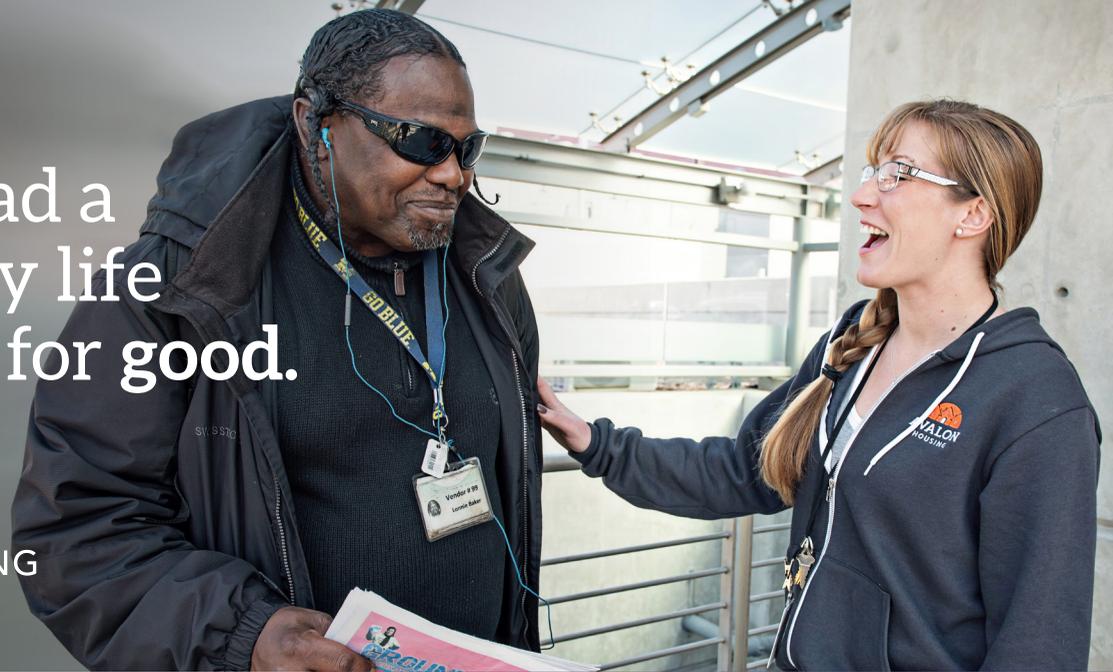


Once I had a home, my life changed for good.



Dear Friend,

My name is Lonnie. I haven't always had a good job and a stable place to call home, but I do now. This is my story.

When I was growing up my parents got divorced. I took advantage of a lack of supervision and started acting out and getting into trouble. I was exposed to drugs and alcohol, and became addicted from a young age. Through the years, I experienced anxiety and depression, but without a regular doctor, I didn't know how to handle what I was feeling. In my 20s I was sent to prison as a result of a crime I committed under the influence of drugs.

When I was released from prison I was homeless and jobless with nowhere to turn. I knew I didn't want to go back to jail, so I began skipping parole meetings. I knew the penalties for "testing dirty" for drugs or alcohol, or breaking parole – either way, I ended up being sent back to prison. The cycle of prison and parole consumed my life for the following three decades.

While incarcerated in 2015, I experienced the scariest moment of my life. I had a severe panic attack. My heart was pounding so hard I thought I was going to die. I had only experienced this once before, and I thought it was a result of drug use. This time around I knew it couldn't be drugs because I wasn't using in prison. The panic attack was a result of the severe anxiety I experienced for most of my life. From that point on, I knew I wanted to live. I used my fear of the panic attack as a force for good. I decided to take better care of my health and get sober.

When I was released from prison in 2015, I was approached on the street by Avalon's Rapid Rehousing team. They were able to help me secure housing with a private landlord in Ypsilanti. I hadn't had a real home in over 30 years. I could now regularly attend doctor appointments and was able to continue to see my nurse practitioner from the shelter, Gina Dahlem of Packard Health, right in my new home.

At that point in my life, I was identified as being legally blind. My Avalon Case Manager helped me complete paperwork for social security benefits and I was approved.

With a stable home and a stable way to pay my bills for the first time ever, I was able to seek help for my alcoholism. I entered a treatment program and successfully completed my parole. This year, I am celebrating three years of sobriety. My past struggles seem so far away. I proved to myself and others that I could succeed.

I have a job selling Groundcover News. Groundcover News is a local newspaper that is written by homeless and formerly homeless individuals in Washtenaw County. Everyone at Groundcover has been so supportive in my recovery, and they even featured my story in the January 2018 issue.

Avalon is an organization that keeps giving, giving, and giving. Everyone I know that works there is good people. Avalon case managers stand out because you can tell they have a genuine interest in their clients. When someone actually enjoys what they do you can tell because they are much more passionate. That really shows at Avalon. I know my Avalon Case Manager, Crystal, will continue to advocate for my housing safety and good living conditions with my private landlord. She accompanies me for inspections and doctor appointments and checks in with me to make sure I have what I need. Without housing and Crystal, I don't know where I would be today. **When you give to Avalon Housing, you're helping pay for case managers who give people the support they need to stay housed.** Thank you in advance for supporting Avalon.



Sincerely,

Jonnie

P.S. As many as 5,000 people in Washtenaw County will experience homelessness this year. Please help your neighbors today.

Donate online at AvalonHousing.org/donate or use the enclosed envelope.

