

## **Hospital to Home Success Story: Paul Watson**



Paul Watson is an Atlanta native who has moved around a little, but has resided in Atlanta most of his life. Employed by the same company for eleven months, Paul soon became frustrated with the amount of income he was receiving. This frustration led him to quit his job and find one that paid more. During this time, he was living with his mom, but because he had no flow of income he was unable to pay her rent. He was then forced to move out. With nowhere to go, Paul was faced with the fact that he was homeless- for the first time in his life.

For two years Paul lived in a park off of Piedmont Road. Life for Paul during his time of homelessness was “unreal, I don’t know how I made it through.” Living conditions for the homeless are rough and difficult. “It’s rough out there. I

encountered lots of grief and depression out on the streets. I didn’t have anyone to look up to,” Paul says.

The Grady ECSEL group from Grady frequently came to pick Paul up to try and help him find a place to stay. In December 2007, through ECSEL, he came to Positive Outlook Foundation, Inc. (POFI). Prior to entering the program, Paul had various brushes with the authorities in Atlanta. He was arrested many times, often for violent offenses including assaulting a City of Atlanta Ambassador. Paul had anger management concerns but also required assistance with identifying his mental health needs. When he entered the program out of jail, he began receiving intensive mental health treatment and counseling through POFI.

During his engagement with POFI, he was able to earn some income through his disability and then with consistent monthly treatments. He then began volunteering at the Holy Comforter Episcopal Church working in the church’s greenhouse and went six months with no violent episodes or even any arguments. What was once a volunteer job as a gardener soon turned into a hired position because of his hard work and likeable personality. He also cultivates and sells vegetables and plants each Thursday.

In April of 2008, Paul moved into his own permanent housing and for the past year has enjoyed being independent and building a new social circle of friends. Paul also enjoys reading, being outside, going to church, and watching his favorite television shows. He now “feels better about myself and I’m very happy about how much more productive I am.”

*Written by **Molly Wamsley-Osorio**. Mrs. Wamsley-Osorio is an intern with the United Way Regional Commission on Homelessness, working as Program Director for the Celebrating Success Program.*

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