

Beyond 107

JARVIS STREET



From The Inside Out
The Treasure Hunter

It was early in January when I was asked to cover an afternoon shift on our outreach van. Our outreach workers scour the city every day of the week in hopes of finding someone who is living in the Don Valley or other remote areas. Their goal is to build trusting relationships with individuals living outside in hopes of walking alongside them towards a healthier living situation. I felt I really needed a dose of reality after being holed up in my office for so long and that an afternoon of trudging through the Don Valley might do the trick.

I also felt that it would be a perfect opportunity to get to know our newest outreach worker better. Shannon had once lived on the street himself and had, at one point in his life, lived with an addiction to crack cocaine and alcohol. He is one of the fortunate ones who managed to kick this addiction and has chosen to give back to the community.

While we were driving I asked him what about this job brings him joy. His answer struck me hard and moved me deeply. He told me that when he was a kid he always dreamed of being a treasure hunter. He wanted to grow up to be an explorer who roamed around looking for things of great value. He revealed to me that during his time of living with his addictions, he assumed that his dreams would never come true. He had lost hope.

He went on to say, however, that since he has become a street outreach worker, he knows that his childhood dream has come true. He said that every person he encounters while doing outreach is a treasure.

As he was telling me this, we were climbing up a hill that had just about defeated me. Once we got to the top, we walked along some train tracks until he stopped us in the middle of nowhere. "What are we doing here?" I asked. He said "We're visiting my friend". We then proceeded to climb into a hole that led us to an underground house. The person living there had dug a huge hole in the ground, framed it up, and built his home there. It had homemade solar panels for heat, electricity that ran off a rechargeable battery, Christmas lights, a bed, cupboards, and a bookshelf. It was as though I had entered a scene from Lord of the Rings and I was in Bilbo Baggins' house. I couldn't believe my eyes.

I began to really grasp his notion of being a treasure hunter. We then drove to another location. We climbed down yet another seemingly impossible hill and ...then walked along more train tracks. He began looking for signs of life and I yet again felt as though I was in a scene from Lord of the Rings where Strider was following markings that revealed to him which direction he should take. He stopped when

...continued on back

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Transformed Lives...

"Imagine the dirtiest, smelliest bum you've ever seen. Now multiply that by 100. That was me in 2002," says Anthony Schofield, 33.

Anthony grew up in a home with a stepfather who has since lost his life to crack cocaine and alcohol abuse. Anthony had low self-esteem, and his erratic behaviour led his parents to have him placed in special education classes, group homes and a mental health centre.

Anthony started selling and using drugs at a young age. His drug problem escalated when he was accepted into the Ontario College of Art. His \$8,900 student assistance loan and the downtown school's proximity to drug dealers proved to be too tempting of a combination.

In 1994, Anthony dropped out of school and started living on the streets. He was one of the first "squeegee kids", cleaning drivers' windshields for a donation. "When we first started doing this, drivers were sympathetic to us and quite generous. I was making about \$60 an hour." Yet, this newfound source of plentiful cash only made it easier to feed his crack addiction.

Living under an overpass, Anthony's white skin turned black with grime. Hardly eating, he dropped to 100 pounds. His shoulder length hair matted into dreadlocks. His face was swollen. His feet were so bruised and raw, he could barely walk. Not bathing for months, he constantly smelled like urine. "Even other bums were repulsed by me. It's a miracle that I'm alive today," says Anthony.



Anthony's 1 year group photo, he's in the centre!

make the decision to get off drugs. On the day I was going into detox, one staff member dropped everything to drive me to the hospital. The Gateway helped me to get into a recovery home. I lived there one year as a recovering addict, and the next year, they hired me to manage that home, which I did for a year. With the grace of God, I've stayed off drugs ever since, and continue to go to Narcotics Anonymous meetings. This fall, I also found a job as a front-line worker at a group home.

"Gateway staff helped me to get a \$1,000 scholarship, which is being held for me to help pay for tuition, when I'm ready to go back to school.

