

# PATHWAYS TO HOUSING

**Phillip Colbert**  
**Testimony on Housing First**  
**March 23, 2010**

My name is Phillip Colbert; I was born in August 1967. My natural father left us when I was two years old. I was raised by my mother. I met my stepfather at the age of six. I wasn't a problem child. I was a nice kid. I was very adventurous. I was abused as a child. I kept strong and continued to do good things.

At age 7, I could read labels for cooking pastries. I am a gifted baker.

Also as a child, I saw my uncles and aunts, dealing drugs, and doing things I knew were not right.

I always told myself I would not put myself in that light but as I got older as a teenager things got better. I did my music.

When I was 24 years old I got married but the marriage didn't go too well. I got divorced and remarried in 1993. I had two sons. This marriage also didn't work but I was able to maintain a job at a home improvement company. Even though it has been hard for them, my sons are doing well. The older one is in college at Northern Virginia Community College.

After my marriage broke up, I went out into the streets and got involved in drugs and alcohol. I was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder and bi-polar. While I was on the street I didn't take my medication. Then, in 1999, my mother passed and that is when my life really turned from bad to worse. After her passing, I left everything (my home, my car, my job) and walked the streets. I tried to commit suicide 5 times. One time I was revived back from committing suicide. I also had a mild heart attack. I didn't want to go on; I had no reason to go on.

The only thing left were my two sons. I wasn't even able to keep in touch with them.

I had to learn how to live homeless, soup kitchen to soup kitchen. I had to live outside, even when it was 10 to 15 degrees.

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One day I was downtown and I met some people who talked about Pathways. I came by and talked with Josh Greene a representative from Pathways. He told me about it. In a couple of months I was placed into my first apartment.

Although it has not always been smooth, Pathways has stuck with me the whole time.

The apartment I have now is in Northwest, just off of New Hampshire Avenue. The area is not a drug involved area. The people there are Black, Latino and Ethiopian. There is a community grocery store. There is a guy at the grocery store also named Phillip. He tells me what is on special, especially the ice cream. He is also a Leo.

I love my neighborhood. It gives me great hope that there is a life outside of being homeless. I credit my God for the turn around of my life.

Lastly, I am a professional gospel artist. I am working on an album which should be finished by the end of the summer. Because I have a place to live and the support of Pathways, I am living my dream.

Last Friday night I sang two songs at an open mike in Mount Pleasant.

My life is really headed in the right direction. Having a place to live is what makes a difference. I would not be able to do this on the street. I know me. Pathways didn't make me get clean and sober before I got my apartment. I couldn't have done that. I am proud to say that I am clean and sober now.

I hope that because of what I have just said that whatever way possible you will be able to help other individuals such as myself. I have friends and acquaintances still on the street. Please put more money into housing first so my friends don't die on the street.