

# In His Own Words

This is my story. On November 29, 2012, the house I grew up in was raided by the Anoka Police. Soon after that, my mom passed away – on Christmas Day of 2012. I knew at that point that my life was going to be a real struggle. At the time, I didn't care about anything except drugs, alcohol, money and women. Minus the hand I was dealt, it was my fault that I continued to be homeless. I pursued anything but a place to live. I was chasing women, drugs and alcohol and it didn't matter where I slept, as long as I was drunk or high. At the age of 18 I knew there was more to life and I checked myself into treatment.

Three words I knew well – COLD, anxiety and depression. Not having a home was very scary and honestly I would be couch surfing at friends' houses or walk around all night doing whatever, wondering if I'm going to have a place to stay or not etched the feeling of anxiety into my head, which caused my depression.

I heard about HOPE 4 Youth in High School, when I was 16 or so. My Prevention Specialist, Renee Snow, who never gave up on me, gave me a card for HOPE. I didn't take advantage of it right away because I was staying in Big Lake, St. Cloud and other areas. One day, I came to me senses and walked into the HOPE 4 Youth Drop-In Center and truly, sincerely, asked for help. Within two weeks, I was off the streets because I did my part and they did what they said they would do. They also helped me with things to furnish my apartment, provided me with work clothes and food. I am so appreciative of HOPE 4 Youth. When the time is right, I would love to come and help those who are in my position.

I GOT YOU! Eddie is my Case Manager. The tough love this man has shown me has been real. He did his part 100%. I am so blessed to know him – he is always there with advice to help me work through any situation. He always tells me he cannot help me more than I can help myself. The application of knowledge is powerful. You can know everything in the world but if you don't apply it, it's useless.

And then there's Lisa Jacobson. Man this woman has a heart bigger than Texas. She is also there for me with advice from a different point of view than Eddie. She is always rooting for me and I'm so grateful to know I have such strong personalities and characters in my corner. It makes me want more for my life, to strive for greatness.

Every time I walk into the Center I get smiles, then people ask which one I am (I have a twin brother that comes to the center too). But I want to say "THANK YOU" to every mentor that volunteers their time and money to make the world go around in the Center. Without you guys, we wouldn't have a center. You all are truly a blessing – thank you!

I now live in Anoka in my own apartment. I am working at DustBusters as many hours as my boss Eric will give me. When I have spare time, I like to watch the Blacklist, the MN Vikings and other TV series. I also like to keep an open mind and read self-help books, study different religions and of course social media. When I can I also like to spend time with my nephews. I recently got into vehicles and am learning more about them.

My future plans include getting my GED, which I am working on now. That will allow me to join the United States Army if I pass the ASVAB with a 50+. After I get out of the Army, I would like to get my LACD and become an Adolescent Chemical Dependency Counselor. In pursuing all of these things I would like to obtain happiness each day, always remain sober and be a productive member of society. I know it's a process – progress not perfection.

- Jason