"The people at the Gateway gave me the strength to turn my life around. They have become my friends, and they never stopped believing in me. They taught me what it was like to have a healthy relationship with someone, and how to love. I've done a lot to get myself back on my feet, but they've supported me every step of the way and still do – I run all the big changes in my life past them.

"The people at the Gateway never turned their back on me. I owe them my life."

Anthony found his miracle in the support he received at the Salvation Army Gateway. For four years, he popped into the Gateway on occasion to warm up, get a bite to eat, clean up, or sleep in a bed. "At the beginning, I was belligerent and foul-mouthed with them, and abused the place by smoking crack in their bathroom. And they'd kick me out because they didn't allow that behaviour. Yet, every time I came back, I received unconditional forgiveness and support.

"One day while in the Gateway, I was really feeling hatred for myself. I started punching myself in the face, and blackened my own eye. The staff at the Gateway held me down so I couldn't hurt myself any more. They hugged me and prayed for me until I settled down.

"Over the years, they have listened to me and I've received counseling from everyone there, on my addictions, on managing my life, on self-awareness. They helped me

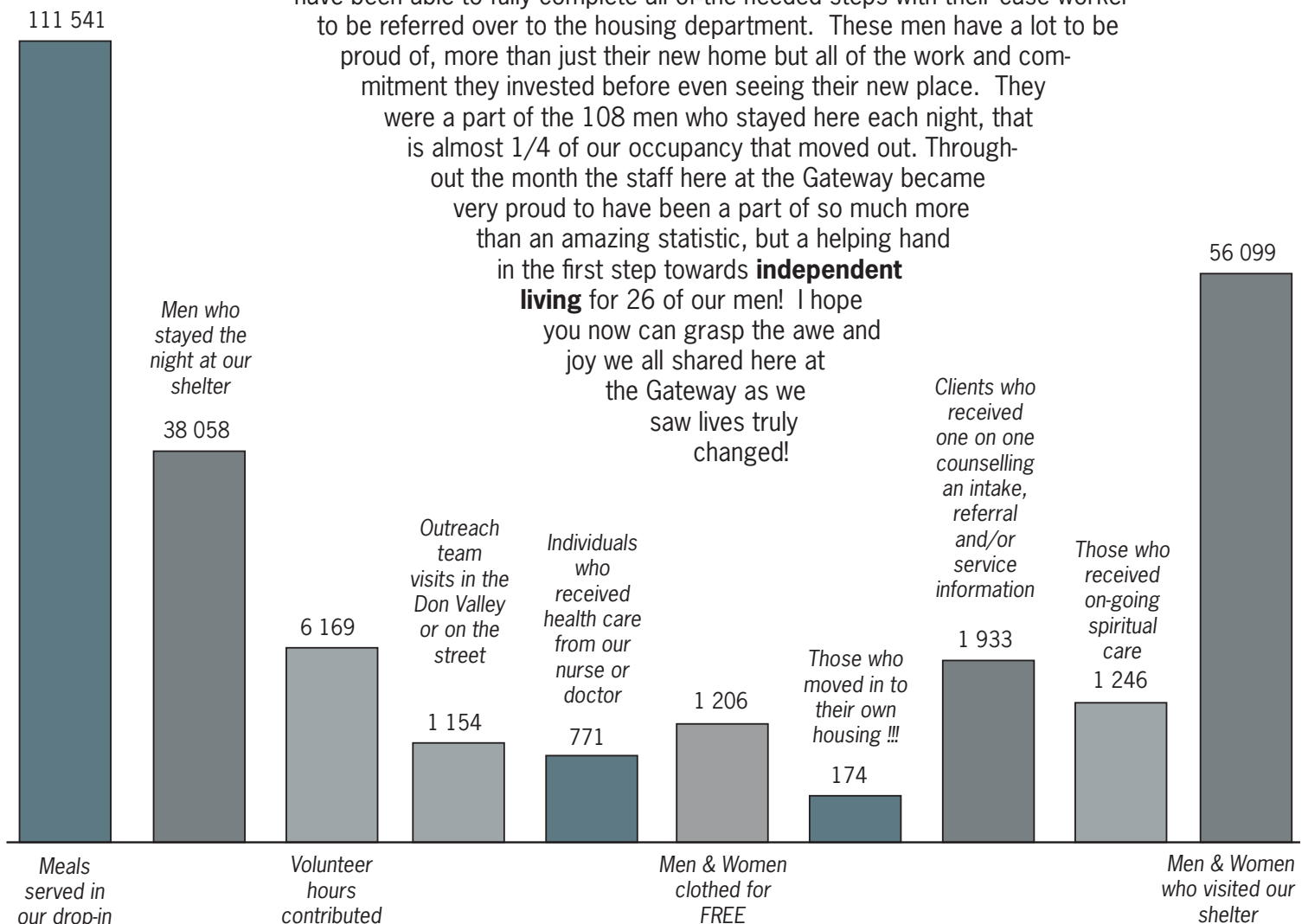
Welcome to "Beyond 107" the first edition of our newsletter!

