

Next Step Peer Support Program Summer 2020 Newsletter



We extended a big hello to Cam in January and Dave in June. Cam briefly came to Next Step and is living at home with his parents. Dave is working part-time and is waiting patiently to move into Quixote House so he can have his own room and a real bed!

Warm summer greetings from Next Step!

In our Spring newsletter, I spoke about how we have reinvented the ways we were communicating to adapt to the changing environment. Well, this theme has certainly continued into this summer!

Next Step met via Zoom up until mid-June. Fr. Eduardo joined us in one of our last Zoom meetings to tell us how he is doing, to show us pictures of his travels and where he is living now. In all, Sr. Carol counted that we had 13 virtual meetings over the spring. As things changed, we decided as a group that it was time to try to meet again. So we had a transitional meeting at a park and then by July we were meeting back at Quixote House. Since the passes from the Minimum haven't started again yet, our group has about 8 to 10 people each Thursday night. Fortunately the living room is large enough that we can practice social distancing. We are slowly making our way in this new normal and are prepared again to change our meeting space again if necessary.

Our meetings have felt to be vibrant and fresh as we meet face to face. We have welcomed three new members who have been recently released from prison. One of the new members is Dave, who is excited to be out to make a fresh start. Another is Hamilton, who came through group about five years ago and who also wants to start fresh. Cam joined us on Zoom a couple of times but has not continued. We also said goodbye to Ace, who found a new place to live and is doing well in the community. I am happy to say that in spite of all the restrictions, we have been able to receive new members and continue supporting our members in their time of transition.

Quixote House has experience many changes too. Along with Ace, two other Quixote residents moved out. Yoni Rabitz, who you met last summer and already graduated from group, has found a place downtown to live in and has full time work. He comes to visit often and it is always nice to see him. Ulysses had a difficult departure from the house but has also found a new place to live. Mel is our remaining resident who has found a new job and is excited to start it soon. In August, we expect Bart, Dave and possibly Hamilton to move in. Please keep these men in your thoughts and prayers over the next while.

We give thanks to those of you who donated to the program this summer. In the last three months we have received donations from St. Ignatius Parish, St. Mary's Academy Mission Club and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish. We are most grateful!

With heartfelt gratitude, *Kathleen*

A note from Cam

I've lived most of my life in Transcona and have played football and watched hockey, let's say. In Grade 3, I was introduced to pot and it became a habit. In Grade 10, I went to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) twice. My parents tried their best to keep me from not missing school and I did graduate.

I liked welding and was good at it. My teacher thought I could go to Skills Canada but sadly he died. I did get my welding apprenticeship at 23 years and got a car but things fell apart. I accidentally hit a cyclist while I was driving my car, got spooked and left the scene. When I dropped my passenger off, she was covered in glass. The next morning, I hear the guy had died on the news. I woke up my parents and turned myself in.

I was put on house arrest but that didn't work, things fell apart more. I used drugs and alcohol. I was selfish and abused my parents' goodness. When I was finally sentenced, I went to the Medium for three months. It was a short time but it was tough. It was a dog-eat-dog kind of place. Moving to the Minimum was good. I could clear my mind, felt safer and could start to forgive myself. I went to chapel at noon every day, took my programs, and a small engines course and worked at the warehouse. I went to the gym, ate well and explored the bible more. I took time to work on myself and better myself. I didn't want to sleep with clenched hands any more.

At the time, my relationship with my parents was strained, so I was looking for a place to live. Quixote House seemed like a good place to go and I made preparations in that direction. But in the last two months before my release, I had a heart to heart with my parents and they said they wanted me to come home again. So I've been with them ever since.

I am happy again, moving forward and trying to use my experience to have a better future. I am putting my energy towards something positive and people say they see a difference in me. I have been slowly paying down my debts and in October, I hope to find my own one bedroom apartment. Eventually I would like to find a healthy relationship, buy a house and have a family. I like kids.

I am grateful for Next Step. The group sharing is the best. It opened my eyes to hear what others were going through. I see that I'm not alone. I appreciated the Christmas gathering and was able to see my niece for the first time in a long time. Also I'm grateful for Next Step volunteer Lenny who helped me with my resume. Funny, I didn't have to use it though! When I called a place I used to work with, they hired me on the spot.

Thank you for your support.

Gratefully,

Cam

A note from Dave

My parents had two girls and thought they were happy but decided they wanted two boys as well. My brother and I were adopted from different moms. As a child, was a loner, didn't have friends really. I was just happy to ride my bike around. In Junior high, I got some friends and that is when I started drinking and experimenting with drugs. But I was known for my puff pastry and strudels. My teacher used to pay me \$50 to make them for him. I did graduate from the modified program, excelling in food services. I felt really proud to have completed that achievement.

You'd think I'd stay in the food industry but no. I did mostly factory work, which paid more. Eventually I got on as a security guard with Manitoba Lotteries. I was there for a few years but my addictions were getting worse and worse. Insults used to bounce back but they started to get to me and I fought back. My employer tried to support me but eventually I was 'laid off.'

I did keep working sporadically at temporary agencies. Then there was a big break up with my family. I ended up on the street. There, I developed street agoraphobia. It was a very traumatic time. When I did get a few jobs and got a place, I could barely leave. Then in 2015, I was arrested.

Initially I was charged with second degree murder. But the judge didn't see the intent so I was charged with manslaughter. At the sentencing, I accepted responsibility and said realized it could have all ended much differently. I felt remorseful for victimizing my victim, his family, our neighborhood, my family and my future.

My family knew the chaplain at the Medium. When I started meeting with her, she suggested I meet with Kathleen. I met with Kathleen periodically at the Medium. When Sr. Peter started, I met with her too. It was when both Sr. Peter and I were at the Minimum, that we started some serious counselling.

I came to Next Step but was denied parole. Then I started back again but COVID 19 happened. In prison I learned patience and in June, I was released on my statutory release.

I am now living at a halfway house. I have part-time work at a pizza place. Slowly I am reconnecting with family. I go out with my parents once in a while for coffee or a meal. I'm looking forward to moving to Quixote and having my own room and a real bed! Also it will be good to have Sr. Peter close by so we are able to talk. She is one of my best friends.

I like Next Step because of the good connections and friendships that I have made. It is a positive reintegration into society. I feel safe there and not so guarded,

Long term, I would like to open a homeless shelter and further down the road, a couple of treatment centers. I have lots to get in order first to make these things happen.

Gratefully, *Dave*