

# OPEN DOOR GAVE HIM AN OPPORTUNITY, HOPE FOUND HIM A HOME.

## A United Way-funded program success story.

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Paul knows what it is like to feel trapped on the streets. Only one year after moving to Wichita for work, his job was eliminated and left Paul homeless and without employment. For two years, Paul struggled on the streets in Wichita. Once he heard about United Methodist Open Door, a United Way-funded agency, he knew there was hope.

“If you’re willing to work, there are people to help you,” he said. “I’ve always been proactive, so the people there really helped me go somewhere.” Open Door currently aids almost 15,000 people in need of food, shelter and clothing every month.



### Employment problems

Paul was in a difficult situation when he came to Open Door. He wanted to work, but had no address to receive mail and no valid form of identification, making it impossible for him to apply for jobs. He was also eligible for Air Force veteran’s benefits, but without the right paperwork he did not have access to the programs. After discovering Open Door, Paul used the available programs to have his mail sent to the day shelter office, get a homeless identification card, and finalize his veteran’s documents.

Because of Open Door’s help, Paul was available and ready to work when the carnival came to town. He was willing to try almost anything to improve his living situation, so Paul signed up. “It was a job,” he said. “It got me off the streets and after that season I got some roommates and began working in construction in Wichita.” The carnival was exactly what Paul needed to move himself off the streets and back to something resembling what he considered normal life.

### Finding a career and family

Since then, Paul has continued to work in electrical construction and began to build a family. He met his wife through mutual friends and they have a four-year-old daughter. He is filled with joy to have stability and family back in his life.

Paul said he is thankful for the help he received, and he hopes more people take advantage of the services available to them. “The people on the street have to want to help themselves,” he said. “Sometimes they need a nudge to get out.”

Most importantly, he is very thankful for the dignity and respect Open Door showed him. “It’s hard to walk around with your eyes on the ground all the time,” he said. “It’s nice to know you can walk into Open Door downtown and everyone is right there to help you.”

*Article by Rachel Stanley*