

Reaching Out for Hope and a New Chance

Reggie Chapman and Amicus Reconnect

“With my felony I couldn’t get housing or a decent job. I felt like I was blackballed. What was I supposed to do? Go out and sell drugs? Rob someone?”

That was when Reggie Chapman learned about Amicus Reconnect.

Reggie Chapman remembers his teenage years in Kansas City as a dangerous and drug-filled time. At age 15 he was smoking weed and starting on other drugs. “PCP, LSD, Speed, Angel Dust, you name it I was familiar with it,” Reggie recalls.

Seeing the effects of drugs and the drug business on friends and family members, Reggie sought treatment and got clean. In October of 1994 he decided to make a fresh start in Minneapolis-St. Paul. Things went well for a little more than three years. Reggie found work and a good place to live.

But good times can be fragile.

On Jan. 28, 1998 at 11 p.m., Reggie was driving home from work when he was hit head-on by a car sliding on ice. He sustained life threatening injuries, including severe facial lacerations, cracked ribs and a broken knee. His ribs and knee caused him great pain but healed. His facial injuries required 300 stitches and left him disfigured.

“I looked like Frankenstein,” Reggie said. “I couldn’t stand to see myself. From there I essentially gave up on my life.”

Reggie went into a downward spiral - back to drinking and then drugs. He stopped working, went into treatment again, got clean and then relapsed. At that point he had gotten involved with a gang which was active in drug dealing, robbery and theft.

While using, Reggie committed criminal sexual conduct. That led to an eight-month jail sentence - first in Hennepin County Detention Center and then in the county’s Adult Detention Facility/ Workhouse.

“I made some poor decisions and bad choices in my life and I suffer from it,” he said, while discussing the loss of contact with his family as a result of his actions.

Reggie was released to another drug treatment program and it helped, but he was worried that he wouldn’t be able to escape from his past.

“I was able to stay clean but I still needed some help. With my felony I couldn’t get housing or a decent

job... I felt like I was blackballed. What was I supposed to do? Go out and sell drugs? Rob someone?”

That was when he learned about Amicus Reconnect.

“I didn’t know much about them at the time, but I knew I could at least get a bus token there. I started meeting some people who were caring and they connected me with resources I didn’t know about before.”

Reggie estimates he visited Amicus about once a week. Through Reconnect staff, Reggie found job leads, housing leads, connections which led to furniture for his new apartment, and what he considers most important - the encouragement to go on looking.

“When I was feeling bad they always reached out for me...They told me to ‘hold on. There’s something out there for you.’”

“They were willing to care for me when I couldn’t even care for myself. It meant a whole lot to me.”

It took some time but eventually Reggie found housing, and then a low paying job and that led to a better job.

“I’m still looking for better, but I like where I’m at. I’m just grateful that I had a second chance.”

He’s beginning to give back to the community through volunteer work. He’s even referring others he meets to Amicus for the same kind of help he got.

“People who have barriers - felonies, when others find out about it, they start looking at you differently. You can see it in their eyes. They’re not looking at who I am. It’s all about what I did ... When people with felonies come to Amicus you don’t run into that look. It’s not just another brick wall.

It’s still not an easy ride for Reggie, but through Reconnect, he’s found the resources for a new chance and the hope to get through rough times.

“When it’s all said and done, if you can lift your head up and move forward, life goes on.”

