

Jeremie Ballenger - 7-18-23 (1)

Wed, Nov 29, 2023 3:54PM • 47:37

00:00

Interviewer:

So I'm here recording with my friend, Jeremy Ballenger. This is Martin Dormish, and I am recording this interview on July 18th, which is a Tuesday, and we're here at the Refuge Cafe in the chapel. And

00:20

yeah, so that's what we're doing today. I'm going to put this next up so that it picks up your voice as I ask questions, but this should, this should work pretty well.

00:33

Because I did a little sample and it picked up the sound pretty well.

Jeremie:

Okay.

Interviewer:

So you don't, you don't even have to point your, your face toward it. Just talk normally . . .

Jeremie:

Do I need to introduce myself or anything?

Interviewer:

Sure, why don't you go ahead and introduce yourself and talk about your connection to Broomfield, when you moved here, how long have you been here,

00:55

that sort of thing. We'll start with that.

Jeremie:

All right. Hello. My name is Jeremie Ballenger. I have been a Broomfield resident since I was about 12 years old.

Interviewer:

And you are how old now?

Jeremie:

I will be 39 tomorrow.

01:12

Interviewer:

Oh wow! I didn't know your birthday was tomorrow.

Jeremie:

Yeah, my birthday is July 19th, 1984. I went to Westlake Middle School. I have been in the community and a functioning member of the community for quite a while. And other than that, the Refuge Marty, Kathy Escobar, everybody here, I mean, I have a lot of community ties and know quite a few people and I

01:39

have lived not exactly the best life and made some negative choices, and I've been down and out. Plus, I've been up and successful, and I'm here to show light on the community and aspects that might be overlooked. And other than that, just participate so that other people can be aware and have knowledge and things that they might not be aware of.

02:05

Interviewer:

Thanks, Jeremy. So you mentioned that you went to Westlake Middle School.

Jeremie:

Yes, sir.

Interviewer:

So just kind of give us some background biographical details. You said you came here, to Broomfield, when you were 12. Where did your family move from? And why did they move here, and just kind of unpack those details for us.

Jeremie:

We had moved to Broomfield because I was living in a trailer park off of 92nd and Federal, Kimberly Hills. I was going to Pecos Middle School. And it was

02:39

not a good area. And I was starting to get into trouble. We moved up here even though it cost more, we moved to Front Range Mobile Home Park to try to take me out of a bad scenario. And

02:56

I did okay, but I had already started making negative decisions. I didn't really have a home life. So I just kind of proceeded, I mean as you know, but everyone listening does not know, I didn't really have a social structure, I kind of raised myself. It was . . .

Interviewer:

So when you say we, who are you referring to when you say . . .

Jeremie:

The Refuge, people, me and my mother.

Interviewer:

Okay, you and your mom.

03:24

Jeremie:

Mmm-hmm. And by moving up here, she was hoping to get away from that. But even by moving to a more enlightening community, like, it looks great but there's still underlying there's still negative things and I still found

03:44

ways of doing not productive things.

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Interviewer:

Okay. So can you speak a little more specifically to those issues of the not good things that you were involved in?

03:58

Jeremie:

Underage drinking, being friends with people who also had parents that really didn't pay attention too much, they just cared about how they presented themselves socially and in the community, as long as everyone thought they looked okay, and no one knew what we did, their kids didn't matter. They would just give us money and tell us to be quiet and act like we were good and

04:30

everything was okay until it got to the point where we started getting in trouble for

04:36

just not having rules or structure.

Interviewer:

Okay. So you went to Westlake Middle School and where'd you go to high school?

Jeremie:

I went to Horizon High School for my freshman year. And then from Horizon I went to Legacy. I was supposed to be the first graduating class from Legacy.

Interviewer:

Okay.

04:55

Jeremie:

And

04:58

at Legacy I was on the half day program, that program that followed me from middle school. I was only allowed to go to school from 7:34 in the morning until 11:15 in the afternoon, no electives, no anything. I was an endangerment to the learning environment for other children. So every day at 11:15 I was escorted off school premises and allowed to go home half way through the day,

05:28

and that followed me into high school, and by the time I hit 10th grade I was already working full time.

