

CHRISTINA'S STORY OF HOPE

HOW AFTER 10 YEARS OF BEING UNHOUSED, CHRISTINA HAS FINALLY FOUND HOPE.

After 10 years of being unhoused, struggling with schizophrenia, and using meth, Christina had nearly lost hope. In October of 2023, Christina was living in an encampment under the freeway on X Street, when she noticed a new business moving into the vacant building across the street and a sign that said 'Hope'. "I found out about it by being inquisitive," she says, "I came into Hope one day and someone offered me some food."

Christina met with Bre Barry, a Personal Services Coordinator (PSC) at Hope



Breanna Barry, PSC & Christina Morris at CORE X Street

Cooperative's CORE X Street Wellness Center, for about five minutes. They arranged a time for a longer conversation the following day.

The next day, before she could make it back to the Wellness Center, Christina got into a scuffle with a police officer and went to jail.

20 DAYS LATER, CHRISTINA WAS SURPRISED

While waiting to be discharged, a staff member at the jail told Christina that her ride was there. Christina was confused as she had not made any arrangements. That's when the staff said, 'Bre's here. From Hope Cooperative.'

"I was like, 'What are they talking about?!'" Christina describes. "Then I opened the door, and there she was. Because she checks up on her clients, and she was wondering what happened to her client - me!"

It was raining hard that day, which Christina didn't know until she walked out into the open air. It was



disorienting. Christina didn't have any of the psychiatric medications while she was in jail, she didn't know her next step, and she was worried. But this fear quieted down quickly, "I felt at ease when I saw Bre. Somebody was there for me."

Christina adds, "I re-found hope through my PSC. I've always walked out to nobody, to start over the same thing. Seeing Bre gave me hope to begin again right there."

STILL UNMEDICATED, CHRISTINA STRUGGLED WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA

Christina asked Bre to drive to her daughter's house. While there, Christina had an episode:

"My reality's different from most people's reality," Christina explains. "Even if nobody is after me, or people are not going to kidnap me, or the voices are not there, I still hear those voices, and I feel those symptoms. If you thought you were being kidnapped, you could just imagine how you would feel. You would want to run, and you would try to save yourself. It's fight or flight, you know. That's why I was hissing in a corner."

Christina had experienced many episodes before, often yelling at people passing by on the street in a schizophrenic haze. She'd been on and off medications and in and out of psychiatric hospitals. "But it's hard to take meds when you're homeless," she explains. "Because you don't have a safe place to take them, or your backpack gets stolen, or you don't take it correctly."

CHRISTINA STARTED RECEIVING PSYCHIATRIC CARE AT HOPE

The in-and-out, off-and-on cycle was about to end. Once she was assigned a psychiatrist at the Hope CORE program, Christina made a wonderful discovery: Invega, a medication that treats schizophrenia, is available as a once-a-month shot. Delivered in a doctor's office, there's no chance that it could be stolen or taken incorrectly.



Christina showing off her calendar

"It helps tremendously!" she says. "My body feels different. I've only been on medication for less than 3 months. Because of the medication, the voices are calming down. I don't talk to myself so much in public. I do talk in the mirror still, but I'm just trying to pep talk myself up. I'm not telling myself stories. I don't have racing thoughts."

Not only are the negative symptoms gone, Christina feels more capable and creative than she has in a long time. "I am more focused and able to write. I have a whole journal, and I have the ability to hold a pen." She has notebooks full of personal thoughts and a calendar to keep her on a productive schedule.

"My body feels like it's calm," Christina explains. "And I like it because I used to have daily episodes of yelling and cussing at people. My people were afraid of me—they loved me, but they were afraid of me. And they are now trying to embrace me, and they're not so much afraid of me. I like them not being afraid of me," she concludes. "There's still problems, you know. But I'm able to manage the problems without having attacks."

CHRISTINA'S DAILY LIFE AT THE WELLNESS CENTER IS BUSY AND HELPFUL

Christina attends three groups, two for COTP (Co-Occurring Disorders Treatment Program) and one for AOD (alcohol and other drugs). "The groups are educational and informing. They teach you about your addiction, about mental health, about medication. You can ask Dennis anything, any question of any sort, and he's got an answer, or he'll get an answer for you. He's very informative. I enjoy going to his class."

Because of these classes, Christina has experienced an unexpected change of heart. "I've never really wanted to get sober in life at all, and now I have the seeds planted. And getting sober, it's not as bad as I thought. It's not as fearful. So getting educated and informed is helping me a lot." Christina is now using a harm reduction approach, as well as staying sober Friday through Sunday, when she visits her daughter.

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Christina at one of Hope's computer stations

Christina's seven kids are big fans of Hope. "They like the class, the groups. They like Hope. They're like, 'Did you go to group today? What happened at Hope? What did you learn today at Hope? What did you eat there?' They see the difference in my behaviors."

But groups aren't the only thing filling Christina's time. She is also learning how to use a computer and earning her GED with help from Hope's Employment Specialist, Haley Maco. "I want my credentials to be correct when I get going. You can work for Hope, and if you have a year's stability of mental health and sobriety, then you have an opportunity to apply. Maybe I could help somebody like me in the future. I'm not there yet, but maybe I can turn around and offer help to somebody else that's hissing in the corner."

CHRISTINA'S DREAM TEAM PROVIDES SUPPORT FROM EVERY ANGLE

"Hope's services have really helped me tremendously," says Christina. "I have a psychiatrist here. I'm also in counseling. I have an employment specialist. I have a housing specialist. I have a personal service coordinator. I have the front desk. I even have security. I have a support system right now in play, and they don't seem to be going anywhere. They are my dream team. I'm amazed that it's called Hope."

This gives Christina an incredible sense of belonging and safety. "If you have a support system, somebody's going to reach out because they care about you. If you're melting in the concrete, they're probably going to want to come and offer, 'Do you want some water? Would you like to eat? Come in and shower! Or come do something in the Wellness Center and we'll get you redirected into a positive light.'"

CHRISTINA IS IN TRANSITION TO A STABLE LIFE

Christina is on the waiting list for housing through the Coordinated Access System, “The housing specialists and I, we’re working on that. But I’m in transition, and I have a tent, and I don’t really know where I’m gonna be tonight. Bre is working on getting me in a shelter and I know that my dream team is still solid.”

Even though she hasn’t found housing yet, Christina has experienced radical changes to her mental health, emotional health, and outlook on the future. She credits the psychiatric care and personal support she has received at the CORE X Street Wellness Center. Bre credits Christina’s strength of will, buoyant spirit, and hard work!

“Hope are the best services going right now that I’ve ever had in life. I’ve had experience with the homeless community and services, but Hope has been a dignified one. If you feel respected, and you don’t feel belittled or beneath or put down, it’s uplifting. It’s health through education—learning about what’s going on with your body can help you with your body. Or learning what’s going on with housing or the computer availability. It really helps to feel dignified.”



Some one-on-one time with her PSC

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We are so thrilled to update this story with some positive news – In July of 2024, Christina was placed in housing!

Christina, we are so proud of your hard work and commitment to sobriety! We are so honored to be on this journey with you!