

Testimonial – Chris Thibert

“I grew up in an alcoholic family with many challenges. Growing up I was withdrawn and dove into sports to ease some of the suffering at home, my mother was a saint, and my father did the best that he could suffering from Alcoholism himself. I was put in Karate at an early age and spent a lot of time concentrating on getting better and excelling in that sport. I also played football, wrestling and basketball until I reached a certain age and my own drug addiction started to rear its head. I started to hang around with the wrong crowd and went to school less and less. By grade 11 I had been expelled from my home school and was asked not to come back to my home Karate Dojo because it was apparent to my instructor that I was becoming out of control. It all came to a head when I was 16 and was in some trouble that I needed help getting out of. I was living with my father and using drugs daily. My dad decided to make a change and checked himself into Brentwood Recovery. I was not far behind; I went into Father Paul’s office and broke down. I was young, lost and didn’t know what to do.

I stayed in Brentwood for almost the full program but left before my final week. Brentwood did wonders for me, and I would be drawn back there over the years when things would get so bad that I had no other place to turn. I have had 17 intakes over the years, and it saved my life many times. I eventually had children and ended up trying to stay sober on my own for some years, but I wasn't doing what I was supposed to do. I wasn't going to meetings. I wasn't talking to people. Eventually my relationship with my first baby's mother fell apart and I was in full blown addiction again. My kids were gone, I had nobody to answer to, and I became full blown once again. It took me a few years to get back to any sort of life because I was so lost in addiction.

I ended up meeting my future wife and the mother of the two youngest kids that we have now together. We were lost in addiction ourselves for the first four years of our relationship. We went through countless traumas together and we were at the end of our ropes. Constantly in and out of jail or the hospital, both of us were at our wits end. We were both on the verge of death or suicide and didn't know where to turn or what to do. We went from apartment to apartment, slept on the street and at homeless shelters. We missed our children and our family and wanted so badly to be able to be sober and function normally. Everything came to a head when I had been jumped one day and left for dead in an alley. I woke up in the hospital

and found out that I was lying in a snowbank in minus 20-degree weather until someone saw me and called EMS. I awoke with a catheter and decided I don't want to live like this any longer. I spoke with Katie (my wife) and we both decided that we wanted to live and not die!

It was not easy, but we rose from the ashes and put all our energy into sobriety! We worked together and helped each other from the first day we got sober. We both went to separate meetings and programs and worked as hard as we could on making this new life for ourselves. Katie's mother and mine helped us out immensely in our recovery from first and last apartment to just being there for us, they were always a phone call away and never turned their backs on us. I decided that I wanted to go back to school and become an addiction counsellor and that's just what I did. At the beginning when I first got sober, I was offered a job if I stayed clean at the Downtown Mission, and I ran with that. I took things slow and started to get things back in my life. The object was to hit each goal one at a time and not put too much on my plate because that's when people relapse. So, I got a part-time job waiting tables and went back to school. When I was ready, I went and spoke to the former ED at the Mission and started working as a support worker.

My journey and story are long and there is a lot more involved, but I am just summarizing. I have worked at the Mission for seven years now and have been sober for almost nine. My wife and I got married and have two beautiful young children. I have changed positions over the years at the Mission and rose up the ladder if you will. I now run the Phoenix Recovery Program at the Mission and help as many I can daily. Our lives are filled with joy and happiness. I just must remember daily that I'm not in control, there is a power greater than myself at work. If I let myself slip back into my old ways I will be in trouble. I work daily to try and help as many people as I can and to be there for my wife and kids emotionally and physically.

Thank you so much for listening." - **Chris Thibert**