Interviewer:

Where at?

Jeremie:

I was working at Lone Star Steakhouse and Saloon right there over I-25. Now it's a Kum and Go. But it's bulldozed, but I started working there.

Interviewer:

So that's on the north side of 120th?

Jeremie:

East side.

Interviewer:

It's on the east side of I-25.

05:55

Jeremie:

Yeah, mmm-hmm. Right by the hotels. Where that Kum and Go . . .

05:57

Interviewer:

Yeah.

06:01

Jeremie:

That was my first like, real job.

Interviewer:
What'd you do there?

Jeremie:
I was a host.

06:07

And I started there. I got recruited by Applebee's and I went to the 104th and I-25 store. And because I wasn't in high school anymore

06:19

and I was such a young age, they needed help during the day, so I had more than full time, and I would clock in and work off the clock for tips, everything, and wanted to move out. Even in high school I didn't really live at home.

Interviewer:
How old were you when you moved out?

06:41

Jeremie:
13. I was 13 when I stopped living at home.

06:45

Interviewer:
Who did you live with?

Jeremie:
I had two older friends that were in high school, but they were seniors. And it was my friend Richie and AJ, and one was a power washer. His dad owned the company and another guy was a masonry man and his dad had him working as a masonry whatever, and they had a house and they saw the predicament I was in so they let me live with them. They encouraged me to go to school, but at the same time they weren't exactly my boss either, so . . .

07:19

Interviewer:
Yeah.

Jeremie:
That was where I had, they co-signed for me. I had money and a job and a place to stay and it was a better environment than what I was coming from. So . . .

07:33

Interviewer:

Okay. And where was that place? We used to live, we had a house, it was a five bedroom, two bath house right by my middle school.

07:44

Interviewer:
In Westlake.

Jeremie:
Yeah.

Interviewer:
Okay. And how long did you live there?

Jeremie:
We lived there at, up until I was, I just started seventh grade. And then through eighth grade. And then in the ninth grade we had that house, and then I moved into a townhouse right over in new Thorton, just by my school, but I was still using . . .

Interviewer:
By Horizon?

Jeremie:
Yeah. And I was using my mom's address, so that she didn't get in trouble for me not living with her and being under age. And she was, whatever, I have no clue. I didn't really communicate very much with her.

08:27

Interviewer:
Okay, so your restaurant work was kind of how you got started in your working career?

Jeremie:
Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer:
How long, how long did you work in restaurants?

Interviewer:
I still, I just recently, this last time I was taken into custody, I was a dishwasher, busser, and cook in a management training program at Village Inn, but due to my incarceration, I unfortunately lost that opportunity.

08:52

Interviewer:
Okay. So for 15-ish years.

08:57

Jeremie:

Mmm-hmm. Yeah, if not longer. I'll be what, 39? 40? Tomorrow.

Interviewer:

So twenty years?

09:05

Jeremie:

Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer:

Almost 20 years.

Jeremie:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay. That's a long time.

09:11

Jeremie:

Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer:

So you were with some older friends, you lived with them for a while, Then, so tell me the story of how you ended up becoming unhoused.

09:24

Jeremie:

I had a really good job. I was working at Eldorado Trading Company, and when COVID had wound up happening, I had just successfully completed probation. I had

09:40

money, I had a condo, and when COVID hit, housing, and I lost my job. I wound up living in a negative situation with a gentleman that was kind of extorting me to pay his mortgage. And there was drugs involved and

10:00

I caught my fiance doing drugs with my friend, got into an argument. I wound up getting a domestic violence charge, went to jail, got out, couldn't go home. I had . . .

Interviewer:

And this was in Broomfield - your home?

Jeremie:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Where was that home?

10:21

Jeremie:

Just off 10th and 287, on Nickel Street. And I wasn't allowed to go back to the residence, I couldn't go to contact anybody. I had no family, I had nothing. And that was when I'd already known Lori. And that was when you first. . . .

10:40

Interviewer:

So Lori's a friend of ours, as part of The Refuge.

Jeremie:

That was when you first met me, when I was sleeping behind 7-Eleven, and by the library with Jeff and all that. And that was when you first met me.

