



Once helped, now helping— thanks to you!

Today, Jeff has a great job and is saving for a downpayment on a house.

But in November 2005, his was quite a different story. Jeff had been sleeping in the park and living on the streets of Fostoria for several months, unable to find work because of past problems with alcohol. “Once you’re labeled an alcoholic, you always have that label,” he explained.

Vulnerable and alone, Jeff was attacked by a gang of young adults who shot him repeatedly with paintballs. Wet, and stinging all over from their impact, he decided it was time to leave Fostoria. He knew there was a mission in Toledo, so he headed northwest on foot. Six hours and roughly 40 miles later, Jeff arrived at Cherry Street, exhausted, hungry, and with blisters on his feet from the walking; the paintballs had penetrated his shoes and created sores. A month later, he accepted the offer to enter the Ready For Life program.

“We had Bible studies every night,” Jeff recalled. “I’d gone to church as a kid, but I didn’t really have a relationship with God until Cherry Street.”

Jeff found one class in Ready For Life especially helpful. “*Thinking for a Change* taught me how to change my behavior and how to know when I was at risk of going back to it,” he stressed. “It was very helpful to me.” In addition, Jeff took advantage of the computer literacy and job readiness courses offered at Cherry Street’s Education and Career Center.

Like all RFL participants, Jeff went through a simulated work experience. Jeff worked in our Gifts-in-Kind department five to seven days a week, depending on the volume of donations. He also tackled the closet where donated clothing is stored.

“I set up racks donated by The Gap and organized the clothes,” he noted. “At the time I was solely responsible for keeping the closet in order.” Anyone who has worked in the closet knows that’s no small job!

Today, Jeff’s “great job” is right here at Cherry Street. In July 2007, he graduated from RFL and accepted a position in our Facilities Maintenance department. A year later, he became a service coordinator, connecting guests with needed programs and services in the community.

“When I tell guests that I was where they are now, it gives them hope,” Jeff stressed. “They see that they can get over their problems. They don’t have to live with them for the rest of their lives.”

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*Your gifts to Cherry Street provide hundreds of people like Jeff the opportunity to develop a relationship with God and, with His help, turn their lives around. On behalf of all those we serve, we thank you.*