

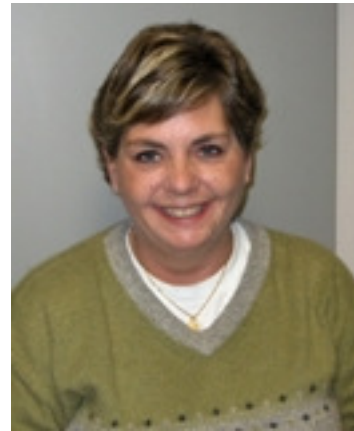
Name: **Pam Williams**

City, State: **St. Albans, WV**

Age: **N/A**

Occupation: **N/A**

Her Story: **Gambling addiction forces
Vice -President of credit union
to exchange corporate suit for
prison gray**



PAM'S FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT OF HER STORY

For most, losing their job is one of the worst things that could ever happen to them. For me, it was an event that saved my life. I started gambling for a good time at the local track. At most I'd spend \$20. For me, it was fun, my entertainment. Others went to the movies or bowling, I gambled. However, before long I found the machines to be absolutely mesmerizing.

I was a busy bee. I worked at a local bank and absolutely loved my job. I felt as close to many of my co-workers as I did to my own family. I was also very busy at home. I had two college aged daughters, a husband, and an ill mother I was caretaking for. To all of this, I wanted to be Ms. Perfect! I wanted to please everyone and tried endlessly to do so. What gambling offered me was a beautiful escape into nothingness. No need to think, no need to worry, no need for stress. I was one with the machine and absolutely nothing else.

Before long I felt the need to escape more and more often. My mother was getting progressively worse in her illness, my children were growing more and more independent, and my husband was leaving for duty in Iraq. Unfortunately my need to gamble was not greeted with an enormous pay raise to supplement the addiction. The need to gamble exceeded my income so I had to turn to other methods. As Vice President of Operations for the bank, I had access to credit card balances and limits to all bank customers, including my own. To support my gambling addiction, I began increasing my credit limit, with the understanding throughout that I would eventually win enough to pay it all back.

Unfortunately for me, that "big win" never came. From 2002 to 2003 I increased my limit over and over again until I had eventually embezzled

\$34,000 from my employer. Funny thing is, I never thought it was embezzling. I had always planned on paying it back, as soon as I hit a winning streak.

On February 12, 2003 I was fired from my duties as Vice President of Operations. This was very difficult for me! I had loved not only the job I did, but the people I worked with. My own daughter was working at this very bank. The day I was released my boss, along with several co-workers, cried.

My crime did not go unpunished. I was later charged with embezzlement and ordered to serve five months in federal prison at Alderson Prison. During those five months I spent a lot of time dealing with me and focusing in on my own issues. With bars all around me, I could not and did not have to be that perfect woman any longer. The loss of employment and imprisonment saved me from further destruction, I finally felt free.

Since leaving prison, I have abstained from gambling completely. I have become involved with my local Gamblers Anonymous group. Through them I have found the much needed support to stay clean. I also owe a great deal of gratitude to the 1-800-GAMBLER help-line. Through them, I found a counselor who was willing to listen, and a staff of dedicated professionals who want to see problem gamblers win their battles with this addiction.

Life has not been easy for me. Over the last few months I have encountered setbacks, including the death of my mother. However, thanks to that horrible day in February 2003, Gamblers Anonymous, and the 800-GAMBLER help-line I was able to spend the time she had left time with my mother instead of a slot machine.

Disclaimer: the above story appears in its original form and has not been edited for content. The above story does not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of The National Council on Problem Gambling.