Interviewer:

And that was in 2019? Or 2020, 'cuz you said COVID, yeah.

10:57

Jeremie:

2020. Yeah.

11:01

2020. Okay.

11:04

Jeremie:

Mmm-hmm. And . . .

Interviewer:

So you had been working restaurants when, making ends meet, bounced around, then you had gotten to a point where you, you met someone you were engaged, then that didn't work out, so you ended up outside.

11:19

Jeremie:
Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer:
Okay, so then what happened from there?

Jeremie:
And then

11:24

was temporary housed. I fortunately had The Refuge and FISH and Workforce Center. I got approved for a grant through Workforce Center through Connecting Colorado, which The Refuge and everyone accepted me as a volunteer previous to that, so then I wound up becoming employed through The Refuge.

Interviewer:
Through the grant program.

Jeremie:
Through the grant program, and worked for here until I was able to gain employment and everything, and I had temporary housing through FISH with Sharon Tessier, and everybody, and Marty and Kathy, both, everybody encouraged me and helped me grow intellectually and mentally, just as a person. And I

12:17

moved from there. And then when that had expired, once the grant money ran out and everything, and I was already on my way to that, then it took a little bit. And I wound up full time employed at Village Inn. I was making 34 to 3600 a month. I was working 12 to 16 hour days with overtime every pay period. And I was in a management training program. But in order to do that, struggling with medical conditions, with pancreatitis due to a toxic lifestyle and drinking, I was juggling, and in, I couldn't do probation without taking care of myself first.

13:06

I wound up violating probation. And now

13:12

I'm back at the beginning again. I'm in a halfway house. And . . .

Interviewer:
Where's the halfway house?

Jeremie:
It's 62nd and Washington.

13:22

And my job is still there. I still have an apartment, I still have a card. But I'm not allowed to return or go back to any of that, because

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it's, none of it's under my name. But I financially pay and own all of it. It's being taken care of right now by the person that has it all. And I can't go back to work because the halfway house is so far from my place of work. My boss would love to have me back. But no RTD goes up that far.

13:58

And if I just had transportation to go back and forth, I could go back and proceed to succeed. But as far as the halfway house goes, I have already had one job, but it was demanding, it was multiple locations, working through Walmart selling cell phones and

14:21

it's a two hour commute to work to work an eight hour day.

14:26

Cell phone rings.

Interviewer:

Speaking of selling phones.

14:31

That's his cell phone ringing.

Jeremie:

Sorry about that.

Interviewer:

(Inaudible) going on?

14:35

So, so tell me about

14:39

your experience being unhoused.. So you were outside for about two years?

Jeremie:

Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer:

Does that sound about accurate?

Jeremie:

Yes, sir.

Interviewer:

What, just kind of describe that experience for our listeners in general and I'll have some more specific questions about it.

14:57

Jeremie:

The experience of living outside . . . that's,

15:00

it's a lot to elaborate on. I know everybody has their own story of it.

15:11

As long as you don't stay anywhere too long, and the hard part is staying clean and presentable, 'cuz if you look clean and presentable, but there's times and days when it's really cold, or you can't make it, and you have to be in this specific area, where there's a bathroom, or you know that you're not going to freeze if it happens to get really cold, or if you can stay close to where a friend might be, or you can take a bus route, there's a lot of variables that contribute. And then when you get stuck in an area,

15:54

it's just, I mean, there's a lot to consider and having a tent

16:02

is helpful, but it's kind of an eyesore. It is an eyesore. I'm not gonna lie, it's a nuisance to the community, people frown on it. Everyone thinks that it's just this like disgusting thing, but when it's all you have, it's not disgusting when you're just trying to lay down and rest for a couple of hours to where you can get up and go. And trying not to carry stuff or having just a backpack. And it's, it's very strenuous and it does take its toll in the long term in mental aspects and different ways that you don't realize affect you until you try to go back to a normal lifestyle. And then when people don't understand why you accept, like the shitty variables of things, or when things aren't perfect, and you're like, that's fine with me, it's because that's still, that's more than what you're privileged to in that negative scenario. And you learn to just, it's a different thought process, it's an eye opener. 'Cuz I never thought I'd be there until I was there. And the hardest part about asking for help is admitting that you need it. Because everybody's like, no, I got this, I got this. And you want to appear like you're okay, but when you know you're not okay, and then having to own that, and when you know, like, it's bad. I have to ask for help. And when you ask for help, sometimes you have to ask more than once. Sometimes you have to continue to ask and you feel like you're bugging people. And then that's when you start to think less of yourself and

