David L.

CCC TURNINGPOINTS: A CLEAN START IN LIFE

There’s a place for each and every one of us, but some places are better than others. David grew up in the Rockwood area of East Portland, the youngest of six kids. His older sisters dated gang members, and he remembers his house getting shot up when he was about 9.

He was bounced around a bit, mostly living with his grandma. Though he started at an alternative high school, he was already deeply into substance use and gang activities; he dropped out at age 15. The next several years revolved around drugs, gangs and incarceration. “As long as I had dope,” he says, “I had a place.”

But when he was facing his third prison sentence in 2014, a Multnomah County justice program referred him to a six-month residential recovery treatment for substance use disorder. “If I didn’t go into treatment,” David says, “my kids and my girl wouldn’t be part of the picture.”

When David finished residential treatment, Central City Concern (CCC) found him alcohol- and drug-free housing and enrolled him in CCC’s Community Volunteer Corps, which helped David find structure and purpose. “Free time isn’t good for people just out of treatment,” he says.

He soon found employment with CCC Clean Start and has been working there for nearly three years, helping keep our neighborhoods clean. He says his job “has given foundation to my life and helped me stay grounded in my recovery.” He finds that working around people living on the street and active in their addictions only strengthens his resolve to stay on his recovery path. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 2]
In the years since he began his recovery, David has received his certificate to be a recovery peer mentor and is part of his children’s and partner’s life again. He has options, but the most important thing to him right now is being right where he is: “an ex-gangbanger, an ex-drug addict. I’m just a grown-ass man trying to raise kids.”

One of David’s most recent rewards was taking his 5-year-old son to the first day of kindergarten. “I’m showing him a different lifestyle from what I had.” And finally, David has found the perfect place to be.