

Success Story: Mark Stevens, by Leslie Wood, 3/15/2017

As with many success stories, there are set backs, rebounds, little steps in the right direction, unforeseen obstacles and slow progress. Mark's story has all of these aspects, but ultimately, in 13 months, success has been achieved.

Mark Stevens is a 60-year-old Alaska Native man who experiences psoriasis, arthritis, traumatic brain injury, high blood pressure, hearing loss, and vision disturbance. Mark had been homeless for four years prior to coming to SAIL. He was couch surfing, out on the street, or staying at the Glory Hole.

Mark first came to SAIL in January 2016 as a referral from The Glory Hole asking for help with securing SSA benefits and housing. Mark and he had just gotten Medicaid through the Medicaid expansion, as well as Food Stamps.

SAIL staff followed up with AHFC and Social Security to verify Mark's application status. Due to Mark's disability and homelessness, he was not able to respond to mail in a timely manner, and had been taken off the Voucher waitlist and his SSI application was on hold. SAIL was able to help Mark submit the needed paperwork to reinstate his Voucher Waitlist status and to get his SSI application moving forward.

Mark was approved for SSI in June 2016. However, the SSA staff felt he needed a payee before he could start receiving his benefits. Mark was sure that he did not need a payee. SAIL advocated for Mark to become his own payee, which the SSA staff agreed to on a trial basis. Mark started receiving his SSI payments in August 2016.

In July 2016, Mark's name was on the top of the list to be awarded a Home Choice Voucher. The required paperwork for AFHC was again difficult for Mark to follow through on because he had a death in the family and he experienced a couple of medical emergencies, one ending with a hospitalization. In October 2016, SAIL was able to write a letter on Mark's behalf and to file a request for an Informal Review. AHFC staff approved the request and Mark was moved to the top of the list and scheduled for a class to learn about the voucher program. Mark promised he wouldn't forget to attend the class. Mark's Voucher was awarded on December 21, 2016.

Mark looked for housing for a couple of months and landed an efficiency apartment at the Mendenhall Towers. He moved in February 21, 2017. The Glory Hole loaned him the deposit fee. Love INC gave him a new bed, a recliner, and a vacuum. His sons who live nearby in Douglas have given him a table, some chairs, a microwave, and is loaning him their TV until he can get a new one. He pays \$432 in rent and \$11 in electricity and is paying for cable. His ex-wife will help him retrieve his Thunderbird artwork from Klukwan so he can decorate his walls with his moiety. Furthermore, Mark is back to receiving regular medical attention for his psoriasis and hopes in a few months he will be feeling better physically. Mark's mental health has greatly improved.



"It's awesome. I'm comfortable and learning how to relax and enjoy myself. I'm so glad not to be couch surfing anymore. The help The Glory Hole and SAIL gave me was awesome. Before I was worried and stressed out all the time, now I can relax. I don't drink, sober 27 years, and I just quit smoking a week ago. My boys, ages 21 and 17 come to visit me all the time. My goal is to save money to go visit my 7 grandchildren in Seattle sometime soon. I go to the food banks and so my fridge and cabinets are full."