



*communities where whānau are housed, connected,
valued and thriving*

Walk a Mile in My Shoes – Adam’s Story

We invite you to walk a mile in Adam’s shoes. We are inspired by his journey from homelessness to housing and greater wellbeing. We lift him up for sharing his story with us. Ngā manaakitanga, Adam!

The road that leads to someone experiencing homelessness can be long and winding – the result of a complex set of circumstances such as poverty, familial breakdown, substance use and mental health difficulties. For some of the people we meet at DCM, it is sadly not always a surprise. They are often men who are Māori, over 40, who have been in institutional care, and victims of abuse.

But for others, homelessness can be sudden, unexpected, and very scary. For Adam, who is working with Ava from DCM’s Noho Pai (Sustaining Tenancies) team, homelessness started with an assault which Adam says “Was the catalyst for a really big bump in the road, which lasted over a decade”.



Adam speaks very highly of his family – especially his mum – but he had a rough start, especially since his dad was “a criminal basically”. “He was a car thief,” says Adam, “And that would’ve been quite stressful on mum, me and my brother. One day, he wiggled out, and there was a 16-hour stand-off at our house with mum at knifepoint and me and my brother in the cupboard.”

Adam’s dad got 25 years, but soon, “Mum being mum thought, ‘Well the kids have gone through a tough time, and I need to do something’, so she got a job, and that’s where she found Dave.”

Adam believes that Dave “pretty much saved the family”. “He came in and did a superlative job on me and my brother. I consider us both good guys – we’ve got our scruples and our morals right.”

“They were strict, and when I got into trouble, it wasn’t the police I was thinking about – it was mum. ‘Oh my God, I’ve gotta deal with mum!’ I’d come home in various states of inebriation, and one day I went too far and rushed past mum – into the toilet – with her outside shouting, ‘You shouldn’t drink!’ as I answered, ‘Bleugh! Yes, mum!’”

Adam’s family moved to Wellington when he was 11 or 12, and when describing what school was like, Adam laughs and admits, “I was evil!” But he quickly corrects himself. “Not evil, that’s the wrong word entirely. I was mischievous, I got up to some stuff. Some of it was peer pressure. Guys would come up to you and say, ‘Look, let’s do this’ – and it would seem like a great idea, especially if you’ve had a few.”

Adam describes his teenage years as colourful, with lots of partying. “I had a ball. We had a ball. We had a great time. But friends died along the way.” Adam lost some close friends to car accidents, but despite these tragedies, has many happy memories from his younger days.

Still, even as he got older, being told off by mum was no fun, so Adam worked at a veterinary clinic, supermarkets, and \$2 shops. Later, he studied journalism. “I enjoyed finding the facts, interviewing people – all that kind of thing. That was where the fun was, and I got quite a good reputation doing it. I’d have people wanting follow-up interviews which journalists don’t usually get – and if they do, they’ve done their job right.”



One night, at a party, Adam was assaulted, first by one individual and then by another, who “laid into me”. “And that just started carrying on. I ended up homeless, living in a shed, and my doctor got me into ward 27.”

Ward 27 – Te Whare o Matairangi – is Wellington’s 24-hour mental health treatment service for adults who are experiencing serious mental health concerns. Adam had to stay there for a month, after which he got a flat at the old Arlington Apartments.

“It was horrible,” Adam says. “I spent a year there, I was depressed, I didn’t know anyone. It was a bad old year.”

Adam’s brother moved in with him to the dingy one-bedroom apartment, but wanting a fresh start they were able to move into a shared flat in Porirua with Adam’s old schoolmate. After he moved out, followed some years later by his brother, Adam says, “All the people that were hanging around started beating me up – like hardcore.”

“One dude baseball-batted me on the elbow for no reason except I’d put the kettle on and I hadn’t filled it up. I got my jaw broken by one fella. I came down early one morning and turned on the TV, and one dude grabbed a shoe, one of those plimsole shoes, and started beating me round the head with it. It perforated my eardrum. They were just idiots...”