Our hope is to be the hand of God in the heart of the city which you will see stated on our building and on our uniforms as a constant reminder to us all. Thank you for all of your participation and support and for standing alongside us as we offer, encourage, model and teach community in Christ as a Gateway to meet the holistic needs and develop the gifts of adults in our community. If you would rather receive our newsletter by email please let us know. If you are interested in helping out in any way or just curious to find out more about our services please look to the back of the newsletter for our contact information and don't hesitate to contact us, we'd love to hear from you!



The Gateway's year end review of stats for 2006...

December 2006 was an amazing month for the **housing department** at the Gateway as we found **26 residents** their own apartments and helped them move in. You may be wondering if this number really is that successful, so let us consider our staff and the occupancy of our shelter. We have two full time housing workers who work with residents who have been able to fully complete all of the needed steps with their case worker to be referred over to the housing department. These men have a lot to be proud of, more than just their new home but all of the work and commitment they invested before even seeing their new place. They were a part of the 108 men who stayed here each night, that is almost 1/4 of our occupancy that moved out. Throughout the month the staff here at the Gateway became very proud to have been a part of so much more than an amazing statistic, but a helping hand in the first step towards **independent living** for 26 of our men! I hope you now can grasp the awe and joy we all shared here at the Gateway as we saw lives truly changed!



...he saw some orange peels beside the tracks and began climbing a hill. I decided to wait and then he looked back and silently beckoned me to join him. I scrambled up the hill and wondered not for the first time if this was my last day alive and suddenly I was looking down on a man's encampment in the middle of nowhere. The man approached us and angrily and in no uncertain terms demanded that we leave him. He told us he wanted nothing to do with society, including us. Shannon told him we were with the Salvation Army and left his card and said if he needed any help to feel free to call us. We then respectfully left him. Shannon had once more found more treasure that no one else knew about in a place no one would care to look.

Once we got back to the van (after climbing through more bush and almost breaking my neck), Shannon continued on telling me more about his experience. I will never forget his words to me. He said that working through the 12 steps of AA as well as working at Gateway as an outreach worker is bringing him into a deeper understanding of who God is. As he meets the people that he sees as treasure more valuable than any gold or silver, he is meeting God.

My mind took me to the passage in Matthew's gospel; "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy...but store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt.6:19-22) Shannon has left behind his juvenile desires to find earthly treasures and, on his journey to recovery, is placing higher value on human life than he is on material gain. He is placing his treasure in a sacred place where nothing can damage it. As a result, he is entering into an understanding of and relationship with the sovereign Lord and is gaining a deep and tangible understanding of the Kingdom of God.

Here at Gateway, we strive to view each person as a treasure. Everyone who walks in our doors has been created by God in His image and therefore has immeasurable value. God has gifted us with the opportunity to journey alongside people who have been long forgotten and overlooked by mainstream society and in return, we get to experience the Kingdom in ways that bring us more joy than any pay-cheque or earthly treasure could ever bring.

We'll keep on attempting to be The Hand of God in the Heart of the City.

- Dion Oxford, Director



Yes! I want to support the work of the Salvation Army Gateway!



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- I would like to make arrangements to have your Director as a guest speaker.

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