

## **Let me share a story of how my life was quickly changed forever.**

My name is Jon and I was born and raised in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, the eldest of four children. We are a close and loving family, but as you read my story you will see we've had some very serious challenges over the past two years.

I had been single for many years, and not very socially active. At some point I realized I was ready to settle down, again. I truly wanted a long term committed relationship. So, I became more involved in the community, made new friendships, exposed myself to art and culture, and ventured into the scary world of camping! I was having fun and feeling good about myself.

Then I got the worst flu of my life; with aches and pains, headaches, nausea, sweating.

I tested HIV+ on September 28, 2006. I immediately informed my family and I was thrilled that they rallied around me, as did my colleagues and friends. Within the next 12 months while my physical health and depression teetered back and forth, members of my family faced their own health issues. My mother became constantly ill and my father was 'slowing down'. I started to realize I wanted to return to the East Coast to be near those I held closest in my heart. I was comforted when my family also told me they wanted me to come home.

After careful thought I decided I would return home, however, my beloved mother died unexpectedly ten days after my parent's 45<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary; before I returned home.

Families sometimes fall apart after the death of a family member, especially when it is the death of 'the head of the house'; and that's what I feel happened. All of the original planning put into my relocation was accelerated because my father was unable to care for himself – by himself.

My employer was more than supportive and agreed to a transfer. On leave from work, I packed my treasures and sent them ahead. Between yard sales and donations to charities, I emptied the last few things from my apartment.

But lightning struck again. Somewhere during my flight home my family changed their minds. I sensed it the minute I saw them at the airport with 'stunned and numb' looks on their faces. It was confirmed when they gave me their cold and unfeeling 'hugs'.

I had just gone through an awful year of constant changes... and I knew it was going to continue.

I spent two months in my father's home before he announced that during a family meeting (of which I wasn't invited to), my family had decided that it was best that I do not live with my father. Furthermore, they told me that they would prefer that I leave and never come back. My father, who is usually in control at all times verbally tripped and stated 'we don't want you around the children; your situation doesn't make for a good role model'. They also informed me their decision was effective immediately.

Heartbroken, I packed what little I could squeeze into a travel bag and the very next day hailed a cab to the airport. I landed in Toronto. I've not been back, nor have I looked back.

I notified work and explained what had transpired. I was lucky they were able to cancel the transfer. But back at work my health took a turn for the worse and I had to be placed on long term disability with reduced benefits and pay.

I am doing the very best I can to stay healthy for as long as possible. But I know I desperately need housing to maintain my optimal level of health and motivation. Even though I have wonderful old and new friends, I am alone. I live every day with the fear that I will die alone in a mission bed or on the street...cold, hungry, and sick.

**Thankfully I have discovered Fife House.**

The counselors and social workers at Fife House are helping me find a place I can afford and where I can stay healthy.

There is even one lady at Fife House who I call my Angle of Kindness. It's with her support, compassion and encouragement that I have completed the required applications for safe affordable housing. I couldn't have done it without her.

I will always be grateful for the kindness Fife House has extended me. It's with their encouragement that I will keep believing that things WILL get better, that things WILL work out for the best and that some day I WILL obtain the single remaining dream I have left...safe affordable housing!

I truly feel that if I don't obtain safe affordable housing, my health will fail rapidly.

You never know when someone close to you may need help to get through their own nightmare. I know this from first hand experience, and that's why I wanted to share my story with you. I wanted to show you how your support of Fife House makes a difference.

If you can send \$35, \$50, \$100 or even more, I can assure you that your support means that services can be provided to help people like me – people who just start running into one bad situation after another. Your support helps us get back on our feet.

On behalf of all the people who will benefit from your generosity, please accept my thanks.

Yours sincerely,



Jon

**P.S.** Please give to Fife House – especially at this time of year – there are so many other people just like me who benefit from their support.