Escaping the violence of the communal living situation, Adam ended up at the now-defunct Night Shelter, where he says, “Things started ironing out”. Adam speaks very highly of Don, who used to manage the Night Shelter, and DJ, a DCM staff member who would regularly visit to support the men staying there and to help them look at long-term housing options.

“That was the first time someone in a long time had done something for me.”



Adam used to visit DCM’s Te Hāpai service regularly, as residents of the Night Shelter would have to leave early in the morning, and he accessed the Foodbank, as well as DCM’s emergency dental service. Like many of our whānau, Adam needed to have a few teeth out and a referral to the Oral Health Department at Wellington Hospital for replacement teeth. Adam was able to get a full upper denture so he could start smiling again.

Adam is now permanently housed in a property provided by the Salvation Army – and he loves his place. “The price is good, and I’ve kept it nice. The garden is great, I enjoy getting the fresh air, sometimes watching people coming and going, and you get to see all types of birds. And I’ve got nice neighbours.”

It is a struggle for Adam to get by on a benefit, and he would like to work again so he can get through the week and save up so he can visit his family in the South Island. Though Adam never saw his dad again after he went to prison, he remains close with his mum and stepdad.

Adam has been working with Tipene, and now Ava, from DCM’s Noho Pai (Sustaining Tenancies) team. The Sustaining Tenancies mahi involves regular home visits to check that everything is going well in people’s homes, addressing any health concerns, ensuring people can live adequately on their income, and connecting them to their whānau and other supports.

Ava says, “Adam’s such a lovely person. But the cost of living has been hard on him. He really wants to see his mum and stepdad in Christchurch, but it’s virtually impossible when you’re on a benefit. I would just love to see him with a job where his talents can shine through. That would be mana-enhancing for him.”

Tipene describes how some of the people working with Noho Pai don't draw out funds when they overpay on power bills – one of the few ways they are able to put money aside.

Tipene says, “Adam really enjoys our company. He likes to say, ‘Let's catch up and go for a coffee’. Just things that are normal in his life – people who treat him normally and ask things like, ‘What would your life look like if it was at its best?’ Having someone who does that can change your outlook on life.”

Those conversations are part of the job at DCM as we walk a mile in the shoes of our whānau. Our vision is for communities where they are housed, connected, valued, and thriving. It is a big vision that we can only achieve if we walk a mile – *together*.



WORDS/IMAGES: MATTHEW MAWKES.

DCM Walk a Mile Challenge **Let's make big strides together!**

This story was connected to a new fundraising initiative undertaken by DCM in 2023: The Walk a Mile Challenge.

Every day, hundreds of individuals in the Wellington region face the harsh realities of homelessness; with no shelter, food, or hope. That's where DCM steps in – building trust, offering a place to be together, providing essential medical services and other help, securing homes, and ensuring a smooth transition to stability.

But we can't do it alone. We need funds to keep our essential services running.



About the fundraiser

The Walk a Mile Challenge encourages participants to walk a mile each day for 30 days in a pair of old shoes. Like a sponsored walk, but everyday distances rather than one big hike.

You can walk anywhere and anytime that suits. The challenge is designed to be flexible and inclusive, including walking to work, to school, walking the dog, or even just to your favourite lunch spot. And 1 mile is just 800m there and back.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who stepped up and took on DCM's Walk a Mile Challenge! All the steps you have taken, and all the money raised, will go a long way to help us transform the lives of our whānau, so they can be housed, connected, valued and thriving.

On Sunday 26 November, we held our Big Thank Yous concert at San Fran. It was an awesome night, and we are so grateful to San Fran for providing the venue and to Two Times, Beans, Seamus Johnson, Laura Collins & the Back Porch Blues Band, Dr. Blue and Vicky Weeds for entertaining us.

Thank you also to James Parkinson and Dunbar Sloane for running our charity art auction and all those artists you donated pieces, including DCM's own whānau, Daniel, Hapi and Jason.

DCM has always been a grassroots organisation, and despite our modest budget, we are tackling some of the biggest problems facing our city. We can only end homelessness with your help – so THANK YOU for walking a mile with us as we pilot this new fundraising initiative.

[Support DCM](#)

Nāku te rourou, nāu te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.

With your basket and my basket, the people will thrive.

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