

TRIPLE C's 35TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SPEECH

We're here tonight to celebrate 35 years of Triple C's work in the community! 35 years! Most folks can't stay married....or do anything for 35 years.

My presence here this evening is a direct consequence of that work. And...for anyone that may be confused about what exactly Triple C does- allow me to make it plain. Listen closely as there will be a quiz. It is the

Mission of Triple C: to create permanent supportive housing opportunities coupled with innovative support services, to empower individuals to live....with DIGNITY & FULFILL THEIR UTMOST POTENTIAL.

That mission statement contains 2 words that really sum up the essence of Triple C's work. DIGNITY & POTENTIAL. These words are woven into the fabric of the Triple C Community.

Dignity: appears no less than ten times on Triple C's website. It is defined as: *the state or quality of being worthy of honor or respect; worthiness.*

And now...I am going to illustrate how Triple C facilitates their mission towards the fulfillment of potential. It's a brief story that opens a window into the nature of the parallel universe...and how these worlds can often intersect in profound and surprising ways.

This is a narrative of Triple C and me. ...And our evolution from SURVIVAL to THRIVING

1979 marked the end of a decade of immense mental health reform. The consequences of which saw the release of thousands upon thousands of formerly institutionalized folks with mental illness to destinations unknown, many of these folks wound up homeless.

In 1979, some New Jersey families impacted by these sweeping changes got fed up. They joined up, spoke up and stepped up to address the critical need for the housing of this population. This collective formed the foundation of Triple C.

In 1979 I was eleven years old. I was being nurtured in a toxic environment of chaos, confusion and violence. At eleven, I was gaining the valuable skills necessary for SURVIVAL.

6 years later....1985. In 1985, Triple C bought their first house that became a home for 5 individuals. This home provided safety and stabilitya supportive environment for folks who had otherwise been discarded.

In 1985, approaching my 16th birthday...at the age of 15, I left that toxic environment and set out for destinations unknown. After surviving on the streets for some time, I landed at which was to be for me...the first in a series of institutions. ...The Middlesex County Youth Shelter on Remsen Avenue in New Brunswick.

At the mercy of an ineffective system, I bounced around from place to place until...at age 18....I aged out of the system. I began to make my way as best I could....sometimes stumbling...sometimes standing....but always.....SURVIVING.

While Triple C continued to grow, my adult life became a reflection of the chaotic and unstable experience of my youth. ...Along the way....I laughed, I cried...And....by November 2012;...I couldn't stop crying. I was homeless and hopeless...and no longer even wanted to survive.

I entered into treatment at UBHC in Monmouth Junction and was blessed with the support of a great friend.

Early on in 2013...the system that had failed me began to work for me. Through my ICMS worker and UBHC...I was connected to Triple C.

In March 2013, I moved into an Apartment in New Brunswick. (aka "Promise House") I will never forget my first night there. ...As I was making my bed, I collapsed and cried tears of joy. ...So grateful to have a safe and stable home.

So....it's been a year and a half now. 2014. In that time, Triple C has continued to grow and expand...opening doors and providing homes....shelter and safety to more and more folks. Yet...there still is such a need.

In the year and a half since I moved in...I completed treatment at UBHC; attended and graduated the Bachelor's Level Alcohol and Drug Counseling program...I am active in my community (neighborhood crime watch, Middlesex County Homeless Youth Commission and Central Jersey Legal Services board member).

In that time, my mother has passed away, I have assumed the role of main caretaker for my dad. I will be celebrating 4 years clean and am anchored and nurtured by healthy and supportive relationships.

In that year and a half....I have lived in the same place...with DIGNITY and....I do believe...am well on my way to fulfilling my UTMOST POTENTIAL.

I have set aside my SURVIVAL SKILLS...and...am learning to THRIVE.