



Dennis *interviewed by Jill Conway*

Dennis likes to keep things simple. He has a job he likes, a nice apartment, good friends and he's the happiest he's ever been in his life, but things haven't always been so simple for Dennis Rimmer. In 2000, after an injury that ended his truck-driving career, he came to Arizona. Things spun out of control and soon a drug addiction landed him in prison for almost five years.

After being released, Dennis came to Tucson to start fresh and to get away from the life that had led to prison. He quickly learned, however, that there are many barriers to successful reentry. It can be extremely difficult for individuals with felonies to find a job or rent an apartment. According to the Re-Entry Policy Council, nearly 650,000 prisoners are released each year in the U.S., but without the ability to meet their basic needs on the outside, two thirds will return to prison within three years.

Dennis came to the Prisoner Re-Entry Partnership (PREP) after a few weeks of an unsuccessful job hunt. At PREP, he was provided with the tools he needed to find a good job, including haircuts, clothing, transportation and job leads. In addition to finding a great job at Goodwill, Dennis also moved into Catalina Transitional Housing at Primavera and participated in mentoring, a vital component of successful reentry that pairs up recently released individuals with supportive mentors.

At the end of the day, Dennis has made a new life for himself through hard work and dedication, but the community has also gained something invaluable: an active and compassionate citizen who will continue to help those in need.



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While PREP can provide a lot of support for recently released individuals, the credit for Dennis's success must be given to Dennis himself. Brandy Nixon, his case manager, enjoyed working with Dennis because of his positive approach to life. Since completing the PREP program, he has moved into permanent housing at Primavera, quit smoking and become a mentor for new PREP participants. He encourages his mentees to make good choices, to surround themselves with positive people and to follow his motto, "keep your life simple." Now that he has gotten settled here in Tucson, Dennis would like to take some computer and writing classes to help him share what he has learned through his life experiences with others who are going through similar situations.

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