17:58

it just becomes a downward, it sucks to say that it's a downward spiral but

18:04

emotionally and the way society views you when you know it's someone, like if I just had a couple of days to look decent, might be willing to help you but because you're at that point, they don't want to help you because you can't present yourself the way you know you are. But that's where you are. And then you got to learn to live with that on top of everything else. So . . .

Interviewer:

What was it like to experience homelessness in Broomfield?

18:35

Jermie:

It's hard because the community up here is more upscale. It's a nicer community. There are people that are very accepting and it's very easy to ask for help from certain individuals. But there's other people that

18:53

want nothing to do with it.

18:56

And the library's awesome. The Refuge is always great. Health and Human Services, the Workforce Center, FISH, I have nothing bad to say about anything up here. Every organization up here communicates, works with each other, and I have benefited from everything - from utilizing, and that's why even now being down where I am, I still come up here because I believe we have a better structured program than other places, but that's because it's not as overwhelmed either.

19:32

And I'm just

19:35

grateful that I have the community ties that I have, like you already know

19:41

this is like a giant triangle between everything, everything's so close, everyone communicates, it's . . .

19:51

Interviewer:

So in terms of Broomfield, what would a garden variety day, if there is one, I know you said it helps to move pretty

20:00

often, but what would a garden variety day look like?

Jeremie:

Being homeless?

Interviewer:
Being homeless in Broomfield.

Jeremie:
Well, it depends on who you are, and how you know how to utilize. I don't want this to affect other homeless people.

Interviewer:
Okay, so without having a negative effect on people that may currently be in that situation, what could you share that would help?

20:24

Describe what you actually experienced to people who may have no framework or categories for, for that sort of experience.

Jeremie:
So you would wake up from wherever your secluded sleeping and or hiding spot was, to where you could be safe.

20:41

Me personally, being a Broomfield resident and everything, I would go check my PO box, see what . . .

Interviewer:
Check the mail.

Jeremie:
Check the mail. Go to the Broomfield Center, the senior center now? They changed the name of it, didn't they?

Interviewer:
Broomfield Community Center.

Jeremie:
Community Center. It's a dollar, kids take a shower, can plug in your electronics, you have Wifi you can get connected and everything and get a chance to freshen up, do that. From there I would proceed to the library and / or workforce. Go from there, come to The Refuge. If not The Refuge, I would go up to the mall, or somewhere there's a social setting that I would be able to interact and look for jobs. If not look for jobs, at least,

21:39

you can go do surveys at the mall,

21:42

you can go take care of . . .

Interviewer:

To get paid.

Jeremie:

Yes. You get paid from the mall, for surveys.

21:50

And then after that you come back, the library's open. You have a bathroom, running water, everything, you get secure, go to storage, switch all my laundry, take my dirty laundry in my backpacks up to the laundry mat, do laundry, fold, everything, there's WiFi at the laundry mat as well. After you fold, get organized, go back to storage before they close, switch out for what you need for the evening.

22:19

If you have enough money to go to a hotel, go to hotel. If not, if it's Code Blue, if you registered and / or if you qualify, and then

22:30

the next day's a whole new (inaudible).

22:33

Interviewer:

What would sleeping be like?

22:38

Maybe just describe some of the places, not specifically, exactly the location you were at, but describe what it was like to sleep in some of the different places you slept in. What were the, what were those places?

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Jeremie:

Closed down businesses where the dumpsters had been pulled out.

22:57

There's a doctor's office where the whole lobby, it's no longer in business, but the lobby is

23:06

open.

23:08

Interviewer:

Okay.

Jeremie:

It's just . . .

Interviewer:
Vacant places.

Jeremie:
Yeah. Vacant places. There's

Interviewer:
What else?

Jeremie:

There's some rooftops that are quite easily accessible. And behind . . .

Interviewer:
Certain stores?

