

Success—Sam

Sam was born in Houston, Texas, on August 2, 1968 to Freddie Mae and Elijah Kirby. He is the eldest of his sister, Tammy and brother, Adrian. His story is one of hard work, discipline and perseverance. Education and training have always been important to Sam, and has been a key motivating factor to getting him where he is today. He attended Memorial Drive Elementary School, Francis Scott Key Junior High School, and graduated from Barbara Jordan High School for Careers in 1987 where he also participated in Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC).

Sam has struggled with homelessness since he was 18. He says that he wasn't the best at keeping out of trouble or minding his mother or grandmother, with whom he lived with. His father was killed when he was young, after an altercation where a man threatened his mother. He remembers the shelter in Houston and remembers it being difficult to keep a job when he was living on the streets. He recalls one winter when he was sleeping on cardboard in the rain and told himself he had to make a change. He was always strong-minded and when he felt discouraged or down about his situation was able to pull himself out of it by "thinking about the good times" and telling himself he had to get through the hard spot he was in.

Sam studied ceramic tiling at Houston Technical Institute and worked for eight months in Galveston, Texas. He took a change in career path when he studied to be a medical assistant at the United Business Institute. He did an internship at Ben Taub Hospital in Houston and went on to study more at Hargas College. Part of the school's Work-Study program, he also spent time as a custodian and Tri County Trash. He spent the 90s working for restaurants and spending time with his family, but found it difficult to stay off the streets when work was not consistent.

Sam spent ten years working for Pacesetters Construction in Austin until the economy fell and there was less demand for work. He found himself on the streets. He decided to make a change and move to Austin, hoping to find more consistent employment. After coming to Austin he was connected with case management at the ARCH and was introduced to Case Manager Jim and Housing Manager Shawna and was placed in the Permanent Supportive Housing program. He said as soon as he walked into his place on June 30, 2011, he knew it was "home-sweet-home." He now works at the Austin Supportive Living Center, a program of Goodwill, as a Maintenance Tech 1. He has been at Goodwill for three months and spends his days painting, moving, cleaning the warehouse and anything else asked of him.

While he does well at and enjoys his job, his true joy is found in his fiancée, Katherine, whom he met at the Salvation Army his first night in Austin, and his family. Both of his siblings have two children; his brother has a son and a daughter, Aden Jr. (14) and Adriana (12) and his sister has two daughters, Jolene (21) and Jessica (15). While Sam is no stranger to hardship, his hard work, dedication, and commitment to the Permanent Supportive Housing program has given his life the purpose he was searching for.