

## Success—Franklin

Franklin was born in Eagle Pass, Texas on July 16, 1962. He was the second oldest of five and remembers his earliest years with difficulty. His father struggled with an alcohol addiction and was abusive to both Franklin and his mother. After completing eighth grade in a town forty minutes away from Eagle Pass, Franklin left school to work and spend time with his friends. He describes his friends during that time as “the wrong crowd,” and identifies thirteen as when he began drinking alcohol. His job was profitable, and was a leader in bringing individuals and families into the states over the border from Mexico. He remembers the nights well. The families were met at a river and he, at thirteen, would lead the way by swimming or hiking through deep water to the path only he knew in the dark. He would park a van behind a local bar and, from there, drive to Austin, San Antonio, Waco or another large city in Texas where the travelers wanted to call home. While money was easy back then, he acknowledges now the destruction that had on his life at such a young age. He could buy anything he wanted, and within a few short years of partying found that he was addicted to heroin. Eventually he was arrested for transporting people across the border and went to jail for six months.

In October of 1983, just months after his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, his parents were killed in a car accident. Not soon after, his eldest brother was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison in Mexico—which turned into life without parole. Now the eldest in his family, he felt it was his responsibility to take care of his younger siblings. With the death of his parents, he felt it was time for a change of scenery. In 1984, Franklin and his three younger siblings came to Austin. They rented a two bedroom apartment with his sister in one room and the three boys in another. Together, Franklin and his brother worked as painters while his sister worked at a restaurant. After some time, his sister moved in with a boyfriend and the oldest of the two brothers moved in with a girlfriend, leaving Franklin and his youngest brother living together. In 1986, he married a girl he went to school with when they were younger and together they had four children. Franklin and his siblings continued to be addicted to heroin and found all sorts of ways to feed their habit. Thirteen years passed with ups and downs in Franklin’s marriage until he was arrested. When he went to jail for three years, his wife had a “nervous breakdown” and checked herself into the state hospital, leaving their children in the custody of her parents.

Franklin thought about his children every day while in jail and counted down the hours until he could see them again. When released, his wife had already filed papers to divorce him and had gotten a restraining order against him preventing him from seeing his children. This began his battle with depression. In 1998, at age 26, his sister died of a drug overdose. Her funeral was the only time he went back to Eagle Pass. He mentioned that at her funeral he was approached by his old friends from when he was a teenager. He felt angry and was not happy to see them, as they were the ones who introduced him to drugs. He and his brother began going to the methadone clinic and the next few years were filled with spouts of sobriety, relapse, and heavy usage. His life took another turn into darkness when he began work as a “booster,” and stole the items needed for those cooking drugs. He remembers the dealers getting him hooked by offering him drugs for free at first, then once he was used to it, demanding supplies in exchange. Franklin mentioned it being a blessing in disguise that he was proficient at stealing from stores as it kept him from breaking into homes or attempting to rob a bank. He mentioned that this too kept him from feeling the need to carry gun.

In 2000, he met and married a woman, and began his recovery once more. He worked construction until 2005 when he was let go. His relationship with his second wife was a rocky one, and she was often on his case about using drugs—even though the period there were together he was sober. He felt as though if she was going to accuse him of using he might as well begin using again. In 2005, he walked away from it all. He left his wife, his duplex and all of his possessions. He stated that for the next four years he lived on the street. He spent many nights at the ARCH and spent 4-5 months out of each year in jail. He slowly felt the life leaving his body every night he spent on the street.

The night he changed his life forever was in the winter of 2009. He woke up in the street ill and freezing and thought he was sure to die. He made his way to the ARCH where they sent him to Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES). At PES, they told him there would be a week-long wait for him to get an appointment, but after he continually vomited in the waiting room they called an ambulance and sent him to St. David's. He stayed at St. David's under the care of Dr. Pasero for three days and after he was well enough to leave, sent him on his way with a prescription for methadone. His wife found him at the ARCH one day and begged him to come back home. He asked her to leave and to stop looking for him, stating that he finally had peace in his heart and felt that had he gone back with her, he would fall back into the same depression he escaped three years ago. Franklin moved into housing as part of the Permanent Supportive Housing program on March 2, 2012. He has not used drugs since that winter in 2009 and has found a path rich in friendship, support and freedom from addiction.