



**I have hope today
because of them
*Sober 398 Days***

Supportive Independent Living Program – Jason's Story – October 2020

Like many, his road to The Salvation Army's Centre of Hope had been a long one with many turns.

From a broken home, with an estranged family, Jason's mother was a victim of domestic violence. "She protected my sisters and me as best she could and took the brunt of the violence. We grew up poor, constantly moving, on the run, hiding in women's shelters," he says.

Without close friends, and with family drifting apart, he left school early, diving into his work, in an effort to change the lifestyle he grew up in. "I did not do drugs, or drink often, choosing work instead of socializing into my 30s."

Marriage and a daughter led Jason to pursue a career change for better benefits, but that brought shift work that made it difficult to find family time and led to drinking to induce sleep.

"After my separation, my alcoholism took off. I withdrew and quit my job. I was in and out of homelessness for five years. Several attempts to build my life came and went. I walked away from everything as I battled depression and alcoholism. I felt alone," he says.

Jason had visited the Centre of Hope for a hot meal and occasionally a bed in extreme weather. "I remember being startled by my reflection in the mirror – it was yellow. I knew I was killing myself slowly and soon after that came a suicide attempt. It was rock bottom for me when that failed as well. I needed to change."

While he'd tried to quit drinking on his own many times, it never stuck.

"On my next visit to the Centre of Hope, Darshan reached out to me, but instead of talking about *me*, he told me about himself ... His story was a lot like mine and his honesty was incredible and humble. He told me about his recovery, how The Salvation Army was helping him in the Supportive Independent Living program (SIL) and about AA in his life.

"Shortly after, I asked an outreach worker for help," Jason says. "Without hesitation, I was given a bed in the shelter. I told them I wanted to get sober and they introduced me to AA. I also met other SIL residents and as they shared their stories it gave me hope. Thirty days later I was invited into the SIL program. It was the first time I felt welcome anywhere in a long time. Being homeless made me feel like a burden and an outcast even though it was my choices that put me there."

A year later, with their help and support, "I have joined AA and maintained my sobriety. I have come to understand and build a relationship with my higher power. I have been in counselling for both addictions and depression. I am employed full time and I am rebuilding my life that I had written off as lost.

"I am so thankful for that first time Darshan talked to me. It saved my life – he saved my life. He was there because the SIL program helped him. I am grateful today for The Salvation Army's Outreach and SIL programs, for being there to help and support me because without them I would still be lost in depression and addiction. I have hope today because of them."