



## David's Story

*"A roof over your head helps you heal faster."*

David had been homeless for most of his life when his situation changed abruptly in September of 2012. He found a job, an apartment, and a renewed sense of pride.

According to a 2012 United Way-led study, there are 372 homeless people in Saskatoon. These people – many of whom are children – live on the street, stay in shelters, and “couch-surf” with friends. Their stories are unique, but the results are the same. Without a good home, many people can't overcome poverty, addiction and mental health issues.



At United Way, we believe every individual and family deserves to have his or her basic needs met. Through our From Poverty to Possibility focus area, we lead, improve access to, and invest in programs and initiatives that move people out of poverty and into sustainable, healthy situations.

We don't believe that homelessness is inevitable for anyone, and with our community partners, we're working to end it. Following models underway throughout Canada and other countries, we are developing a Plan to End Homelessness, with measurable, ambitious outcomes, and key milestones. Our strategy is Housing First – getting people into healthy, safe housing, and then providing them with the support they need to move forward.

David has struggled with homelessness for most of his life. A childhood spent in foster care and residential schools left him without the stability of a permanent address. After high school, he travelled across North America – hitchhiking, doing odd jobs, and staying with friends. He drifted from place to place, often preferring shelters to rough rental housing. In the late 1970s, he lived on the streets of Toronto – using cardboard boxes to stay warm. He ended up in Saskatoon in the 1980s.

David has always worked in roofing, carpentry and construction, but due to physical and intellectual disabilities, he found it difficult to maintain consistent long-term employment. “I have a good work ethic,” he says. “(But) I don't like to crash and burn in front of anybody. It's very embarrassing.”

For years, David focused on his immediate needs, living day to day. But all that changed over a year ago, when the United Way-supported agency, Friendship Inn, offered him a job. A steady income and renewed sense of purpose have made a difference in his life. They have helped him move into a home of his own. “I have peace of mind at my place,” says David, noting that, for the first time in a long time, he feels in control.

David's story reinforces United Way's Housing First approach to ending homelessness. Emergency shelters are necessary, but they provide a temporary fix. Having a home base gives people the strength to heal and move forward into a better quality of life. David agrees with this statement. “A roof over your head helps you heal faster,” he says.

United Way is working with our community partners to end homelessness and move people from poverty to possibility.