



L-R, Patrick Burwell, Greg Nelson and David Storm

Meet Patrick, Greg, and David

Our first three veterans to move into

PATRIOT PLACE

**Goodwill Homeless Veterans
Transitional Housing Community**

November 1, 2011

Below they openly share their stories.

Jointly they put together these two quotes. They often end each other's sentences but all feel that it is their experiences in life and the service that draw them together but also forces them to become their own person.

*“The most important thing in life is family.
This Veterans Transitional Housing Community is bringing
together a family from all walks of life.
Family is not about blood. Here we will become a family”*

*“We have never been anywhere where a Veteran
did not want to help another Veteran.”*

ABOUT THE PROGRAM: The Goodwill Homeless Veterans Transitional Housing Community consists of four duplex housing units to serve 24 veterans (at any given time). Each house has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, dining, living room, kitchen and a garage/storage area.

There is also a community building that includes group meeting spaces, classrooms, case management offices and single unit residential manager's accommodations.



Goodwill Homeless Veterans Transitional Housing Community
This is a program of Goodwill Industries of Northern Michigan,
For more information visit www.goodwillnmi.org/vets.



Gregory Nelson – 10 year Coast Guard Veteran

What does moving in today mean to you?

It is awesome! It has been a pretty emotionally charged day, leaving the Friendship Housing Center after nine weeks.

This is another step forward. Since 2004, I have been dealing with my health issues and not able to deal with other things. Everything else fell by the wayside.

I thank God for the VA... I would not be alive without them.

I was always a work hard...play hard guy. After the service, I worked for seven years in construction, while going to school to get my BA in Structural Engineering and Associates Degree in Civil Engineering.

I had my own construction and carpentry business and life was good. Then tragedy struck. My 16 year old son died of cancer in 1996. There was so much emotion. My wife and I split up and the financial responsibilities from my son's cancer and surgeries, above and beyond our health insurance wiped us out financially and emotionally.

I went to work in construction in a good-paying job. Since 2004, I have battled cancer. It started in one area and has spread through my body...left me in a wheelchair and with nothing.

The Friendship Housing Center helped bring out the best in me. I had really withdrawn. Being at the shelter helped me be social again and come out of my shell.

I have a lot of knowledge and experience. I know now that I have purpose left in my life. I can't work, but I can volunteer and would like to pursue my master's degree.

Today, I am very thankful to be here!



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Patrick Burwell – United States Army Veteran 1982-1985

What does moving in today mean to you?

Today is a God send. It means so much, knowing I have a place to live...I have what I need and not having to depend on others.

When I got out of the service, I did floor covering. I owned my own business for seven years here in Northern Michigan. Four years ago I lost everything when a relationship and the economy went bad. For me, there was nothing positive out there for me.

I floated from family to friends and house to house. With the turn in the economy, I was not able to find work. For the past eight months I have been at the Friendship Housing Center.

The Friendship Housing Center opened a lot of doors for me...this being one of them. Having access to housing, schooling and vocational rehabilitation programs is amazing. I recently got dentures, which made a big difference how I feel. Things have begun to change with access to programs and resources that I did not know existed.

The last two years, I really looked at what I had and what I lost! I want to regain my independence and rejoin society in a positive light. The emotional downside to losing everything was too much...too overwhelming...I withdrew into myself and away from everything and everyone.

I would like to go to school and take computer classes with secondary studies in horticulture.

The shelter was great, but the opportunity here to live more independently is wonderful. The commonality and understanding that comes with sharing a home with other veterans and brothers is very positive! Today will never be replaced!



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**David Storm – United States Navy Veteran
1999-2008**

What does moving in today mean to you?

It is hard to come up with the words for how I feel today. The closest I can come is an incredible relief. It is an opportunity for me to re-establish me as a person.

This is a solid foundation to start a new journey to support myself and two children. It has been hard to make sure that the needs of my kids are met, when I have just been treading water. How do I take care of my kids when I can't do for myself?

I joined the Navy at 17 years old, ready and proud to serve. Unfortunately, since leaving the service in 2008, my training and job as a Fire Control Man left me with very limited transferable skills or job opportunities. I have been pretty much unemployed or working menial jobs. I relocated to Iowa, then Seattle with another veteran and eventually back to Michigan seeking stability where I have family.

Due to a lot of chaos in my life over the past few months I spent time at the Friendship Housing Center and then staying with friends. I felt held down, and my life was full of negativity; I was behind in my child support, lost my license and vehicle and had mounting debt.

Moving into the Veterans Transitional Housing is the positive coming through. This is an opportunity for me to get my feet firmly planted to help me turn things around in my life. It helps me reestablish purpose. I know that people see potential in me. I am starting to see it in myself.

I have been attending North Central Michigan College and have 33 credits toward my Associate of Applied Science degree. I look forward to returning in January and working on finishing my degree.

Adversity and fate may have brought me down, but I want to use this opportunity to hold my head high. I want to be able to share that with my children, that you can overcome adversity and hard times.

I am going to be thankful for every moment that I have here.



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