

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



SHAWN, CASE MANAGER

How long have you been with Accessible?

My first day was April 16, 2018.

What, in your opinion, sets Accessible Housing apart from other organizations?

The people. I remember when I first started, I was thinking, 'there's no way these people were genuinely this great.'

Everyone was so supportive, generous, thoughtful, smart, and happy to be here. I had never experienced that type of atmosphere at a job before. I kept secretly waiting for everyone's true colours to show, but it never happened. It turns out these people ARE genuinely this great!

I told my team at our Friday meeting at the end of my second week how lucky I felt to be able to work for Accessible

Housing and specifically in the Bridge to Home program. Now here I am two years later and that feeling hasn't changed.

How has working at Accessible Housing Society made an impact on you, personally?

In a word, gratitude. I have gratitude for this job for bringing me from small town Central Alberta to Calgary.

I'm grateful for a team full of competent, compassionate and collaborative coworkers. I'm grateful for being part of an organization that values and supports its staff.

You've probably heard the proverb, "Be thankful for everything because somebody somewhere is grateful for less than what you have"? I see that every day in this job and because of that I feel a sense of gratitude every single day.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

SHAWN M., CASE MANAGER, BRIDGE TO HOME

Is there an experience you've had with a client that has inspired you more than most? Why?

So many! One that really stands out is Morgan.

When we met, Morgan was recovering from throat cancer surgery and was expecting to be cancer-free and alive for years to come, but shortly after surgery a new tumor developed, forcing him into another surgery.

While recovering, another tumor was found; after just a few weeks his body was filled with tumors and his doctors told them there was nothing more they could do.

He accepted the news with dignity, while staring death and cancer straight in the eye, refusing to blink.

Morgan spent the last few months of his life living it exactly as he always had and enjoyed it as much as possible. Every time I saw him I left being blown away at his ability to remain positive and courageous in the face of his own mortality.

Do you have a client success story you'd like to share?

Again, so many!

What immediately comes to mind is the transformation of Shelley, a feisty 66-year-old woman who had spent the previous 40 or so years living the life of a vagabond. Shelley found herself sleeping in garages, abandoned cottages and whatever random building she could find from Calgary to Ontario to England and back. When she came into our program she had been living at the Drop-In Centre. She had no income, what teeth she had left were black, and it looked like she hadn't been able to wash her hair in weeks.

After somewhat of a rocky start I was able to gain her trust and together we were able to get her a stable income via the various pensions she was entitled to. She was then able to move into her own apartment which she pays for entirely independently. Not long after moving, she decided it was about time she got something done with her hair, so together we found a salon close by and made an appointment. I went with her that day and sat waiting as the hairdresser spent three hours untangling her hair before cutting and styling it.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

SHAWN M., CASE MANAGER, BRIDGE TO HOME

When it was all done and Shelley got out of the chair, the look of pride on her face and this newfound sense of self esteem she exuded made every minute I spent in that waiting room worth it and more.

The final phase of her transformation occurred not too long ago when, after months of appointments for consultations and fittings, Shelley went in for oral surgery where she had her remaining teeth removed and had dentures put in. If I thought she looked happy and proud when she got her hair done, it was nothing compared to when she was able to show off her brand new smile!

"Everyone was so supportive, generous, thoughtful, smart, and happy to be here. I feel a sense of gratitude every single day"

Today, after so many years of instability and chaos, Shelley now spends her days in her own apartment, eating anything she wants and peacefully watching Kelly & Ryan, The Price is Right and Days of Our Lives.

As Shelley's graduation from the Bridge to Home program approaches, I can't help but to think about how lucky I am to be able to witness and be part of stories like that, and how proud I am to work for an organization that makes that happen.

