



"Saving Lives and Reuniting Families"

Russell

My addiction began at the age of ten. It impacted my opportunities to learn. At 18, I was still unable to recite the alphabet. I was in rough shape. I was six-foot weighing only 120 pounds with a 23 inch waist. Because addiction was not readily identified and certainly not openly addressed in the 80's, I was labeled "a good kid with a severe learning problem." I was so damaged that during my freshman year of high school, the school assigned me to four study hall periods each day. For my sophomore, junior and senior years, I was placed in a special education school for the severely handicapped. I was one of only four students in the school who would ever get a driver's license.

I came to Freedom House from a 13 month stay at a long-term rehab in 1985. As resident #13, I had a good start on my sobriety but had no idea how to live or function in the world. I had missed out on getting an education and on learning the most basic life lessons. I had no idea how to interview for a job, manage a checkbook, do laundry or appropriately socialize. Freedom House helped me realize that I wasn't "stupid" and that the drugs and alcohol had done this to me. It was Freedom House that encouraged me to reach for something better and then pushed me to achieve it.

Because of Freedom House I learned to live in sobriety and discovered a new "normal" which embraced the value of doing the right things and making better choices. Freedom House challenged me to step out of my comfort zone and go to work for the telephone company. I was scared to give up my job detailing cars for a new position I believed with all my heart I could not do. Today - 33 years of sobriety later – I have my own telecommunications business spanning 28 years.

Freedom House and my sobriety have given me the power of choice. The power to choose a career, family, and giving back to the community as a way of life. Freedom House provided the strong foundation upon which I could rely to face challenges and achieve successes in all areas of my life. I will for always be grateful to Freedom House!
