



community development partnership

Creating opportunities for people to live, work, and thrive on the Lower Cape

Bonds formed at Canal House lead to independence

"It's a good feeling. My past is now water under the bridge."

John

Former Canal House resident



Nick, Cam and John the night before moving day.

Canal House, the CDP's sober living facility in Orleans, has been a temporary home and place of respite for over 145 individuals over the past 20 years. While the journey to recovery is up to the individual, and the will to lead a new life comes from within, the sense of camaraderie that often develops amongst the residents at Canal House provides significant support and sometimes a way forward.

This spring, two of our Canal House residents were ready to move on to their next chapter. At the same time, Cam, the house manager in residence, decided he was ready to retire. The

three men, who had become friends over the past year decided they could continue to support one another beyond Canal House. Their stories share similar elements including an underlying desire to heal and move beyond their addiction.

Nick, a 33-year-old native of Sandwich, MA started using drugs while in high school and became addicted to heroin. Incarcerated numerous times for drug-related offenses, his arrest in 2016, which sentenced him to 18 months in jail, was the turning point. At his nine-month parole hearing he was given the option to move to a sober living facility. Nick, who was eager to get his life on the right track, chose Canal House. "I knew what I wanted and where I wanted to go," he says. Nick lined up a job with a local landscaping business, attended his counseling and group therapy sessions, and "I focused on staying around people who are very positive." In June of 2018 Nick's one-year lease was up but he opted to stay an additional year to save up money to afford a place to rent or perhaps purchase a house.

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John arrived at Canal House in August 2018. A native of Chatham, and a carpenter by trade with 24 years of experience, he had been happy working at Monomoy High School but was unexpectedly laid off. John's life started to spiral downwards from there. He began to drink excessively, and without a steady paycheck, he started living out his vehicle and couch surfing. He was unemployed and homeless. He was then arrested for stealing. John credits a woman at the Barnstable County jail with getting him started on his path to recovery as she connected him to the services he needed. After eight months, he was put on the waitlist for Canal House, and two months later he found himself living under the same roof with Cam and Nick. Earlier this year he secured a job with benefits at Pine Harbor running the trim shop.

Cam was the house manager of Canal House for several years and the person Nick and John considered to be both mentor and friend. He understood the struggle his residents faced. A native of Framingham, Cam became sober when he was 16. He picked up a fishing habit while he was on the Cape visiting and then moved here permanently 24 years ago. He connected to the recovery community on the Cape and has been able to maintain his sobriety. Nine years ago, he began working for Gosnold. This last year he decided he was ready for a change and the next chapter of his life. He has started working at the Harwich Post Office.

There is a palpable sense of camaraderie among the three men and it was only natural that when they found themselves in transition at the same time, they decided to join forces. In the late spring they moved out of Canal House and are now renting a house together in Yarmouth Port. John says that "it's a good feeling. My past is now water under the bridge." What is Cam looking forward to? "More freedom," he says with a smile.