



Andrew's Story

I didn't know it when I was just a kid, but I was born into a very dysfunctional family. My mom was a drug user most of her life, and my dad was an alcoholic, and later became a drug addict too. Shortly after I was born, they split up and I bounced back and forth between the two of them until my mom died in a car wreck when I was nine. My dad took me full-time and we moved to Florida. We moved back about a year later and I spent most of my adolescence in Buchanan, MI, moving from trailer park to trailer park. I was emotionally unstable and always getting in trouble in the neighborhood and at school and was put on probation with the state when I was twelve. I guess my dad was tired of the hassle of raising me, so he kicked me out of the house when that happened. There was no one to take me so the state picked up custody and I went into foster care. Because I was in the juvenile justice system, I was a ward of the court and not officially in foster care, but I was placed in foster care homes.

"This was the low point in my life; I just didn't want to live anymore. I attempted to kill myself by overdose."

The last place I lived in foster care was with an older couple. We never talked. I would stay outside until dinner, come in to eat, and then go right to my room. I would read or just lay on my bed every evening. I had no relationship at all with these people and felt like I was raising myself. Life was tough. It was horrible. I cursed

God for giving me this life, and the hand that I was dealt. I wondered why nobody loved me and why nobody cared. Why was I given to parents who were addicted to drugs and alcohol, and didn't want to take care of me?

Everything got worse when I turned eighteen. I had moved around so much that I was behind in school.

At 18-years-old I was only in the 10th grade. One day, two policemen and a probation officer showed up at my school and I was pulled out of class. Nobody told me this would be happening, but I was taken to the courthouse and told I was no longer in state custody. While I was at school that day, my foster parents had packed up all my stuff and it

(continued on next page)

Andrew's Story

(continued from front page)

was waiting for me at the courthouse. After three years of living with that couple there wasn't even a goodbye or good luck. My aunt picked me up and I stayed with her for a few days, but she was drunk all the time and kicked me out. It seems everyone in my family is an alcoholic. Because of the papers I signed at the court, and then having to leave my aunt's house, I didn't have a place to live. And with no address I couldn't go back to school.

The next three years were terrible. I was homeless after leaving my aunt's house and lived in abandoned houses, slept under porches, and behind sheds. I stayed with a friend for a little bit until his parents told me to move on. For a while I was at my sister's house but when she had her baby, she didn't want me there anymore. A friend from junior high school told me there was construction work in Alabama so we went there. Eight months later we had not found steady work, and were living in his car. Unfortunately, I also discovered methamphetamine at this time. We went to Cincinnati, OH, and then to Joliet, IL, and always found just



enough money to keep taking our drugs. We made our way back to Buchanan, and then a cousin told me he knew a drug dealer in South Bend who would give me housing and drugs if I would stay at his place and watch his dogs. I did that for a couple of months. I stayed in his house all day and smoked dope.

This was the low point in my life; I just didn't want to live anymore. I attempted to kill myself by overdose. I guess I had built up a tolerance because a couple of cops found

me behind a hotel, took me to the hospital, and then to a mental health facility. I was there for a few days and then released.

“That was the first time that somebody wanted to take care of me. The Hope staff wanted the best for me and were teaching me about life.”

I had heard about Hope Ministries and took an Uber from Elkhart to Hope, and there was a bed available. It was the best moment of my life. That was the first time that somebody wanted to take care of me. The Hope staff wanted the best for me and were teaching me about life. Staff helped me get my social security card and my birth certificate which I needed to get a job after core classes were done. Most importantly, they taught me that God loved me, that Jesus loved me. For the first time I knew what it was like to be part of a healthy community. *Hope feels like the family I never had.*



What a Crazy Story

Perhaps as you read Andrew's story in this newsletter you might think to yourself: "*what a crazy story – can one person really experience that much chaos, hurt and brokenness?*"

When I first came to Hope Ministries, I heard stories like Andrew's and thought to myself: "this must be an outlier – there can't be many people who have endured that much". And then I kept hearing the stories. Story after story filled with chaos, hurt and brokenness. Andrew's story is more the norm than the exception among the people who come to Hope.

These stories helped me learn one of the most important lessons I had to learn about our ministry: people end up at Hope not because of what's wrong with them, but because of what happened to them. The people we serve are not somehow less skilled, smart, motivated, capable or good; rather, they are dealing with the after-effects of all the suffering they have experienced.

And these stories also helped me realize how central Jesus has to be in our ministry. The hurt that folks like Andrew are carrying can only be healed by Jesus. Without Him, our ministry would have to change its name because we could not offer the hope of healing to those coming to our doors.

Thank you for all the ways you help us bring Jesus into the pain and suffering of people like Andrew. Your gifts of prayer, time and money allow us to offer true hope to the men, women and children who have endured so much in life.



With Gratitude,

David

David Vanderveen

Executive Director

We Need Your Help

We don't often ask for extra financial support, but your gifts are especially needed at this time. Cash reserves are at their lowest level in several years and we want you to know about this need. We trust that God will provide just like he has for the past 71 years; if you are able to make an additional donation to help in that provision we would be grateful. Thank you for sharing in the life-changing work that happens every day here at Hope Ministries.



A Car Changes Things

Brandon and Marquitta are very grateful for the cars they received through the generosity of two local families. Brandon and Marquitta have both found healing and hope during their time at Hope Ministries, and are now reentering the work force. The cars they received will make a big difference in their future success. Donated vehicles (as long as they run well, even if they are older) are a wonderful blessing, and giving one to a Hope resident will bless you too. You can learn more about donating a car to Hope by emailing info@hopesb.org.



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