

Story of Hope #4

Story of Marc



Marc cannot tell you where he lived when he was growing up - the list of people and places is too long to remember. At various points he lived with his mom, his dad, his grandma, his aunt, his older sister, his older brother, friends, group homes, and foster care. He lived in several cities, attended countless schools, and lived in two different states. "I moved around a lot," he says, "and every time I was too hard to handle, I'd get sent to another place."

He struggled with ADD and acted out in school as a result of being bullied and wrestling with untreated learning disabilities. Marc was introduced to pot by a family member at age 11; by 14 he was drinking heavily, and by 16 he was using crystal meth.

"I got myself into a big hole - I was drinking, fighting, and struggling in school. I was in so much trouble that I knew I was going to get put back into foster care, and I didn't want that. So I ran away and just stayed gone."

Marc continued to hang around with people he describes as "the wrong crowd," and his casual drug use turned into a hard-core addiction. During this time he fathered two children with his then-girlfriend, and although he had bouts of sobriety and tried to be a responsible parent, he and his girlfriend eventually fell back into their addictions. After losing their jobs, their apartment, their car, and most of their belongings, they dropped their 2 young boys off with a relative and went to live on the streets. Not long afterwards, the pair split up again, and Marc found himself cold, hungry, and on his own.

He wandered into the Drop-in Center at Street Youth Ministries (SYM) after hearing that it was a good place to hang out, take a shower, get a sandwich, and stay warm. To his surprise, he also discovered that SYM offered activities like wakeboarding and rock-climbing. "The first time I went wakeboarding with SYM it opened my eyes. I had been hanging around with a bad group of people who never had fun like that, and I looked around at the new friends I was making on the boat and I thought, 'this is good, this is encouraging.'" When asked how many drugs he used that day he doesn't hesitate: "None, none at all." Marc says that's the day he began getting interested in himself again, rather than just being interested in escaping from reality.

Marc has come a long way in the few years since he first connected with SYM. He went through SYM's Independent Skills Program (ISP), where he underwent counseling, took cooking and yoga classes, and even received a laptop computer as an incentive for sticking with the ISP program. He now has housing, holds a job in the retail industry, and works hard to surround himself with people and activities that are good for him. "SYM helped me work through a lot of the things I used to use as excuses for not making positive choices. They helped me find an internship and a place to live, and even gave me bus tickets and a shirt for a job interview."

When asked what makes SYM different from other organizations that serve homeless youth, Marc is quick to respond. "SYM has great Case Managers. The people at SYM really care about me, and it's easier to talk to people when you know they care. That's the best part."