

MAKEOVER

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said Browning. "It's really made a big difference. It's given me a lot more self-esteem. I'm happier and I smile more now."

Over the years, her ex-husband and, later, a boyfriend managed to knock out or break off most of her teeth. Her boyfriend also stabbed her and later pleaded guilty to aggravated domestic assault. He is serving a five-year prison sentence in Tennessee.

For years, Browning tried to hide her shattered teeth by rarely smiling. Then she learned about the Give Back a Smile program on the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Web site.

She was thrilled when she learned Beasley would fix her teeth. Over the course of five months, she made trips to the dentist.

Five people from Athens and one from Huntsville helped restore her smile.

Athens oral surgeon Dr. William Littlejohn extracted Browning's teeth. Beasley did

the cosmetic denture smile design. Certified dental technician Donald Saint of Custom Dental Arts in Huntsville made the dentures. Hair stylist Deela Hicklen owner of Deela's Salon in Athens and Athens makeup artist Amanda Jones of Mary Kay Cosmetics did her hair and makeup for the "after" photos.

The American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry established the Give Back a Smile program in 1999. Since then, 850 dentists, lab employees and other dental professionals have donated their time and expertise to help about 350 domestic abuse victims at a cost of more than \$2.1 million. To apply, call (800) 773-4227 or go online to www.aacd.com/give-backasmile/.

Browning urges other abuse victims to call and get their smiles back.

"It's helping me a lot, it's building my confidence in myself and my abilities," she said.

To that end, she is earning her bachelor's degree in psy-

chology from the University of Phoenix Online. So far, she has a 3.96 grade point average — straight A's.

Eventually, she hopes to pursue her master's degree and use the knowledge to help other victims of domestic violence.

"Someday I want to open a shelter of my own," she said.

She knows it is difficult to understand why battered women stay in abusive relationships.

"Most of the time, there are a lot of threats and you don't know if they are saying it or meaning it, or what," she said. "Also, you love them too, so that's a problem. They make you think you can't do without them. They tell you that."

But, she urges battered women to get out of the violence.

"Go to a shelter and get help and use all of the resources available to you there," she said.

She wants them to know there is help out there, like the Give Back a Smile program.