngest being a mere 12 years old.

Although he is currently in prison, the damage of 13-year-olds marrying much older men, and decades of oppression, have left a void in this town.

On our very first trip here, we fell in love with the kids as we handed out back-to-school supplies. One little girl looked up at me and asked, "Are you just going to leave like everyone else does?" She pierced our hearts so



much so, that we plopped our RV in the center of town and have stayed ever since.

We are seeing many of Jeffs' followers who have been kicked out or are now leaving the church. They come out with nothing. Most of the time forced to leave their family behind. With minimal education, traumatized by generations of abuse, brainwashed, and ripped from their loved ones, many turn to a life of drugs and alcohol to cope, and numb the pain. We have single moms trying to raise ten or more children without any support.

Briell Decker, Jeffs' 65<sup>th</sup> wife, found her way to the Phoenix Dream Center for hope and healing. With her help, we acquired Warren Jeffs' compound a little over one year ago, and opened the Short Creek Dream Center in his former mansion! Our Dream Center is coming alongside the lost and the broken in this town.

Our motto is "Find a need and fill it. Find a hurt and heal it."

By offering drug, alcohol, and trauma recovery, counseling, GED courses, life skills, community outreach, and providing a safe refuge...there is no shortage of needs and hurts and we are honored to be a part of the healing.

We treat all types of broken people of all ages. Like the 42-year-old man with a nine-year crystal meth addiction that didn't know how to read or write; or the 18-year-old boy fresh out of the FLDS who wants to finish his education but can't get a GED because it's online and he's hardly ever used a computer. There's the single

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mother who was getting her power shut off because she couldn't get a job, needing something called a "rezoom" (resume). And, the young girl who was 8 months pregnant and kicked out of her FLDS family's home as a result.

Beyond our crisis family housing shelter, feeding 1,000 meals a month to the community, education efforts, recovery classes, and showing and sharing love to others, we believe in sharing the GOOD NEWS that the town of Colorado City has changed. And to share the HOPE that although it's not the same place as before, this town of religious refugees still need your help.

We love sharing the exciting news of transformation taking place in Short Creek because everyone has their own testimony and story. Even the house itself is its own testimony. It's a profound message of hope that resonates with everyone. No matter how dark your life is right now or what you are going through, something beautiful and wonderful can come out of the darkness if you persevere and believe.

It's not about their past anymore; it's about their amazing future! 🍀



My name is **Jena Jones** and my husband, **Glyn**, and I are the Executive Directors of the Short Creek Dream Center. Coming from San Diego, people always ask how on earth we ended up in Colorado City.

Over three years ago, we felt God was calling us to travel the country doing disaster relief and volunteer missionary work. This meant selling everything we owned—our businesses, house, furniture—and pull our teenage daughter, Haley, out of school to move into our RV. This led us to Colorado City. **Contact:** PO Box 843010, Hildale UT 84784, Facebook/Short Creek Dream Center, ShortCreekDreamCenter.org



I'm helping host Briell's bridal shower. She married a man of her choosing and for love this time.