

## David K. Feature Story

### Neighbors Housing Neighbors - Focus on David K.

*David came to us while experiencing homelessness. Through our housing and supportive services, we were able to help him secure stable housing so he could begin rebuilding his life. David shares some of his story here.*

David grew up in West Caldwell, NJ, with his parents and 3 sisters. About his schooling, David says "I did finish some college, but growing up, you know, I had ADD issues and it wasn't that prevalent back then, really. So I never did tremendous in school, but I always tried real hard. I was never a superstar student, but I managed."

### David followed his dad into the carpet and flooring business but eventually ended up in Colorado.

"I've always been a little bit of a wanderer. In 1994 I got divorced and my friend had a ski house in Vail Colorado and I was looking to make a change. My best friend, John, growing up – he did very well for himself. It's funny, you know. He lived right across the street. He's making millions of dollars in computers and stuff like that. And I'm just doing my own thing, but I'm a happy-go-lucky person.



I got a job selling carpet out there, which, looking back, if I had just stayed and did that the rest of my life, I'd probably be very wealthy right now, but I'm not a materialistic person; I enjoy what I do."

Fast forward a few years, after the death of David's mom, he moved back to NJ and eventually developed a better relationship with his dad (who passed away a few years ago from stage 5 pancreatic cancer). **"My dad was old-school - you got to do this and you got to do that - but with my ADD issues and stuff, it was always tough for me to get a good job and finish school, so we weren't the greatest talkers.**

So, I worked for myself selling carpeting and area rugs for about 10 years, working just basically like my dad. My mom's passing for the most part got me and my dad in many ways back together again. We kind of grew up."

David had been living with his best friend in Sayreville, who passed away and so David had to move out of his apartment. More recently, he moved in with a friend in Somerset. And then "about a year-and-a-half ago, I lost my job. I was collecting unemployment, but that ran out. I had started collecting Social Security, but that wasn't enough."

**His friend had given him a deadline date for moving out, so David got in contact with county social services, who referred him to Denise at AHC's Neighbors Housing Neighbors.** He spoke with Denise's intern, Mateo, who consulted with Denise, and they were able to arrange for a shared housing situation in Middlesex county through one of AHC's subleasing partners. "So, I came in, I think a day or so later, I was real excited. I met Denise, and it was a great fit from day one. I don't know how or why, but things just always fall into place for me.

"It's a safe, pleasant environment for the most part. It's not ideal, but it could be a lot worse. But in any event, I've come to learn that I'm certainly not the only one in these types of situations. And I swallowed all my pride. And I'm just thankful for RCHP-AHC".

**Denise was able to connect David with Easter Seals, who arranged for him to work at RCHP.** He's done maintenance and cleanup work at RCHP, as well as yardwork and handling the front desk at the Tower Thrift Shop. He also helps Denise out by doing clean-outs of apartments when tenants move out. Of the experience he says, "We need more win-win situations like this."



When asked what he'd like our readers to know about folks who become homeless, David says, "It's hard, it's hard, and I feel for people every day, you know, just in general, it's hard. And one thing I've also learned about people that are homeless or down on their luck, I've usually found that they're just normal people, and then something happens.

And this is just my observation. They're good people overall. Overall, I think most of them are very good, hard-working people that want to do good. But something traumatic happened in their lives that just sets this terrible fortune on them."

David shared his hopes and dreams for the future. "I've wanted to try and get my own business. I sell a lot of beaded jewelry from Guatemala, things like that. So, I've always wanted to start something like that, but it takes money. And I've kind of put it to the side. It's a dream I've had for a long time, actually. **What I'd like to do, to be honest, is help people, really give back. It really means a lot to me.**"

He says his hours through Easter Seals were recently cut due to federal funding cuts. "To just cut the funding from so many good programs that help people is just beyond what America stands for." But he's optimistic about his future: "This program has allowed me to get back on my feet. The main thing is the program really helped me, allowed me time to get back on my feet and to see I'm not alone in this journey."

*Editor's note: It's important to emphasize the circumstances that encompass the categorization of "homeless" or "unhoused". Many people who, for example, couch surf from one friend or relative's home to another (or other temporary situations of that kind), don't think of themselves as being homeless. "Homeless" includes that population, along with people – often working but very low-income – who live in hotel rooms, transitional housing, in their cars, and other substandard housing.*

*See the accompanying article in this newsletter for more info about Neighbors Housing Neighbors.*