

HEAR FROM A VETERAN

Life on life's terms

My name is Jeff Hawkins and this is the newest part of my story. Pretty much I spent 14 yrs on the street as a homeless person. Most of it due to watching my family die off, my wife fooling around with a friend which caused me to use drugs to cope with my problems and completely strained the relationship I had with my daughter. I've been in institutions, transitional housing and jails, and pretty much have not wanted to be part of society for the last 14 yrs of my life. Being a Veteran I attended a program at the Lebanon VA. There I heard about the Veterans' Victory House program at TLC in Lancaster, the city I grew up in. This is my



2nd time through, and this time I am trying to turn my life around which has not been easy. Every time I tried to think that the things in my past which I thought had been taken care of, problems dealt with, something else popped up, like a fine from 20 years ago. I am attending AA mtgs. and working the program in a positive light.

While in the VVH program, I had a social worker by the name of Sheila Brownell go way above what I thought social workers should do ... the caring part ... I wasn't just a number or a statistic. Doug Hopwood somehow sees merit in me that sometimes I do not see in myself. I have always been a runner in the past, afraid of confronting whatever issues were put in front of me. Through some of the groups and programs I have finally come to realize that no one's life is without turmoil, trials and tribulations. I don't know why I expected my life to be any different. But from using the program and the tools that it had to help me make myself a better person, I am trying to live life on life's terms. I found out that even though I had my problems -- living life on life's terms has its own problems. And to stay abreast of that and to keep my focus I need to be surrounded by positive people. Somehow I have found some pretty positive and determined people that will not let me go back to where I was. This includes my mentor, Rich, who supports me when I start to doubt what I am doing; he provides inspiration and helps me maintain my focus. From his communication and the relationship we have he helps me keep my awareness on my goals. That coupled with the people from the TLC staff who are still part of my life, Christine DeLeo of Detailed Services and the staff at Grandview UMC provide the stabilization on the journey toward my aspirations. A couple of my goals today; to live life on life's terms, be a part of society, hopefully start my own cleaning business. I have already taken a course through Assets to learn how to start my own business and have a business mentor in Tim Douglas. I'm keeping current with trends in the cleaning industry through Christine.

I guess the greatest thing I would like to have happen in my life is to get reacquainted with the most precious person in my life, my daughter Carisa Hawkins. I've recently moved out of the VVH, with the help of Marge Mowrer, my caseworker from Tabor's STIL program, after obtaining a HUD VASH voucher. I continue to work on living life on life's terms.