Jeremie:
Certain stores where there's not a lot of riffraff. I try to stay away, away from like high traffic areas, just to where you can just put your head down and be okay for a minute. And then in between that,

23:38

just, I mean there's parks in the areas that you can sit down, and as long as you just put your head down on a picnic table and you're not there too long, you can sleep for a little bit until you have to constantly stay moving. The hard part's during the summer - mosquitoes at night,

23:57

the heat during the day, trying to carry what you can. I've seen people without storage units. Me personally, I've never pushed a shopping cart. I've never, you've seen, I mean a backpack. I'm okay. But that's because I prioritize, like I only carry main necessities. I feel like people will tend to take a lot with them when they don't need to.

24:25

Interviewer:
You mentioned Code Blue before and that is, for those who aren't familiar with that, for a couple years the emergency sheltering in the winter program here in Broomfield was called Code Blue. So you were one of the recipients of Code Blue vouchers. And I wonder if you could describe that experience of being able to receive a voucher during really cold weather? And then I'll have another follow up question for you about that.

Jeremie:
Code Blue vouchers are quite spectacular.

Interviewer:

Now it's called SWAT - Severe Weather Activation Plan, with our partners at Almost Home.

25:00

But it's still a similar program in Broomfield.

Jeremie:

It's,

25:05

the hard part is waiting for it to activate, because it depends on the temperature, but when the wind chill's bad and it's damp outside and it doesn't activate, trying to stay dry and not cold is hard. But when it does activate, it is so nice to be able to sit down and have a moment where you can

25:33

even, if you gotta wash your clothes in the bathtub and use the blow dryer that's on the wall to dry them,

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it's still a privilege, and it's just a great thing. And even the making your way back from the hotel, with just getting a ride up there, I mean it was never an issue. Like

25:59

it's not that hard. But . . .

Knock at the door.

26:07

Interviewer:

Hi. We're having an interview.

Person knocking:

Oh, sorry.

26:11

Interviewer:

That's okay. Let's keep the door shut.

Person knocking.

I thought I, hey, give me one second. I'm leaving in five minutes.

Jeremie:

Okay. I'm sorry.

26:18

Interviewer:
So

26:21

tell us about your experience during the Marshall Fire.

26:28

Jeremie:
That was horrible.

26:31

I woke up.

Interviewer:
So you, where were you?

Jeremie:
I was in hou, temporary housing through FISH. And I had to call Marty.

Interviewer:
And it was not in Broomfield. It was through a partner hotel that was in Louisville. Right?

Jeremie:
Yes, sir. It was . . .

Interviewer:
Through FISH, through our partnership for cold weather and for all that stuff. Yeah.

Jeremie:

Yes. Quality Inn, next to the Cinebarre up on McCaslin and,

27:01

right where the Marshall Fire, oh that was bad . . .

27:06

Interviewer:
Burned right through there.

Jeremie:
Yeah.

Interviewer:

So you were in that hotel, and yeah . . .

Jeremie:

The smoke was so bad that you couldn't walk around in the building. The black smoke rolled over the top of the building to where it looked

27:25

like it was nighttime. And . . .

Interviewer:

So how did you, was there a fire alarm . . .

Jeremie:

No.

Interviewer:

What happened?

Jeremie:

There was no fire alarm. I was actually on the phone with my probation officer trying to explain to her that I didn't think I was going to make it because . . .

Interviewer:

To an appointment?

Jeremie:

. . . to an appointment to appear because there was nothing on the news, anything, and then all sudden the news went, and then TV's went out because the fire was traveling on the electrical lines. So we lost everything. We had no contact, no nothing.

28:00

And next thing I knew there was a black cloud, smoke everywhere. They were telling us we weren't going to evacuate. And then the National Guard pulled up with like seven or eight police officers. They went door to door and I was already in the lobby. But I'd been housed there for

28:19

five months. So I believe all my belongings, everything, and there was no evacuation tactics, anything, no lifts, no Ubers. The fire, the highway was on fire so I couldn't go to the buses.

Interviewer:

The buses weren't running.

Jeremie:

I couldn't go anywhere. And when I was walking, they told me to start walking east across the street and the electrical boxes started exploding out of the ground. And so . . .

