

# Anthony's Story: Dreams of Moving Forward



As children, many of us were taught to dream big. We dreamed of growing up to become actors and actresses, musicians, professional athletes and even the President of the United States of America. We dreamed of living in a three-bedroom, three-bathroom house with a picture-perfect white picket fence. We dreamed of driving around in a new car, usually a fancy sports car. We dreamed of vacations to Disney World, New York City, Los Angeles and Paris. And although our dreams may have become more realistic as we grew older, we were still able to dream big because we didn't have to worry about where we were going to sleep at night, how we were going to get food to fill our hungry stomach, or who was going to be there to love and care for us the next morning.

There are many young people who aren't able to dream big because they were dealt a bad-hand from the day that they were born, forcing them to think instead about the simple needs that many of us take for granted. Recently, a young man, Anthony, walked through our Drop-In Center doors in need of help. Anthony had big dreams as a young child. He dreamed of becoming an actor or Nascar driver, owning a house with a car in the driveway, and having money to pay for anything that he wanted. Unfortunately, Anthony was also dreaming about a different life than the one that he was living. His father spent most of Anthony's childhood in and out of prison and his mother tried to provide him and his two younger brothers with the best childhood she could. But with only one income and no father figure in the picture to guide him, Anthony "did a lot of things that he shouldn't have."

Hoping to turn his life around, Anthony "house-hopped" to his grandmother's house and then to his step-mother's house. While at his step-mother's house Anthony reconnected with his father, who was in prison again, and agreed to help the family out. The burden eventually became too much for him and after a fight with his father, Anthony returned to his step-mother's house only to find his stuff outside on the doorstep.

With nowhere to turn, Anthony ended up at a bus stop. The dreams that he had as a child were no more and now his only dream was of somewhere to lay his head at night. A young woman sitting at the bus stop introduced herself to Anthony and asked if he needed a job. The timing couldn't have been more perfect and he immediately accepted her offer. What Anthony didn't realize at the time is that the job was a scam; he ended up with no money, food or housing. It was cold that first night that he slept on the street. But everything changed when he found HOPE 4 Youth!

"Thank God for HOPE 4 Youth," he said after walking through our doors. Anthony is now living in a house, employed at a full-time job, and working on a plan to finish high school. He is also dreaming again. In the future, he hopes to become an artist. He says his journey has happened "4" a reason ... to move forward.