

Lewis' Story

I'll embrace the fall of 1999 throughout the years. It would come to be the second occasion where my life was drastically altered. The later time, however, I was able to have hope, a choice, and an opportunity to travel through the corridor that would transform my existence into a meaningful lifestyle. I was given the opportunity to experience how it feels to be as close to normal as I could envision. The decision was placed before me and I gratefully accepted.

In the fall of 1993 my life was impacted to the point where I was affected emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. I served my country on a tour of duty in Mogadishu, Somalia. I have no regrets for serving God, country, and fellow man, but I never knew the sacrifice I would have to make at the young age of 18 to acquire money for college.

My treatment for post traumatic stress disorder was ending and I had nowhere to live. I had been in the VA hospital for six months and refused to return to the same environment of dysfunction that prolonged my alcoholism and cannabis addiction. If need be I was willing to sleep on the street at night and go to school in the day time. Then I learned about the St. Vincent DePaul Center.

I started off going to school in the day and cleaning office buildings at night while staying at the DePaul Center. It worked out perfectly for me because I was able to attain the life skills I needed for career employment and permanent housing through the case management and counseling that was provided. It was not easy because I had to learn how to function within the norms of society while leaving behind the behaviors which had kept me stuck in a less than desirable lifestyle.

The staff at the DePaul Center was there in my times of crisis and always provided the direction that I needed. After one and a half years, I had worked my way to the point where I was living in my own apartment, going to school full-time, while working 40 hours a week. Shortly there after I had obtained an associate degree and was working in social services. A position on staff was offered that I filled for a while before moving on in the field.

Today my blessings are too abundant to count. Just five years after completing the program at the DePaul Center, I have completed a bachelors degree, have been married for three years and I am working for the state. I am living in my own house (not paid off but another day closer), started working towards my first graduate degree, and looking towards advancing at the state level or moving on to be a federal employee. There is even an interest by a couple of police departments that I may pursue. The best part for me is that I have a choice today in which ever way that my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, leads me.

Thanks, DePaul Center for all that you have done for me. I would also like to thank all the people who donated to make my success possible.