Interviewer:

That's the, those are the electrical boxes right on McCaslin, right?

Jeremie:

Yeah, the green ones that are like three feet by like two feet wide, about a foot and a half across. They're like a oval thing. They started erupting out of the ground with like four or five, I showed you videos on my phone, like four or five, six foot flames that were green and purple and orange and yellow, and they were exploding, and the National Garden and police kept escorting us further. I made it to McDonald's. I called

Interviewer:

So that's on the east side and McCaslin?

Jeremie:

Yes.

29:20

And 120 mile an hour winds, black smoke, I had three masks on, and a hat and I couldn't even walk. I had hid, McDonald's, everybody locked their doors. Everyone that was in businesses wouldn't let anybody in. I was hiding in the corner and I called Low

29:40

to come give me, and I called you.

29:45

And then they wound up escorting me from there.

Interviewer:

Who did?

Jeremie:

The police officers told me I could not be there because the McDonald's order board exploded. And there was fire and then

30:00

I made it to the Ascent Church in Safeway.

Interviewer:

Which is just across,

30:05

just like 100 yards.

Jeremie:

Yeah, if that. And they were on fire as well. And I walked in between the fire and I was hiding,

30:15

trying to figure out what way to walk.

Interviewer:

And You couldn't tell your directions.

Jeremie:

Yeah, there was, it was so smoke covered and so windy, my eyes were burning, my whole face was black, like . . . and . . .

30:29

Interviewer:

I think we talked two or three times on the phone, and it was hard for you to get your bearings to figure out which way you were walking.

Jeremie:

That's why I got lost. And Marty came through two fire barricades and made it as far as he could to come get me. And after that he couldn't . . .

Interviewer:

But you still had

30:49

quite a ways . . .

Jeremie:

I still had to walk like a quarter mile, almost a half mile, to get to where I can even find you.

30:57

And that was how I got evacuated from the fire. It was about two and a half hours, if not three, that I was stuck in 120 mile an hour winds with smoke inhalation, slit electrical fires and explosions everywhere. And I still cope with that. Like

31:22

I still haven't even really talked about it, like . . .

Interviewer:

And when I saw you walking out of the smoke, you looked like a chimney sweep.

Jeremie:
Yeah.

31:30

When I pulled my masks off, I just remembered looking in the visor mirror and having that black soot across my face, and all my clothes, like I, you couldn't even tell what I was wearing or anything. And just yeah, that was . . .

31:50

I don't even think I'll ever really exactly know how I felt in that moment. Like when you're walking down the sidewalk and the police are like keep going, and you see green and orange and blue sparks and the fires exploding out of the ground where the wires aren't buried as deep and it's traveling. So you know the ground underneath you is on fire.

32:14

That was . . .

Interviewer:

That's intense. And then at our, this is an aside, but at our Code Blue Hotel, we had, our onsite liaison was helping evacuate people from those rooms. That was at Flatirons. And when I went there, the fire, you could see the fire across the parking lot, across the parking lot from Walmart there at Flatirons.

Jeremie:
Mmm-hmm.

32:41

Interviewer:

And that was surreal.

32:44

Quite an experience. So moving on from that, what are, what are some of the things that you've, you think that would be helpful for the general kind of audience in Broomfield to know about what it is to experience homelessness?

33:03

Jeremie:

Just that it's real. And a lot of people, I mean there are certain people that

33:11

are there because of choices. And there are other people that wound up in situations that really did not choose that, and are capable of a lot more. But once you're there, and you don't have a family member or anyone, 'cuz I truly have nobody.

33:32

I do everything. I have to ask everyone, I have, it's all new people. I don't have like an ally or a friend or anything. I mean, you guys now, but I had to reach out and build that relationship from having nobody. And there's a lot of people that are striving to succeed. Don't get me wrong, there are people who

33:59

don't strive, who cry about it and,

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but at the same time there are good people who are in bad scenarios. And

34:10

it's just, it's so hard to differ, differentiate or tell who is what and what is what. Because there's a lot of people who

34:24

don't want help, but say they do. And then there's people who are scared to ask for it because of pride. And it's, it's

34:34

just hard.

