

From homeless to inspirational author

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TRACY OWENS

By Bob Shryock

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From homecoming queen to homeless single mom to artist/author, Tracy Owens knows life's ebbs and flows.

The 1979 Woodbury High School graduate and transplanted Californian (San Bernadino) returns to her South Jersey roots this Saturday for a signing of her first book, "Qurious Feeling," at Cherry Hill Library, 2 to 4 p.m.

"Many people fall through the cracks and never accomplish their goals or dreams," says Tracy, who also answers to Qurious. "My worst subject in school was English—I couldn't spell—so for me to write a book is an accomplishment. I want people to know you can overcome problems and become a success."

WHS Homecoming Queen in 1978, Tracy moved to California and pursued a dream of becoming an abstract artist, a talent she learned in vocational/technical school.

She has sold some of her work. She was married, had a fourth child (she's been married three times), Emerald, now 8 years old, and life was pretty good.

But while going through another divorce in 2005, Tracy became homeless by choice.

"I didn't tell anyone I was homeless," says Tracy, who still has family in the area. "For a year, I lived on a woman's patio. I had to bring in water every day and for a while Emerald lived with me. We ate off hot plates. We just made it work. While homeless, I still dressed like money but might have only \$5 in my pocket.

"When I was married, the book was just sitting on my desk. When I was homeless, I finished writing it on a computer. God said I had a story to tell. But if I hadn't run away from home, I don't know if I'd have finished it." Tracy calls her 234-page book "autobiographical and inspirational," and trusts it will enlighten folks who struggle in life.

"You don't need a big home or money, you just need to give thanks for your health and the simple things in life," she says. "I never sleep. But I do what I can to help others. I like to see people smile.

"You should never let your goals and dreams die. I wake up every day with expectancy. I went to the angels and they housed me and protected me." Tracy is writing a second book and also has a store in Englewood where she sells incense and body lotions.

Her twin sister, Cherry Hill resident Tanya Norwood, functions as Tracy's agent and set up Saturday's signing and two radio show appearances.

And Tracy looks forward to a homecoming in a town she hasn't visited in four years.

"I turned my life around," she says excitedly. "I'm a hustler by nature. Next thing I'm going to do is send my book to Oprah."