

The Community of Sanctuary London Presents **A day in the life:**

What it's like to live a life affected daily by poverty



Sanctuary London Fundraising Dinner

Friday April 26, 2019, 513 Talbot St - details on last page!

This newsletter is a unique opportunity to see inside the lives of those who come to Sanctuary. We sat down and asked some folks (with their permission to share their answers) a series of questions about their backgrounds, life on the streets, what it's like to look for housing, and the challenge to get to daily meals. We also asked each person to share a little about themselves - what is fun for them, how they see the world, and what Sanctuary means in the midst of all that. The result is this newsletter. We hope that you enjoy a snapshot of a "day in the life."



Background story

I just tried to get a warm place there (in Sudbury). My stepdad kicked me out when I was 16 or 17. There was no places to go. So I got me a tent. And I managed outside for 6 years. -30... -40. It wasn't too bad. I just marked my tent where it was. I set it up by close to the (community meals). And instead of getting into more hot water (trouble), I just went back to my tent.

At the age of 17, I was experiencing a really rough home life. My dad was really really drinking a lot and my mom was really struggling with her mental health. And I just finding it extremely hard to be there. So I looked in the phone book and I found the Rotholme (family shelter with Mission Services). I found it really good. There were some people that I actually already knew there. So I found it to be not too bad. A little different with curfew and different things like that. But I actually found it helpful.



I left home at 16 due to an abusive situation at home. I was tossed into a situation where there wasn't a shelter where I was (small town). So I got sent here (London) to the Salvation Army (Centre of Hope shelter). Stayed there a few days. Went to Unity (Project - shelter). Applied to get on the housing list. That was going to take two years, so I spent those two years...basically shelter hopping. As a 16 year old, it was scary. Surrounded by strange people I didn't know in a strange city I didn't know. It was so hard to focus on my own stuff because my anxiety was going through the roof. I couldn't trust anybody around me. It was very difficult. It was very scary.

Experience in Shelter

Really rough because you're cramped together with other people. I was 18. I was scared. I would sleep with my backpack as a pillow. To be safe and stuff like that. So my stuff wouldn't get stolen. And I would just use drugs to help me get through the day.



Getting an apartment

But I went through hell when I was on my own. I had decide between eating and having a place to live or having a place to live and having food. It was ridiculous. And I hear people saying the same thing today. What has changed. Nothing has changed. It is a sad fact. Finding a place was frightening and discouraging and gave me the feeling that nobody gave a damn about me. I was alone. Loneliness is the worst pain I've ever had. Far worse than hunger.

It's not easy with the rent you pay right now. It's the rent that's killing everybody. My rent has gone up twice in one year. That shouldn't be. I don't have trouble paying the rent. It just makes it short for all other things.



I've been looking for a year for a new place. It's quite difficult. It's really challenging because I've been denied several time even though I have good credit, a clean rental record. So, I call, call, call, call, get denied, get denied, get denied. And they (the landlords) don't have to say anything other than "no." I wish there was a reason they say no. They just say no. That leaves you hanging and makes you feel really bad about yourself.



What is Home for you?

I moved in in 2017. I have furniture in my apartment. I have one picture up of each of my daughters on my walls. And that is it. All the rest of my photo albums and everything are stuffed in a corner. I haven't taken them out to display them. Something I would consider home to be is a place to put up all my paintings and pictures of cheer...but that's not my place. That's not home.

That's a very difficult question. I still consider myself homeless even though I have a roof over my head. Just because you have a roof doesn't mean it's a home. It has a lot to do with the word "love" and that's another word I'm trying to figure out. But if you can put together the word "roof" with the word "love" then you're getting closer to the word "home." When you get it all figured out, let me know and we will both know. I'm working on it.





Particularly challenging?

Sleeping outside in the rain in the fall was challenging for me. It was cold, the sleeping bag would get soaked. I tried to seek shelter in an underground parking lot. I got harassed by a security guard. I was asked to move along. "Move along. Can't stay here." I just wanted to stay out of the rain for twenty minutes. I felt frustration, followed by anger...unfairness. It seems like a lot of people don't have a heart anymore. They don't seem to care for the suffering person.

My apartment is ok. It's good to have a roof over your head. It's a good community. But, they don't keep on top of maintenance requests. It took them five years to deal with mould in my apartment. And when they did, they just painted over it.



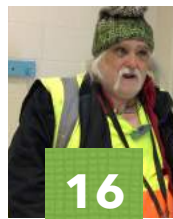
How old were you when you got to the street for the first time?



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18



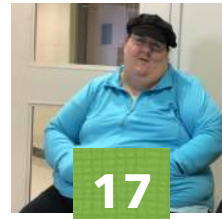
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Community meals

There are meals that the churches offer but they're not all downtown. You might have to walk for an hour or more to get there. So if you don't have a bus (pass), you gotta have a good pair of sneakers. You can't go hungry in this city but you have to know where they are and how to get there. You have to have your wits about you. And that can be challenging if you have issues with drugs, alcohol, mental health. So, you gotta have some agency, someone to help you out.

I try to get to one meal a day. It takes a long time sometimes. Sometimes I walk. Sometimes I take Paratransit.



What gives you joy in life?



I go to the library on Friday night to play cards and stuff like that. I like socializing with people, being with people. Getting along. Instead of all this arguing and stuff. That's no good. You know.



Get up in the morning and enjoy the day. And go to bed at night and sleep. Looking at the sun coming up in the morning, looking at the changing of the seasons. You don't have to drink to enjoy it..



With my friends. Table top games, card games. I like to read. I like to colour. Different things to keep me busy. I tell jokes!

What does Sanctuary mean to you?



Just come and belong and feel accepted. It's basically my family. I don't have a lot of family left. So it's a real sense of home and family.



Peace of mind. Yes. Peace of mind. A warm hug. But something that it vital and necessary for life...and that is trust. If I need help, all I have to do is turn my head and there is someone who will help me. And I don't have to be ashamed of it.



It's a learning opportunity. Because there is still more I need to learn about dealing with difficult people and difficult situations. Friends around me. And know I can count on the people here. Because I don't get that a lot outside of here, so...



Sanctuary London Fundraising Dinner!

April 26th from 6:00pm - 9:00pm,
Dinner at 6:30pm

531 Talbot Street

(free parking in the lot or on side street)

You are invited to join us for a delicious and nutritious family style meal, a typical meal served on Wednesdays at Sanctuary drop in.

You will hear stories that will give you a snap shot of what “a day in the life” looks like for the Sanctuary community. A member of the Sanctuary Community will be present at every table to share their unique story and a day in their life!

**We will explore together and engage what home means
and how we might find it together!**

**Cost: Sponsor a table for \$250 (our average cost to host a weekly dinner)
Sponsorship includes one dinner ticket and the opportunity to invite 5
people to your table.**

Individual tickets are \$50/person.

RSVP by April 24th to tessa@sanctuarylondon.ca

or text/call Mechele at 226.238.8734

Come listen to our stories and be part of the Sanctuary community!

