

Story of Hope: Dani

In Dani's life, nothing has ever been stable, or certain. She faced struggles with mental health, addiction, homelessness and often, hopelessness. In that darkness, SYM was the only home and stability she'd ever known.

She admits that she was not always an easy person to be around, but at SYM she has always found peace, safety, encouragement, and space to be who she is, without judgment—flawed, frustrating, time-consuming, and sometimes, wonderful! She was given space to be herself and room to grow.

She felt discarded by society, but *“SYM was always there to allow for me to feel what I'm feeling, planting seeds of strength, hope, faith, and love. Slowly, those seeds rooted and from those roots, I've found myself enveloped in unconditional love. And then...*

...after 22 years of homelessness, mental health issues, abuse, substance use, and unspeakable heartache, I found a call to action. I co-founded a shelter in 2013 and am now a social worker. I've turned my wounds into wisdom, and I carry parts of what SYM has done for me into my work within the community.”

Dani has been aged out of SYM for many years now, and as SYM staff and volunteers came and went, with each departure, she had terrible anxiety and concern- would all the support I was getting leave with them? It never left. It is woven into the very structure of SYM.

All these years later, when Dani finds herself overwhelmed or feeling uncertain, she'll sit near the Drop-in Center, under a beautiful Elm tree that provided shade on many hot days and she breathes a little easier. *“I know with certainty that if I knock on the office door, someone will answer. If I have needs, or am in danger, I will be met with support, and treated with dignity.”* She describes SYM as still her safe place, a sanctuary.

“My story is not unique- countless people who have engaged with SYM have moved on to become social workers, taking the radical compassion we were shown by SYM and integrating it into our work. There are no words to adequately express the gratitude I have for SYM, or the impact SYM has had, and continues to have, on my life.”