



“I was only supposed to be gone a week! What could happen in a week?” Reyes exclaims. Originally from Texas, Reyes moved to Indiana several years ago for work. Six months ago he took a week’s vacation to visit his family in Corpus Christi. Deciding it would be less expensive to drive, Reyes loaded up his truck and began a journey that would ultimately completely re-route his life.

Reyes made it as far as Temple when his truck broke down. Four hours from his destination, Reyes was stuck. The cost of the repair was more than he could afford, as was a ticket on the bus back to Indianapolis where he started, so Reyes spent his money getting himself to next biggest city; Austin. He had only the belongings he’d packed for his vacation, nowhere to stay, and very little money. “I ended up in the streets, at the ARCH.” Reyes had never been homeless in his life, always having worked and able to afford a roof over his head, but now he was unsure what would become of him.

While sleeping at the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless, Reyes began having trouble with his health that required a doctor. Without insurance, Reyes relied on the emergency room at Brackenridge Hospital to help. Suffering from allergies, asthma, high blood pressure and diabetes, Reyes presented with symptoms that would send him on a goose chase to get under control.

Even while suffering symptoms, Reyes went out every day to look for work. Finally able to get work at Easter Seals as a landscaper, Reyes tried unsuccessfully to enter into case management and find housing, sleeping at the ARCH every night that was available. On one of those nights at the ARCH, Reyes suffered an asthma attack, but the medication he’d been given did not reduce the symptoms and ARCH staff called for an ambulance. After yet another trip to the emergency room, Reyes was given more medication that he would need to manage, yet no safe place to store it. Working outside in the grass, dirt and pollen at Easter Seals had exacerbated his asthma and allergies so much that he ended up in the emergency room again, and was not able to return to work.

During his last visit to the emergency room the doctor assigned to Reyes’ case knew that he was homeless, and that managing his medications and the newly assigned oxygen tank and nebulizer would be incredibly difficult for him should he return to the streets or to the ARCH. Knowing about Front Steps and the Recuperative Care Program, the doctor sought out discharge care for Reyes.

“I didn’t know what I was going to do. I figured I would just end up back in the streets. But I didn’t have any idea what I was going to do” he says, speaking of his last day in the hospital. He was informed that there was a spot for him with the Recuperative Care Program (RCP). He moved into the Monte Siesta nursing home where he stayed for a month until his symptoms abated. Reyes describes how he felt after that month as “feeling like an entirely different person. It’s like I was never sick, never suffering”.

While in the nursing home, Reyes expressed an immediate interest in getting back on his feet, including the desire to obtain his GED diploma, getting a job and getting back on his feet in his own apartment. With fierce determination he set out to achieve these goals, “I was ready to get back to being me again”. Reyes began studying for his GED with the help of RCP’s GED program, learning to use an iPad equipped with an interactive GED prep course while he looked for work.

Without housing secured, Reyes is currently living in Front Steps’ RCP transitional home while he looks for his own apartment. Two weeks before he left the nursing home he stopped in to ask an administrator if they might have any positions open. He was given an application, agreed to a background check, and after three days he was offered a full time job.

One month after leaving the nursing home, Reyes reflects on his experience. “You know, I just stopped caring. I got so sick and wasn’t getting any better. I didn’t think anyone cared about me, so I stopped caring about me. I appreciate everything that everyone has done for me, but it’s time for me to get back to being me.”