Interviewer:

What were the biggest things that helped you move out of homelessness and into at least the, I know you're still kind of in transition. but at least toward more permanent housing toward where you're now at your halfway house?

34:52

Jeremie:

I mean I still have, I had an apartment before this time, but to achieve all of that, the fact of

34:59

just

35:02

the support of people who I ideally look up to, who

35:09

believe in you, to the point just of hey, you're going to get there. Don't let this, this isn't the end of the road, like staying positive is a big thing. Asking for help, and knowing that you're capable, and depending on like if you have a bad day, and no, I'm, I'm upset right now, and expressing it and venting to someone that's gonna give you positive feedback, opposed to all that talent always is with certain people. Like you gotta surround yourself with people who are motivated to move forward for themselves. They'll be like, hey no, we're not gonna stay here, we're all going this way. And it's, that

depends on who you are, your mental mindset, and what you want to do. If you want to succeed, it's there. It's not going to happen overnight. Trust me.

36:05

But knowing that there's people that do care, and you can't expect the world to just give it to you either, you have to try, you actually have to want it for yourself, regardless of

36:22

whatever situation you're in.

Interviewer:

Wouldn't you say that sometimes you have to, have to be willing to put that

36:30

super hard work in multiple times too? Because I recall a situation where you had been working very hard. And you were,

36:40

you thought you had received housing and then that fell through. Could you talk a little bit about that and what that experience was like?

Jeremie:

Yes, gladly. Being promised housing after going to the meetings, in the snow, and then walking three miles from the meeting, from Flatirons, all the way to be to work,

37:04

and then being promised, I was given an apartment with a move in date and address, everything.

37:12

And then two weeks later, was called and told that they were sorry to inform me that I was not acceptable for their program and it was a slight overlook, and they were sorry for my inconvenience.

37:33

That was,

37:38

it was a reality check. Because I thought by putting my best foot forward, even though I have had negative choices and been in bad situations

37:50

that, it made me doubt the programs. It made me doubt people I believed in.

37:55

It put me in a downward spin for a while.

Interviewer:
How long?

38:02

About six and a half months, nine months,

38:06

to where I shut everybody out. I went and stayed in an apartment that I knew I shouldn't be in. But it was a roof over my head. I still had money coming in.

38:20

And then I was working through a staffing agency. But then my foot got crushed. I had to have my toenails surgically removed and wear a boot. I wasn't allowed to wear a shoe for

38:35

two and a half months. I had to have surgery on my foot

38:40

in order to be able to walk normal again. And then in between that, I wasn't allowed to work. But when I came out of that

38:49

I wound up going back out and getting a job.

38:54

Everything again, and

38:57

wound up back in the hospital again because my pancreatitis.

39:03

And that was what, 47 days or something?

39:07

I don't remember.

39:10

Interviewer:

So it was a long road back?

Jeremie:

Yeah, multiple times. It doesn't . . .

Interviewer:
Multiple times.

39:15

And it can go away in the blink of an eye.

39:20

But yeah, having housing taken away, it made me doubt this system. It gave me a lot, it scared me.

39:29

Interviewer:

What did, what did going through all these different things teach you about yourself?

Jeremie:

That I, it's okay to just believe in yourself. You can depend on people and it's okay to confide in people, but you need to believe in yourself before you believe in anything. Because that'll show through a lot. But at the same time, you can't do it by yourself either. And if it doesn't work, it's okay that it doesn't work. It's not that they let you down, because you still make connections.

40:00

You still have ties to the community. You can still go back and be like, hey, I'm gonna try again. It doesn't have to be perfect. Nobody's perfect. And don't think that someone's letting you down because they didn't give you what you think you needed. Maybe they did, but maybe you've got to try a little harder. Maybe,

40:22

it's just, I don't know, you have to be optimistic.

40:26

Interviewer:

What would you say to someone who is in the midst of difficult circumstances, whether that means experiencing homelessness or experiencing trag, personal tragedy, or could be many different circumstances, but what would your word be to someone who's in a difficult place who might be listening to this right now?

Jeremie:

Believe

40:47

Just believe.

40:49

The Lord the universe,

40:52

there's people out there, but you just have to believe. You have to know that you're worth it.

