



Success Story: Ronald Mayes

Ronald Mayes was raised in a large, two-parent family in Beaumont, Texas. Life was good during his childhood. He enjoyed sports of all kinds – football, basketball, and baseball – and excelled in football. His football prowess resulted in his being awarded a football scholarship, and he attended college in California for two years.

Mayes first became homeless in 2002 when he lost his job due to numerous health challenges. “I got to the point where I couldn’t do the work,” Mayes explains.

From 2002 through 2005, Mayes lived in homeless shelters, most notably the Atlanta Union Mission. Of his life while homeless, Mayes explains, “It was like hell, really... living in hell! ... It was my first time ever being homeless.”

While at Atlanta Union Mission, Mayes became connected with social service agencies that would eventually help him return to self-sufficiency. Mayes met a shelter manager who referred him to Positive Outlook Foundation. Through Positive Outlook, he received temporary housing and food stamps assistance. He was referred to other programs, First Step and Atlanta Outreach Project, which provided him with assistance in filing for and finally receiving Social Security Disability. These programs also helped him locate permanent housing in Doraville. Through these programs – all of them **United Way** funded – Mayes made the successful transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency.

Today, Mayes is living independently and even does volunteer work at times. He credits his success to the programs funded by **United Way**, as well as to a bit of luck. “**United Way** and those programs were the best things to ever happen to me,” Mayes says.

Life is better for Mayes these days. He lives alone in his own place, with a television to watch his beloved sports, and a cell phone to keep in touch with family back in Texas. Most recently, Mayes was even able to purchase his own vehicle. Speaking of his life now, Mayes comments, “It’s like living like regular people live. When you’re homeless, you’re not living like normal people are supposed to live.”

Written by Valerie Alexander

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