Rebuilding Lives: Tierre's Journey from Courtroom to Earl's Place

Tierre’s path to Earl’s Place started in court.

During the pandemic he was out of prison on home monitoring. There were no in-person check-ins and he continued to use drugs during that time. When things started to open up again, he went back for a drug test. When he left the building, he overdosed. Right there.

Stupidity or a cry for help?

Either way, this led him to a crossroads. The judge offered him two options. Enter an inpatient treatment program or go back to prison. He chose treatment.

For most of his life getting high was all Tierre knew.

He grew up in Davidsonville in Anne Arundel County. When his mother and father separated, he stayed with his grandmother. His mother moved to the city and Tierre would bounce between her home and his grandmother’s.

His grandmother lived on a large acreage, a different world than the one he found in the city. When he was young, Tierre wanted to be a veterinarian. Unfortunately, his choices led him in a different direction.

Expelled from high school in the 9th grade for narcotics related charges, Tierre spent 15 months in the Charles Hickey School, a secure juvenile detention center.

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OUTSIDE/R ART

Ten years ago, an amazing relationship was born. Beginning as a one-semester course in community radio with Goucher College and led by Goucher professor Phaye Poliakoff-Chen, the arts program has developed organically as an ongoing art and writing partnership.

Most recently, the men and community volunteers have been working on mosaics. In April, we had a beautiful and well-attended show at the Ivy Book Shop. Some of the pieces are now on display in the bookshop garden. You can find many more pictures at www.Facebook.com/cchbaltimore and www.earlsplacegallery.org.

Goucher College alum joined us from across the country. Photo credit: Nishka Seth

Concrete Poetry
Julia Kim Smith
https://juliakimsmith.com/projects/

Congratulations to Larry, Theodore, Robert, and Tierre on their new homes.

Congratulations Josh on starting classes at the Community College of Baltimore County.

We welcomed a new resident to Prospect Place, Keith, after one of the men passed away earlier this year.
When he wasn’t incarcerated, he sold and used drugs. In the 80’s business boomed for Tierre and many others. Crack cocaine became available. He says it was a whole new world. Money flowed and he had an “awesome” (albeit illegal) lifestyle.

His drug of choice was heroin, which he says, for him, was not a problem until fentanyl came along. At 45 years old, Tierre chose treatment because “you can’t get high and have a life”.

In 2021, he was in front of Judge Manck for the 3 or 4th time. He was sober. He looked good. The judge encouraged him to continue what he was doing. His case was dismissed providing he continued drug treatment.

The Judge and others showed they cared – for Tierre it felt good to get a pat on the back.

Being sober gave Tierre a chance to think.

He heard about Earl’s Place from his counselor at the treatment program. He had planned to return to Anne Arundel County after treatment. He didn’t really think he had a problem. His counselor encouraged him to give Earl’s Place a chance.

At Earl’s Place he found a safe space and something he wanted to do with his life. He signed up for classes as a Peer Recovery Specialist. Now he is waiting to schedule his final test to complete his certification.

He is using his education and skills working at H.O.P.E. (Helping Other People Through Empowerment), a peer-led recovery and resource center. He loves his job. So much so, that when he is not working, he can be found volunteering there.

For others who are struggling, Tierre says if you come to Earl’s Place give yourself a chance. “The place can do whatever you need it to do. You just have to want to do it. Just a little effort and it will all work out. Running the streets is much harder.”

Tierre’s final words, “Earl’s Place truly works. Your donations are not being wasted.”

On Monday, April 17, Tierre signed the lease for his own apartment.

While we miss his big smile and hearty greetings, we say well done, Tierre. Well done.
Reconnecting and Making New Friends

We had a lovely time with old friends and new at our Earl’s Place Open House in April. Thanks to Board member, Erika McClammy, for decorating!

We will schedule another for the Fall. If you would like to come by, in the meantime, just let us know.

You can make a lasting impact on the work of Cornerstone Community Housing by including CCH in your will. For an overview of planned giving options, please visit https://cchbaltimore.planned.gifts/

If you have questions, please contact Sheila Helgerson at 410-522-0225 or sheila@cchbaltimore.org.

If you have already included CCH in your will, thank you. And please let Sheila know.