



SAFESTREETS

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Success Story: COET helps man get clean, reconnect with family, following living in his car

EVERETT - *From time to time, we share streets reports and successes from our police, social worker and other City staff. Today's story comes from Staci McCole, an embedded social worker with Everett Police.*

One of the greatest rewards I've received working outreach has been the ability to help individuals who are ready to help themselves. Last September, I began working with a man who was ready to make a change in his life, but didn't know how to navigate the system.

Officer Kevin Davis and I met John* when we went to Lowell River Road to follow up on reports of people living in vehicles along the road. In his 50s, John had been a laborer for most of his life until sustaining an on-the-job injury that left him unable to work. He turned to methamphetamines and lost everything.

The turning point

John's frustration was evident as he spoke of wanting to get into treatment because he was "done with this type of life." He wanted to have a place to call home, reconnect with his family, and lead a clean and sober life.

John's lack of stable housing seemed to be an insurmountable barrier to any meaningful change in his life. He was unable to receive his pension because he lacked a permanent address and, though he wanted to seek treatment for his addiction, he didn't know where to turn. In my role as a social worker with the Everett Police [Community Outreach and Enforcement Team](#) (COET), I was able to help John negotiate both of these barriers.

I first contacted John's former company and updated his mailing address to a family member's address so he could begin receiving his pension. I then scheduled a drug and alcohol assessment for John at Evergreen Recovery Services.

When Davis and I returned two days later to the area to take him to the appointment, John's car was no longer there. I contacted Evergreen Recovery Services to let them know he might not attend the appointment, but to my surprise, John was already there!

Learn more:

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His car had broken down on his way to the appointment, so John had walked over two miles to Evergreen because he “didn’t want to miss this for anything.” He completed the assessment that day.

The next week, Davis and I took John back for his inpatient treatment referral appointment. With the determination he showed in changing his current situation he was referred and approved for an inpatient treatment facility in eastern Washington for at least 30 days.

Jumping through the hoops

To make it to the facility, John would need to catch the train to eastern Washington in two days, but first he had a long to-do list to accomplish.

The next morning I took John to the Community Health Clinic in Lynnwood for a doctor’s appointment to get a prescription for inhalers to manage his chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). He was unsure about his health insurance, but the helpful staff was able to determine his coverage. John also went shopping for facility-approved clothes and personal items, and connected with a family member who would hold onto his few belongings while he was gone.

John called me later that evening, very concerned, after his visit to the pharmacy to pick up the prescribed inhalers. Although his prescription was covered, he did not have his insurance card at that time, and was told he could not pick them up without payment – more than \$700. With my background in medical social work, I contacted Medicare with him to obtain the correct insurance information and relayed it to the pharmacy. Later that night, he returned to the pharmacy and picked up his prescription for less than a few dollars.

John stayed in a hotel that night, which he paid for using some of his pension money. The next morning he was up, packed, and ready to go at 8:30 a.m. We transported him to the train station and watched as he got on with a big smile and wave.

I received a call from John at least once a week during his 30-day treatment, with updates about his progress and connected with his counselors to establish a plan for his discharge. He successfully completed treatment and returned to Everett.

Life after treatment

He stayed in a hotel for two nights while we waited for an opening at a clean and sober housing home. John enrolled in an intensive outpatient program (IOP) and religiously attended every appointment.

Three weeks after he returned to Everett, John contacted me to let me know he was admitted to the hospital following a stroke and heart attack. Thankfully, he was with a few of his housemates and they were able to call 911. John noted multiple times that he would have been dead “if I was still living in my car.”

Davis and I visited him at the hospital, and John reminisced about the past few years and how he was in such a better place now. He spoke of wanting to provide support to the younger

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generation and tell them about the horrible impact drugs can have on your life. He thanked Davis and me for being present and encouraging him on his journey to being clean and sober.

I am proud to say that John now has more than 95 days clean and continues to attend IOP. He is dedicated to continuing on his clean and sober path. I still connect with him every other week to check in.

John has reconnected with his family and has not returned to Lowell River Road. We arranged a meeting around the holidays where he gave me a beautiful card that thanked me for believing in him.

Learn more about the [Everett Safe Streets Plan](#).

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