

It is often assumed that the people who show up at Kelowna's Gospel Mission come from disadvantaged backgrounds; broken homes, alcoholic parents, abusive situations, abandonment, and the list goes on. Though sometimes true, that is not always the case.

At 41 years old, Andy*, a participant in our recovery program, would be one who would look back on his life and say, "I never thought it could happen to me."

Andy grew up in the lower mainland, the son of a minister, in a family strongly grounded in the Christian faith. After high school, he attended college where he took accounting and business courses, and eventually landed a job with an electronics store at the coast. There he made lots of money, but felt conflicted because he thought one had to be dishonest in order to succeed in sales. This left him with an emptiness which he began to fill with drugs and alcohol. He eventually left that career, and bounced from job to job until a friend encouraged him to move to Kelowna.

Thinking that a new location would mean a new life, Andy soon became disillusioned and because of old habits, found himself at the Mission for the first time. "To me, it meant that I had sunk to rock bottom," Andy recalls. But he was amazed at the quality of people here. "There were lots of guys just like me, sometimes just down and out."

Over the next five years Andy worked a number of jobs, eventually landing a position that he really enjoyed and was good at: driving taxi. Things were looking good for Andy, until he made the devastating decision to try crack cocaine for the first time. Within months he says, he was "drug addicted, hopeless, homeless, helpless, and penniless." He came to the Mission, and talked to one of the hostel supervisors. "Darryl was the first person who challenged me to own up to my addiction. He encouraged me to get into detox."

That put Andy on the path to recovery. However, as sometimes happens with recovery, he relapsed. "I had received some money from my dad to help me get set up in an apartment and get re-established. I thought I could party just one night and it wouldn't hurt. But within a week, the \$2,000 was gone." As a result, Andy lost his job, ended up on the street, and once again turned to the Mission for help.

He then learned about the recovery program offered by the Mission, designed to help individuals overcome the barriers in their lives. "Kelowna's Gospel Mission helped me focus on what is truly important." He is now re-establishing commitments to himself, and understands his desperate need to replace obsessions and addictions with new ways of thinking. "God keeps me from my own self destruction," Andy says. "If the Mission hadn't been here at this time . . . I don't want to think about it."

(* not his real name)