

At one point or another, we've all been tempted to pass judgment on someone else. Homeless people, as much as any other group, are subject to judgment that makes already impossible situations even more difficult. **We have all heard the stereotypes:** homeless people are lazy, they choose to be homeless, they want to take advantage of the system, and more.

Jason, a current client at Northlands Rescue Mission, admits that he used to think the same way about homeless people. *"When I was fifteen, I'd drive by this place and think, 'Get a job, you bum!'"* he tells us. After experiencing homelessness for himself and meeting other clients, his thinking has changed.



"You come here, and you start realizing that [homeless people] are not here because [they're lazy]," Jason says. "They're here because they lost family members, lost a job...you know what I mean? It's a whole different ball game."

Jason has dealt with his own issues in life. For a long time, he struggled with substance abuse. His addictions made it hard to keep a job, and they got him in trouble with the law. For four years Jason stayed with friends, here and there, using drugs. It culminated in a short jail sentence after he was caught using.

At first, Jason was angry. He was angry at himself and at the person who had gotten him into trouble. After staying sober for a while, however, his whole outlook began to change. Jason realized how much more control he had over his life and how much better he felt when he was sober. After he got to the Mission, Jason contacted the person who had gotten him in trouble. *"I called her and thanked her, because she pretty much saved my life,"* he says.

Jason is now enrolled in a five-month treatment program, which he has almost completed. *"I'm very grateful for it,"* he says. *"I don't know where I'd be without my treatment and [the Mission]. I joked with my counselor that he'd have to get a warrant to get me kicked out of his group, because I just don't want to leave,"* Jason laughs.

"It's kind of crazy how your mind works when you start getting sober, because I haven't been sober in 30-plus years," Jason tells us. "Everything's all...it's a new life, you know? I'm pretty pumped up about it."

Jason says staying at the Mission has helped keep him clean. *"Structure is good. The staff go above and beyond to help me. Like, they've helped me get on an iPad so I can do my outpatient treatment."*

While at the Mission, Jason has found healthy ways to keep his mind and body occupied. One of his favorite activities is rollerblading. He visits the Greenway often to rollerblade. *"That's my new drug," he says. "It's good exercise, and it keeps my mind going. It helps my recovery a lot."*

Jason isn't shy about volunteering for Mission chores either. He regularly helps out with laundry and mows in front of the Mission. In fact, he says, the chores are almost more fulfilling than working at a regular job. *"It blows my mind how much people appreciate the little things that I do here every day, you know? It makes me feel really good."*

Jason also likes talking to other Mission clients to hear their stories. *"They're good people," he says. "I used to judge the people here, so it's kinda cool to sit here now and talk with them."*

While working through his treatment, Jason has been looking for jobs and submitting resumes. He's a maintenance technician by trade, so that's his focus. By the time you read this, Jason will also have completed a housing application with the help of the Mission's advocacy team. All things together, his future is looking bright.

Once he's out of the Mission, Jason wants to stay in Grand Forks to finish his recovery and use his experience to help others. Jason has talked with his counselor and Mission staff about bringing a treatment program to the Mission. *"It's something that I kinda wanted to bring here to help other people," he says.* He knows a few people who could really benefit from such a program. We agree that this would be a great resource and are excited to work with Jason and others to make this a reality!

We asked Jason where he sees himself once his treatment is complete and he has a permanent home. He knew the answer to that right away. *"I want to be a counselor to help addicts. That's my goal."*

We're so happy to see Jason full of energy, positivity, and the motivation to build a better future for himself and others. **Like so many other Mission clients, Jason is using the support system that you have provided to better his life and escape homelessness.** Even though he's still working towards his own home, Jason says he's grateful for what he does have. *"A roof over my head, a bed, a blanket, a pillow. It's the little things."*

"Who knows where I'd be if it wasn't for this place," Jason says of the Mission. "I'm 168 days clean today. I'm just going to keep looking forward, and not in that rearview mirror."

Thank you for believing in the men and women who stay at Northlands Rescue Mission. Your donations empower Jason and others like him to succeed. With that, you also prove that the answer to homelessness is not judgment – it is compassion. Truly, we are blessed to serve through you.

Sincerely,



Sue Shirek
Executive Director

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11