

A Walk in My Shoes

This is a glimpse into the experiences and hardships I faced as a homeless man in Aroostook County. The County isn't the most temperate environment just imagine being shoved out into the cold in the middle of winter. That's where my journey through homelessness began. I reached absolute homelessness in December 2019. At this time, I had no option but to be proactive and try to wrangle up a warm bed and a roof, which is actually a wicked trying task. The list of services for our area is limited and we have just the one homeless shelter. When I first arrived I felt very picked apart and judged. The impersonal contact and discourse was forced, but you have little choice but to settle in and bare it. Once a resident you get a warm meal at supper and you have the option to eat some form of cereal every morning. So as to do what? Looking back at my journey I'm so surprised that I have had the fortitude to endure the experience and then to overcome and persevere seems almost fictional. At the Shelter I had to vacate the premises by no later than 8am and on the flip side the only time I could actually be admitted was after 6 pm. So there is a lot of dead time and what's one to do? Well in my case it was to abuse narcotics and to work constantly. The combination had me near death. Unlike others in my situation, I went to work every morning. They for the most part were obliged to use the ACAP Hope and Prosperity Resource Center. This was a place where the world was turned on its ear. The whole of the ACAP staff were very personable and from the lounge to the kitchenette they provided the necessities.

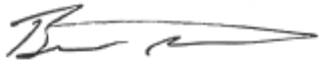
There we had the ability to use the computer so we were able to place applications at a break neck speed, where we had little other obligations. The center saved all of us from freezing all day and wandering the streets with no purpose or direction. They would pick us up from the shelter to provide a warm and reliable ride to the center. This saved many of the residents from

getting frostbite. It was a common theme to have people just walk out into the elements. The idea of allowing another person to endure this is unimaginable. I have watched as 60-75 yr old individuals have had to suffer. I was a part of this rag tag collection of humans from all social classes and background. The point was that if not for the Hope and Prosperity Resource Center at ACAP, we had no other place to go. Thanks to the guidance of diligent family coaches many of the people began to progress through whatever goals they had set for themselves. The fact that you could make use of the tools and utilize the facility along with the guidance and mentoring of the staff was a huge benefit. From the first time I entered the center I was greeted and then met with a coach. The fact that I had a person who actually listened and cared made a world of difference. With the right amount of leg work and the proper focus I was able to obtain a job in just three days. The center fed us our lunches and also provided the fare for the majority of us to be able to utilize the public transportation methods rather than to be on foot. They would literally make it their mission to help us. They didn't give up on me not once, and I've had plenty of reasons for them to just make a clean break. They never did though. They saw an ember in my core and they helped to bring it to life. Even with their supervision and help the day to day was still wicked bleak. I was using drugs to just try and rise above it. I would get to the shelter at 6:00 each night and eat. After, I went and got high in the shared space provided for me and the other 11 men, who would watch as I slowly began to kill myself. I would go to take a shower, which always ended with my body having a contusion of some sort from the inevitable fainting spell. Between passing out from being up to long or self-mutilating my body, I was always in the rest room. I was in a really hard position for an addict. I had an income and no oversight. I stayed at the shelter for a total of 4 months and in that time I lost 43 pounds and narrowly survived.

At the end of April, I was informed that there was going to be a new overflow shelter that was going to be overseen by the involved and caring staff at ACAP that I had grown to know during my time at the Hope and Prosperity Resource Center. I didn't wait for more than ten minutes when I found out they had actually opened up, before I packed my belongings. As soon as I entered the Hope and Prosperity Wellness Shelter my entire life changed.

The staff aided me in my understanding of how I was to build a life. They sat, and cried, and hugged, and actually cared about my wellbeing and about my future. I was becoming more and more out of control with the substances and they let me know without question that I was spiraling. That my choices weren't only hurting myself but also hurting my son who has been waiting for his father to shape up. They sat, and planned, and worked tirelessly toward my recovery and my success. They were the ones to help me to realize my selfish behaviors were going to place me behind bars yet again. So, I took the advice given and started to implement it going forward. They helped me to apply for a housing voucher, which I was granted and thus I had found steady housing. They helped me form the base of my recovery network and they even payed my security deposit. Then they helped me move and get settled in. Then they got me a series of doctors to help me manage my issues and they always wanted to be informed about my journey. They will fight and help each and every one they encounter. The trick is the people being helped have to want it too. If they're just acting the part but not applying themselves they get nowhere. They will guide you to the realization that you can do anything, though only with some effort of your own will you ever truly make progress. They can push you to the door but if you don't take the initiative to make the journey you're just going to sit and rot where you are. The only thing that they want is for the person they're helping to actually help themselves. Also, with the extra help, you can easily set down the path to betterment and with the guidance of

ACAP and with the help of the coaches you have the opportunity to form a life you may well be proud of and you may find the person you become to be well worth the time and effort that they poured into you. Now ACAP is helping me to reach out and help others with whom I have a true insight. I help those who are at best lost and alone. I've been a homeless drug addict and a prisoner to boot. I hope my experiences can truly help and inspire those who suffer as I once did.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Beau Myrick', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Beau Myrick