

Catching up with Matt Robinson

OL: How long have you been involved with Turn it Around?

MR: 5 years because I started in Turn it Around (TIA) when I was I think 17, a junior in high school. I had no idea it was going to be what it is today. I thought it was just going to be a bunch of kids talking about the substance misuse in the community and what we knew. We all just pooled together ideas and got asked a bunch of questions and TIA came up as a name that we all voted on I guess. That's how I got started with it.



Matt at the National Guard Swearing In Ceremony

OL: Can you speak a little bit about your life path since starting Turn it Around?

MR: I didn't end up finishing my senior year of high school. I dropped out and I wanted to get a diploma so I went to Job Corps in Hartford Connecticut so I could learn a trade. While I was at Job Corps I got a high school diploma and certificate in manufacturing and a job at a manufacturing plant in Connecticut. I was going to stay there and just go to college and everything but I ended up coming home to Charlestown and tried to look for a job back home. I was having trouble finding one in manufacturing so I got a part time job at Stop and Shop.

A bit later I still couldn't find a job in manufacturing so I found out about the program Year Up. For 6 months I was training and then 6 months I was on internship and while I was there I wanted to join the National Guard but I also wanted to finish the program. After Year Up ended I got a job offer and it was good money so I ended up working at that job in IT at John Hancock for about a year and a half.

The reason for leaving that job was that my aunt ended up in a nursing home and it was kind of rough so I just wanted to take time off. While off I had time to think and I felt like I wanted to do something more and I got back in touch with Jamie Chambers [a local National Guard recruiter] and started the process of joining the National Guard. I just had to retake the ASVAB and that was pretty much the only thing I had to do to join and I got a 74 on it.

I had my first drill weekend two weekends ago. I have another drill weekend May 20th-21st and then Monday the 22nd is when I leave for basic training for 10 weeks in Ft. Benning Georgia. After that I'll be just basically home. I'll leave one weekend a month and two weeks a year for training but there are possibilities to sign up and get deployed so I'm planning on doing that.

OL: Why did you decide to join the National Guard?

MR: I always liked the military and studying it in school. I like the physical aspect of it and the responsibilities you have. I always wanted to join and I also didn't really want to go back to the desk job —I was just kind of looking for more.



Matt with Sergeant Jamie Chambers

OL: Before you leave, do you have any message for younger kids in Turn it Around and Charlestown in general?

MR: Don't let other people influence your decisions. If you want something you should just go for it. I also want to thank some of the people who have helped me: Jamie Chambers, Sarah Coughlin, and my brother Mark.