



## **Rising Up**

### **Interview with David**

*August 21, 2021*

Many of the young people who are part of the Rising Up initiative are thriving. The numbers alone tell us that, but it's far more compelling to hear about it from a young person who has been a part of the program. In the interview below you will meet David, a young man who, through his own initiative and with the support of Rising Up case managers at both Larkin Street Youth Services and Five Keys Schools and Programs, was able to get beyond a dark time in his life and move towards the independence and stability he now has. Here is David's story, in his own words:

#### **Tell me a bit about yourself, your background, what brought you to Five Keys.**

I'm 27 years old and I'm from San Francisco. There was a time in my life when I just didn't have my stuff together. I was going from spot to spot. Sometimes I'd stay in my car, sometimes with friends.

I had a brother, Eric. He was my twin, and we were very close. He had gotten his own apartment through Larkin Street Youth Services, a place out in the avenues. Sometimes I would stay with him. But then he passed away, so that was a wake-up call. Also, I have a daughter and knew I needed to think about her. It was a really hard time. I was trying to figure things out. Eventually I talked with Eric's case manager at Larkin Street, Marnie, and she told me how to go through an intake process and apply for housing.

I did intake at Homeless Youth Alliance. They evaluated me and said I qualified for Rising Up housing. Jackie Martinez at Five Keys was one of the first people I met when I was accepted into Rising Up. I had another case manager named Gabriel. Danielle was the housing coordinator and she helped me find an apartment in Oakland. I've lived there now for a year. With the help of the people at Rising Up, I found a job with an agency that sends me to various buildings for concierge services.

#### **What do you do on your job?**

I work full time through an agency as a concierge at residential buildings. I've been with this agency for a year and they've sent me on different assignments to different places. Right now I'm working in a Mercy Housing building. The contract there was for a month but it could potentially be ongoing. As a concierge, I deal with complaints the residents may have. I also provide security services, package delivery, answering the phones, scheduling appointments with the property managers, and anything else that needs to get done. I like the job because I really like working with people.

### **Can you tell me more about Eric, your brother?**

He was the life of the party type person; outgoing and confident. He was super funny. He loved to look good and was big on style. He had long hair because he never cut it. He had a drinking problem. It would cause him lose sight of what was going on and he could get mean. But he had a good heart and was very loving. He'd have your back no matter what.

Eric was incarcerated for about 16 months, and then when he got out, he got into a jobs program through Larkin Street and started working for a moving company. He got a place to live, had a girlfriend he really loved, and for a while he was doing good. But he wasn't ready to be on his own. It eventually led to him going overboard. He died on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020. He overdosed in his sleep. He wasn't a drug addict. That's the crazy thing.

### **And tell me about your daughter.**

Her name is Anabeth. The name is a combination of her two grandmothers names. She 7 years old now and she's in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. She's doing really well in school. She loves going to the park and playing with her toys. She lives in Sunnyvale with Wendy, her mom. Wendy and I are still together as a couple, so Anabeth goes back and forth between Oakland and Sunnyvale.

### **You're living on your own in an apartment in Oakland. How is that going?**

The apartment is fine but the lease is up soon. Wendy and I are looking for an apartment in the Bay Area to live together. We want to stay in one place, for Anabeth. Until we find something, I'll be staying with my grandmother. We get along well.

### **What is the ultimate goal that you're working towards?**

The pandemic has kept me from going to school and I really want to go back to school. It's better for me if I can go in-person. I like being around people and it's a better learning environment for me. I am hoping to go to City College. When I go back to school, I want to study social work so I can eventually become a case manager and work with young people. I think I can connect with them. Kids will listen to you if you can connect with them. If it wasn't for some of my case managers and for the life advice they gave me, I wouldn't have been able to do any of the things I've been able to do. All of my case managers were good. Some connected from the heart – they were the most helpful. It's my dream to do this work.

### **Final thoughts?**

My goal is to do all the things my brother Eric didn't get a chance to do, for both of us. I wish he'd gotten to know Anabeth better.