

Housing Matters



Cornerstone Community Housing, Inc. has a two-fold mission. We are dedicated to helping men experiencing homelessness rebuild their lives and to changing attitudes toward homelessness through outreach and education.

WITH YOUR HELP, JOHN IS BUILDING A NEW LIFE

by Isabella Maxey

John D. is a 54-year old resident of Earl's Place. After being in and out of prison since the age of 16, he is working hard to stay out of the tent on the street he once called home. John is working hard at Earl's Place, both for himself and to set an example for other homeless people.

John describes himself as a 'neat-freak.' He says, "I love cleaning, it's one of my hobbies. But I want to learn how to read better, so I can take that up too."

Since coming to Earl's Place, John has been able to obtain his birth certificate and State ID. He is still working to obtain more documentation to help get his life up and running. He credits these successes to the executive director of Earl's Place, Sheila Helgerson, and Earl's Place case manager, James Carey. He believes they helped him see things from a different perspective. **"They looked at me like I was worth their respect. I ain't never had that before,"** John said.

Growing up in Baltimore City, John was physically abused by both his parents. Beatings and other physical abuse were common and were often set off by small things. John recalls his father saying, "Don't leave my house, don't say a word". Not surprisingly, John suffered from depression and suicidal thoughts as a result of the abuse. He even attempted suicide as a child. Since getting help from a therapist, John learned that it is important to understand the fears he had in his childhood in order to overcome his depression in his adult life.



John was first incarcerated at age 16. He continued a pattern of leaving and entering

Continued on page -3-

MORE NEW BEGINNINGS

Steven grew up in Fort Howard. Earlier in his life, he had a job, an apartment, a supportive family, and hobbies including kayaking and hiking. Then things changed. **“I lived on the streets (of Baltimore) for three straight years.”**

As in most cases of homelessness, Steven believes a number of factors contributed to him losing everything before coming to Earl's Place -addiction, a poor attitude, not knowing which way to turn when things get difficult.

But Steven is adamant that one important factor is overlooked as a key cause of homelessness—the mental health issues and the lack of resources to help individuals and their families combat mental illness.

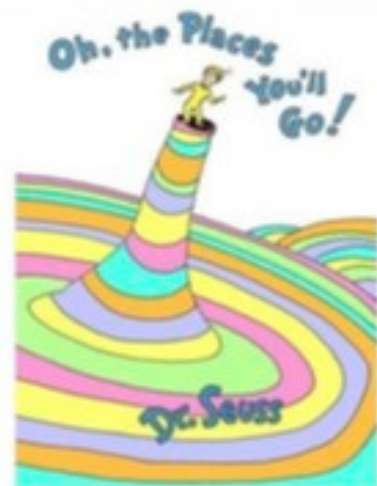
According to the Mental Illness Policy Organization, more than 45% of the homeless experienced serious mental illness at the point when they lost their home. Based on his own life and mental health issues, Steven believes, “Laziness isn't always the case (as a cause of homelessness). A lot of people out there who I met had no family to help them with addiction or their mental health problems. There's a huge stigma with mental health. I see a lot of people get treated differently for having severe mental health problems. People dismissed over a lack of hygiene instead of being offered help. There is a huge lack of empathy. I've misjudged a lot of people myself.” Steven sees untreated mental health issues as one of his biggest challenges in turning his life around.

Steven has participated in numerous addiction rehab and transitional housing programs over the years. However, he sees Earl's Place as different from other programs. “I can absolutely say I am in a much better place since coming to Earl's Place. Just the help I've gotten here, the resource connections, the donations, it's been awesome to know that people care...it's not about the money—it's about the people.”

Steven has had several successes in a short time at Earl's Place. He has obtained his birth certificate and legal identification documents, both needed for employment. He is working. He is learning discipline in saving money for his essential needs. “Earl's Place gives you a better foundation for when you leave”, he says. And now most importantly, he is enrolled in a psychiatric rehabilitation program.

UPDATES

Congratulations to Andre, Gregory, and Charles on their moves to permanent housing.



Congratulations to Guy, John B., Ronald, Steven, and Terrence on obtaining employment.

We are sad to share the death of Andrew, a resident at Prospect Place. He was one of our first residents. Prior to coming to Prospect Place in 2015, he was chronically homeless for many years and suffered from a number of health issues. We are glad that he lived out his final years in the comfort of his own home.

This summer we were fortunate to have Hudson Lui join us as an intern from the UMBC Maryland Public Service Scholars. Although he has completed his internship, he will continue to work with us as the Director of Community Partnerships for the Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Concern, providing volunteers to work with the men on computer literacy.

prison for minor-to-severe offenses for roughly 34 years. “I was too deep into the drug game,” John recalls, “I didn’t see my way out. I didn’t have a home outside of jail, and I am diabetic.” The situation appeared hopeless to him.

After spending four years of homelessness living in a tent, John grew weary. “I would get so hungry, I would have to look for food in the trash.”

He checked himself into a rehab facility to overcome his heroin addiction. That’s when he discovered Earl’s Place as a transition from addiction treatment to independent living.

Now, he is free of drugs and alcohol. After graduating from the treatment program, John received a certificate commemorating his achievement. “That made me feel so happy, I cried,” John said. “If I ever get a place, I’ll hang it up on the wall. This is what took me off the street.”

John’s goals continue to expand as he takes a shot at a life, one his parents never offered him. “Next, I’m going to learn how to use a computer,” John said, “I have no idea how, but I’m not going to stop until I do!”

His determination and grit are products of his pride of freeing himself from his past lifestyle. He hopes to inspire others to do the same.

“My dream is to get on T.V. and be a spokesperson for the homeless,” John says, beaming. “I know I would break down in tears. But I want to tell them they can do what I did, and pick themselves up. You don’t have to be out there, there are ways to get out.”

Cornerstone Community Housing Inc. Earl’s Place Resident Survey Report May 2021

Earlier this year, Ariella Adams, a Johns Hopkins Public Health graduate student, interned with us through the Baltimore Community Practicum course.

One of the tasks she completed was a survey of some of the former Earl’s Place residents who completed the program between 1998 and 2020.

The information she obtained serves three purposes: to help us improve operations, to share participant point of view of program effectiveness, and to encourage continued funding to provide support for the men served every year.

Here are some of the findings:

- 94 % of respondents strongly agree with these statements
 - ⇒ “I felt stable in the program.”
 - ⇒ “I felt supported during my time at the program.”
 - ⇒ “The program helped me grow.”
- 76% of respondents have been able to maintain their housing.
- Over 50% of respondents are making a monthly income of over \$2,000+
- Prior to coming to Earl’s Place most were in shelters, transitional housing, or living on the street.

You can find the full report on our website.

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DINNER CAMPAIGN: October 1-10, 2021

We want to be sure we are all safe, so we will not have an Opening Doors dinner this year. However, the need for affordable supportive housing continues. While we will not see you in person, we are hopeful we can count on you to provide new beginnings and help the men rebuild their lives.

A total of 54 men were housed at Earl's Place in 2019 and 2020. For those who left (39), the average length of stay was 10 months. The cost to provide housing and case management for those 10 months was \$5,472 per man (just \$18 per day).

Will you help us reach our goal of \$93,024 to provide 10 months of housing for John, Steven, and 15 others at Earl's Place?

Please use the enclosed envelope or donate on-line at <https://cchbaltimore.networkforgood.com/projects/137241-opening-doors>

Every gift makes a difference for the men we work with.

Together, we are changing lives!



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