A Family Exposed…Anthony's Story

It was a rainy late afternoon in March of 2014 and my family and I became homeless due to the fact that we could no longer afford motel rooms at $60/night. It was also due to my meth dependency. So I ended up on the street with my wife and kids and all our luggage with no where to go. We walked over to a Christian church on Market Street who fed us, but could not offer us any shelter. I remembered the good folks of Sunstreet Center who I knew I could go to and ask advice of what to do. In the meantime, my family was at the park across the street. The rain was getting heavier. I got desperate. I was trying to find any means necessary to get them out of the rain. Eddie Hathcock and Roberto Garcia of Sunstreet remembered 37 Central, the Salinas Winter Warming Shelter, run by Shelter Outreach Plus. **We were like two ducks in the rain with four drenched ducklings following us!** We walked across town to the shelter. When we got there, I didn't even know if we would be let in. The doors were closed and intake was over. Desperately, I knocked on the door and I heard the lady say, "Hey, there's a whole family out here." We were immediately let in and got out of the rain. They made a table for us and sat us all down to eat. When we sat down at the table, a man asked me if he could pray for us. I, of course, said, "Please do." Once he did that and I looked around the room at all the smiles towards us…I felt safe. While the man was praying I was feeling pretty sorry for myself as a man and as a father for putting my family in that predicament and I started to cry. As I was crying, a lady walked up with some stuffed animals and gave each of my kids one. That gesture gave them all a great smile. At that moment as I was worrying about where else we could go that night, I was told we could stay for just one night. It was pouring outside. **I will be forever thankful to be given this chance to stay and be safe off the street.** I never snored so loud that night! I remember that staff treated us like family. My family was given a separate room to sleep in. We had a wonderful dinner, dessert included. **Looking back…if it wasn't for that shelter being there for my family, who knows what I might have done to protect my family from the element.** I might have committed a crime, which could have put me in jail or worse, just to be able to get my family into a motel room. It gave me a chance to stop and think about the choices I had made in my life and what led us to this situation. I hit rock bottom. **I truly believe it was the start of my first spiritual experience to get my life right.** I had reached the bottom in my addiction.

I now find myself in treatment. I have escaped the tornado of problems that my wife and I caused. I know that the root of our problems is really me. I have now faced it. I believe that Shelter Outreach Plus, that stormy winter night, was a stepping-stone on the road to my recovery.

The next morning at the shelter we were given bus passes and directions to the Family Resource Center of Salinas City Elementary School District. Our children received clothing, shoes, food, resources and backpacks filled with school supplies and most importantly, we were put back in focus to get the kids back in school. We had hope. **We were blessed again.**

As we left the FRC and were waiting for the bus, my wife's cousin called us and invited us to come to her home. Thank God…'cuz, in all honesty, we had no idea where we were going after we left the Family Resource Center with all the bags of resources that we had received. **Another blessing!**

The very next morning, my wife's cousin approached me and made a deal with me. She agreed to watch over my family and put the kids back in school….but I had to leave immediately and go get help. It was tough love. I know I needed to do this. My family was safe. **I had to now focus on me in order to be able to become the man I needed to be for my family and myself.** I needed to address my substance abuse issue….'cuz "wherever I go, there I am." **I could no longer run from myself.**

If it weren't for the Family Resource Center, Shelter Outreach Plus and Sunstreet Center, I would have never found my way. Thank God for all the people out there who are sent as angels…for people like me.