

Man uses story of overcoming homelessness to reach others in Riverside, California

Kenneth Mackillop has a new purpose: conducting homeless outreach in Riverside County, California.

“If someone had told me 14 months ago that I’d have a job in homeless outreach, I wouldn’t have believed it,” said Kenneth Mackillop. “But now, I can’t imagine doing anything else.”

After experiencing homelessness for over a year in Riverside County, California, Mackillop said he lost all hope until [The Salvation Army Riverside Adult Rehabilitation Center \(ARC\)](#) and [Riverside Corps](#) became a part of his life.

With the support and guidance of The Salvation Army programs and staff, he overcame homelessness and gained stability. Now, Mackillop helps others find their way out of homelessness through his job with [the City of Riverside Homeless Program](#).

“The best choice I made was to [trust God and accept help from The Salvation Army](#),” Mackillop said. “God led me to this position where I can now help others.”

While experiencing homelessness, he received food and essentials from the Riverside ARC. During that time, he was also battling with addiction; he later joined the ARC and learned about the Riverside Corps (church), where he became a regular member.

“I found a family at the corps,” Mackillop said, “something that seemed impossible just months before.”

Riverside ARC Intake Coordinator Erik Galban said he witnessed Mackillop experiencing homelessness for months near the ARC and eventually took him to a sobering center, and later into the Riverside ARC.

“The spirit just conveyed me and said, ‘You need to do something now,’” Galban said. “It was like God placed it on me to help him.”



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Mackillop remembers the moment, too. “I felt like I had to trust Erik and let him help,” Mackillop said. “God saved my life through him that night.”

Although Mackillop didn’t complete the ARC program, he said it changed his life by teaching him how to [care for others and assist those in need](#). He achieved sobriety and began attending the Riverside Corps regularly, eventually becoming a Salvation Army soldier.

“The way he speaks now and carries himself is like night and day,” Galban said. “His energy is enough to light up a room. People are drawn to him because of it.”

As Mackillop focused on personal growth and settled into the Riverside Corps, he felt his connection to God deepen and he yearned for a new purpose and direction.

While renting a room in a supportive housing facility, Mackillop secured a job as a delivery driver for an auto parts store and became an Uber driver. He eventually moved into independent housing with roommates, where he currently resides.

He began sharing his testimony wherever he went, from the Corps to his Uber customers, [telling others how God intervened in his life](#).

“People hear his story, and they’re amazed by how far he’s come,” said Major Premek Kramerius, Riverside Corps Officer. “Men in recovery have come to the corps because of him and his ministry.”

Eventually, someone shared his story with a contact at the City of Riverside Homeless Program and gave them Mackillop’s phone number. The program contacted him, interviewed him about his experience and offered him a job.

In April 2024, Mackillop began his job conducting homeless outreach. Today, he spends his weekdays with an outreach team, helping those experiencing homelessness by addressing immediate needs and informing them about local services such as housing placement, employment development, benefits enrollment, healthcare access and mental health support.

He also works behind the scenes at the county Access Center, connecting people with the services.

He said he refers people to The Salvation Army ARC and services whenever possible.

“I know what they’re going through because I’ve been there,” Mackillop said. “I isolated myself until I found God and the support from others. Now, I tell everyone God can work in their lives, too.”

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