

POSITIVE PEER ~ Jason Jackson

*“God flipped the switch in the back of my head
and changed my life around”*

September 30th is an important date for Jason Jackson. It marks 4 strong years of recovery. In this time he has become a CPSW and one of 25 Forensic Support Specialists in NM. He also earned his CCSS (Comprehensive Community Support Services) certification from UNM and national certification as COAPS (Certified Older Adult Peer Specialist).

Jason is tenacious when it comes to helping others. He understands his clients and never wants them to “be sorry” that they returned to use. “They are suffering from an illness, just like a cancer, and they deserve treatment and care”.

Jason himself was very fortunate with the amount of support he had from my family including his parents and his wife during his journey to recovery. They never judged him or made him feel bad about himself even in the most challenging and dark times. “Some people say I am paying it forward in this work as a Peer but it’s more selfish than that. I feel that I get so much out of it. To see someone go from rock bottom to having a job and a home is the most rewarding thing I could ever do”.

Hitting rock bottom is something Jason is familiar with. His abuse of drugs and alcohol started at an early age where it was part of the culture. But it was several injuries that got him hooked on pain killers and benzodiazepines. For years it was easy for him to get more and more pain medication and it wasn’t unusual to take 20-30 oxycodone a day. His rock bottom *was not* being severely intoxicated during his daughter’s birth. His rock bottom *was not* blacking out and getting his third DUI and running into a fence at his daughter’s school. His rock bottom **was** overdosing in bed on a combination of opiates, benzos and alcohol. It took 7 shots of Narcan to revive him and the vision of his daughter crying for the EMTs to save her daddy was a huge wake-up call. Once in the hospital he was ironically offered pain meds as he began to come out of the overdose. It was his mother who helped intercept taking them and at that point he knew enough was enough and started treatment.

He enjoyed the counseling and began to thrive in sober environments. He started attending meetings and groups and eventually started leading groups. He was encouraged to become a CPSW as he was a natural at holding space and understanding others.

Jason now works at Duke City Recovery. “I could have explored different options but I really enjoy helping people. I get so much out of it”. He does a lot of one on one work as well as outreach. “If I can get one or two people to get help it’s worth it”.

Lastly, Jason would like to share: “I appreciate all of the support and friendship I have received from OPRE, specifically Mark, Mika and Lucy. It has truly been a blessing.

Each one of them has touched my heart and given me the kind of support that has literally changed my life”.

Thank YOU for changing lives Jason and for committing to a life of service and compassion for others. The world is better because you are in it!