

Running for recovery

Running doesn't just elevate Waldon Adams' mood, it wards off his manic depression and helps "burn off the medicine" he's been on since his HIV transitioned to AIDS. The 54-year-old was honorably discharged from the navy after he began suffering from PTSD, and been chronically homeless due to his mental and physical illnesses.

BY JENNIFER ORTIZ
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Neon colored sneakers and ponchos contrasted the backdrop of a gray sky. The sound of raindrops and rubber pounding the pavement synchronized to roaring rock and roll music.

Twenty six miles. Five hours and 27 minutes. A familiar feeling of pride and success overcame Waldon Adams as he crossed the finish line. Sweat and rain soaked his body at the completion of his 13th marathon.

It heightens his mood. It wards off his manic depression. Since his HIV transitioned to AIDS in 2008, he runs to "burn off the medicine." For Adams, the benefits outweigh the possibility of his asthma acting up during a run.

"We all have ways we channel our energy. For Waldon, it's running ... But without housing, you can't pursue any of that," said Tom Murphy, the director of communication for Miriam's Kitchen, where Adams now works.

Adams has experienced many episodes of homelessness in the past 32 years due to his mental and physical illnesses. He said that he had been to "all the psych wards and all the hospitals," only having a place to spend the night if he was "sick enough."

For the past six years, however, living in

Waldon Adams



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an apartment has helped stabilize Adams' lifestyle. Friendship Place has provided him with case management and permanent supportive housing. Former Division Manager Jill Carmichael managed the different housing programs and supervised Adams' case manager. Friendship Place has integrated permanent supportive housing since August 2008, according to Carmichael, "Permanent supportive housing is the best intervention for the most vulnerably chronic homeless individuals in our city," Carmichael explained. "It provides safe and stable housing with intensive case management ... which we know is cheaper than leaving them on the street."

In fact, providing permanent supportive housing costs almost half of the cost of providing emergency services. Chronically homeless individuals live on the streets and may use emergency shelters and other emergency services such as emergency room visits, ambulance rides, hospitalization etc. This can cost up to \$40,843 per person a year, according to a 2014 report from the Advisory Board Company. Permanent supportive housing, where people can be safe from the elements and thus use less emergency services, has a price tag of \$22,500 per person a year.

The District's Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) plans to spend more money on permanent housing in its efforts

to end chronic homelessness by the end of 2017. At a public discussion on the ICH's plans for 2015-2020, Kristy Greenwalt, the director of ICH, said that because it is spending a lot of money on emergency shelters it wants to increase the effectiveness of permanent supportive housing. This will reduce the need of emergency shelters, according to Greenwalt.

Adams has plugged in to the community through the housing and case management services he receives at Friendship Place. He was asked to speak at an event at Miriam's Kitchen, where they kept in touch and reached out to him with a job opportunity. Adams now works as an advocacy fellow for Miriam's Kitchen.

"I'm manic, and sometimes I can't stay on topic. As time went on, I was asked to speak more and more," Adams said the job offer came as a surprise. "I guess I was speaking on their talking points, because they offered me a job."

The Advocacy Fellow Program at Miriam's Kitchen began in January and Adams is making history as an inaugural fellow.

Through his new job, Adams has several speaking engagements lined up. He has been learning about different housing

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