41:00

And even if you don't think you're worth it, still tell yourself that every day. Because that's what will pull you through right now. There's been days where

41:14

I couldn't even bring myself to want to do anything. But from me believing so positively and pushing other people when they're down,

41:26

that out of nowhere, a phone call, something to where people are like, hey, come see me. Hey, come talk to me. And all it takes is two words. It might not even be someone that you know

41:39

that might just start a small spark in the back of your brain that you're like, you know what,

41:46

I'm better than this. And you keep trying, you can't give up.

41:52

You have to believe. That's the biggest thing I can say is just believe. Because there's amazing people out there.

42:01

Don't, don't let pride keep you down, like you're too proud to admit that you need help. That's not a weak, it's not a weakness, that doesn't make you a weakling, that makes you human. And that makes you a person that you know, there's people that want to help you too.

42:21

You just have to, you gotta believe. That's all I can say.

42:27

Interviewer:

What are some of the things that you really love about Broomfield?

42:31

I love everything about Broomfield. I've been to Northglenn, Thornton, (inaudible) Thornton. No matter what, I always, the community. Even though I don't get along with police officers, I still like the cops up here. I like

42:47

everything I like,

42:50

the atmosphere, the culture, it's,

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it's a very pleasant place to be. I enjoyed it, holding, like I love taking my kids to the park. I love

43:06

going to the library and recognizing faces and having ties to the community. And people who know me, who

43:17

are in higher scenarios, like certain people at the fire department, who know me from my volunteering, or just being an advocate, or other people who see me in the community, putting a positive vibe, just encouraging people to keep their head up and just being acknowledged, just knowing that you're part of something that's bigger than you, like it's a good place. I truly enjoy it. That's why I gravitate towards it. And that's why even now I'm still a Broomfield resident. Where I'm at is a temporary housing thing. And I look forward to coming back and continuing to maintain a household and being a functioning positive member of the community and

44:06

helping people who are in need as well, because I've been there and I think this is a great place. I truly love it here.

Interviewer:

What do you think it would take for Broomfield to become a better version of itself?

44:24

Jeremie:

Open, being open minded is always a good thing.

44:28

And

44:30

it's just, it's really hard when you're less than because it's more of an upscale community. But

44:39

just

44:42

continuing to keep an open eye, recognizing society, the changes and that

44:52

it's growing, and not everything

44:57

is going to stay the same, but

45:00

it's still, it's still a great place even if it changes. But I believe Broomfield can grow

45:08

to be

45:10

a very prominent community to, other communities would very much so look up to.

45:16

Interviewer:

In what way?

Jeremie:

Because of the fact that,

45:20

just like where I'm at now. Going to the Denver Rescue Mission, being in Thornton, even in Northglenn, right over the hill, it's not the same. Like when I talk to people up here, you're not talked to, you're not handed a number, it's more of a, they refer to you by name. You can go in and talk to someone and actually, like communicate. It's not a number, a letter, a sheet you fill out and then,

45:48

I think Broomfield has a very big upper hand in a lot of aspects. And I just don't want them to lose sight of what makes it so cool up here. And I know that that's a lot to say, and I can only elaborate so much from my aspect, and I'm not an authority figure, I'm just one person. But I,

46:15

I know they deal with a lot more things that I don't know about and I don't know how to deal with. I just,

46:23

it's a good place and I just don't want it to lose that value that it has. And just the people that are here. I mean,

46:32

everyone here has done so much for me,

46:36

Kathy, everybody. And I'm just grateful that even after

46:44

I am, or ended up where I am now, first pass I got I was like, no, no, I'm going through (inaudible) why are you going so far? I said because that's, that's my community. That's exactly that's, that's home. I can't say anything else but that. Because it's,

47:05

it's real.

47:07

And I believe in myself when I'm up here, I have positive support. I have people who understand me, who know what I'm capable of, and encourage me to continue to strive to succeed, and I don't ever want to lose that. It's like, how are you going to be made for having really good people around you? Like I'm not. I'm just grateful.

47:31

Interviewer:

Thank you, Jeremie.

Jeremie:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Thank you for your time today.

End of interview.