



A Story of Inspiration- Harold

Imagine being six years old, in a new country where everything was unfamiliar. If this life wasn't challenging enough, imagine being stripped of all your rights and losing everything you have, including your identification. This was the life of a child named Harold. His mother married an American man and moved here from Germany to start a new life for herself and her six year old son, Harold. As the years went on, Harold suffered abuse from his step-father and at the age of 17 he ran away from home. He led a life full of darkness, loneliness and sickness. Harold has a long history of physical issues; heart attacks, congestive heart failure, pace makers, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and cirrhosis of the liver, among other illnesses.

Harold lived on and off the streets for 38 years and chose to live in the Green Belt instead of a shelter. He was extremely ill, and doctors detected he had ten different life threatening diagnoses. This is not uncommon among those who are chronically homeless, as there is a lack of adequate or sufficient nutrition, health care, and stability, not to mention the stress and reality of being without a home for so long. He was



accustomed to visiting the ER at least twice a month. In one year alone, he visited the ER 26 times and was admitted 22 times. His gruff and insulting remarks with nurses lead to hospitals rejecting him for treatment.

Because of his numerous visits to the emergency room, hospital staff soon referred Harold to Front Steps' Recuperative Care Program (RCP), which helps homeless people who are too sick or injured return to the streets, shelter, or a tent. Harold was admitted into our program at age 55. Once in the program, the RCP staff worked with Harold and other doctors to find both primary care and cardiology clinics that would be willing to give him another chance. The RCP staff was successful in this pursuit and had him enrolled in Medical Assistance Program.

Harold's life then changed dramatically. His visits to the ER stopped. His attitude towards people changed. His health was stabilized. Harold's time at the RCP taught him to be respectful towards others and he learned how to take care of himself. After his stay in the nursing home, where the RCP beds are located, he was even able to secure his own place; a quiet little transitional apartment. Harold's greatest goal in life was to have his own home, and because of his rehabilitation at the RCP, this dream became a reality. He enjoyed three



wonderful months of being independent and living the life he always imagined. Unfortunately, a rapid degeneration of his health occurred and he passed away while in the ICU.

Harold was in the RCP for a short six months, yet his life had completely turned around. He went from being bitter and disrespectful to being cooperative and even humorous. He was someone the staff at the RCP were proud of, and happy to know. His story lives on and still inspires others; no matter the amount of difficulties one has in their life, there are always people willing to help you find a pathway home.

In Harold's memory, we remember all the homeless men and women who have died on the streets of Austin without ever having a chance to regain their health or dignity. If you would like to help more people like Harold find a pathway home and inspire hope, please consider making a donation here, <http://www.frontsteps.org/how-to-help/donate.html>.

Thank you for all you do to help those who are experiencing homelessness!