

# Earning a Home

**B**y his own account, Matt's\* life was not headed in the right direction. "It was a long road...just unmanageable," he says. "Last year (with Extended Housing), God gave me a chance."

Matt had been homeless off and on since age twelve, when he ran away from home. As a young man, he made a series of poor decisions and he considered "going back to the streets" until his mom connected him to the staff at Extended Housing. "One day it started clicking to get it together," he says.

**"Extended Housing gave me the encouragement and wisdom to continue."**

Though Matt had been involved with other services, he credits Extended Housing with helping him to be more humble and take more responsibility. In exchange for housing assistance, Matt must earn "points," a dollar for dollar earning program earned by an individual for participating in lifestyle changing opportunities. "For every one I do, I earn points toward my rent and pay a portion from my pocket. It's a learning process, and I have something in my life to work towards," he shares. "I feel 100% better learning to do something. It makes me accountable."

The turning point for Matt has been the level of support and encouragement that

Extended Housing staff has shown him on an ongoing basis. He refers to them as his extended family. "People like me, (some individuals) give you money to make you go away—like a panhandler. But Extended Housing doesn't want you to go away. They're here to put out their hands and hearts to you."

## One Day at a Time

Community services and Extended Housing have helped Matt stay focused on his priorities, enabling him to successfully achieve small goals and establish significant long-term goals. He is succeeding in managing his health issues and looks forward to ultimately earning his GED. "Every day is a whole new change in my life," says Matt. "It's one day at a time. I may not have all of the luxuries, but I have God. And, I will own my own house someday."

Matt hopes to be in a position to give back to the community and his church someday. He'd like to help others realize the importance that support and encouragement can make to an individual. "I hope the community, the Lake County area, understands about homeless people," he confides. "People want a chance in life."

*\*The subject's name has been changed to protect his identity*



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