

Teddy Maddox...in his words

I have been engaged with a number of systems throughout my life were degrading and dehumanizing, including being a ward of the state in the foster care system and spending most of my adult life in the prison system. However, in the halfway houses I still felt like a prisoner and I wanted to take control over my life and make my own decisions. When I decided to move out I began experiencing homelessness, living on the streets across from Health Care for the Homeless. I eventually became tired of struggling day to day on the streets, and came in ready for real change. Engaging with HCH gave me hope that change was possible and I could live better. I am connected to other people experiencing homelessness and advocacy groups including Word on the Street, Speakers Bureau, Bmore Housing for All. I also serve on the Consumer Relations Committee and the Board of Directors of HCH.

Although HCH was critical to my recovery, it was not the only organization responsible for my success. As long as I have been around depressing institutions, I have been around behavioral health organizations. I took a little from each program I was in, and learned a little more each time. I took what I needed and left what I didn't. I always had a hard time giving my all, as I had been failed by many institutions and people in my past. I didn't trust the young professionals telling me what I needed to do; I wanted to hear it from people who had been where I was, and who had made it out. But with each additional program, I gained the strength and confidence in myself to work towards stability and enter recovery. Now I have seen what I can do and that I have built something I want to keep investing in. That gives me the drive to stay strong and work to get more out of life.

Even though these experiences were difficult, hardships are a lesson that show you who you need to be, and I learned who I really was and what I was capable of. These processes have helped me change from feeling homeless to experiencing "humaneness." The advocacy work I do now makes me feel emotionally and spiritually rich, and increases my self-esteem. I want to help other people feel this same way. People lose so much in homelessness, the foster care system and the criminal justice system. People need to feel that they belong and that they have a rightful place in this society. I want to see the day when HCH will not be needed and people will no longer be experiencing the injustice of homelessness.