

Recovery and faith redefine one man's idea of success

After a series of family challenges, Atticus Firey ended up on Skid Row in Los Angeles as a teenager. He decided early on that achieving success was essential for escaping his circumstances and building a brighter future.

"I thought to myself, 'I've got to be rich and powerful someday so I never have to experience this again,'" he said.

His parents' separation and complicated custody arrangements created emotional instability and childhood trauma, he said, which drove him to rebel and eventually move out.

Determined, he began his first venture—selling vacuums door-to-door across South Los Angeles.

"It was the beginning of me building my career," he said.

One thing led to another, and some 15 years later, he appeared to have it all: financial stability from business ventures in music, entertainment, technology and consumer goods, along with the opportunity to retire at age 34 after managing and selling successful businesses.

He admitted that despite his success, he felt unfulfilled and unhappy. In an attempt to fill the void, he turned to alcohol and substances.

"My relationships with my children were affected, and I saw the severity of my situation," he said. "I had money, an empty schedule and no accountability."

In August 2022, at 51, he checked himself into [The Salvation Army Anaheim \(California\) Adult Rehabilitation Center \(ARC\)](#), where he completed a six-month residential recovery program in search of a different path.

He described the program as transformational and crucial in restoring his relationship with God by introducing him to the 12-steps of recovery and helping him understand his life through Scripture.

"Matthew 7:24-27 talks about a man who builds his house on rock versus one who builds it on sand," he said. "In retrospect, I realized when the storm came, my house was built on sand, not rock." Embracing the teachings of Jesus, he said, guided him to a more stable foundation.



“In the process of my rehabilitation, I learned how to surrender to Jesus and to allow him to [renew my heart and transform my heart](#),” he said.

Through spiritual guidance, counseling, life skills training and support groups, Firey credits the ARC as [a tool God used to show him that recovery and healing are possible](#).

“I had [a new understanding of what was important in my life](#), so I cut ties with all my previous financial entanglements and limited my contacts to my immediate family, two great friends and my pastor,” he said. “I needed to change everything and redefine what success meant to me.”

After graduating from the program and seeking a new direction, Firey became the intake coordinator at the Anaheim ARC in March 2023, where he served for eight months. He began to feel a new purpose, he said, discovering fulfillment in helping others navigate their recovery journeys.

“I’m incredibly grateful for the ARC and the spiritual awakening it provided. It helped me realize that there is a greater plan for me and that my story has a purpose.”

Atticus Firey

In October 2023, ARC Commander Major Mark Nelson hired Firey as Donor Development Manager.

“We saw Atticus as a great asset to the team not only because of his skills and knowledge in the field but because of commitment to God, recovery and The Salvation Army,” Nelson said. “He’s just grateful and passionate for his new life.”

Today, Firey oversees and enhances strategies to secure and manage donations and forms of financial support.

Nelson said Firey established a partnership with 1-800-GOT-JUNK to receive resellable items and met with executives from companies like Zara and TJMaxx to forge relationships and explore opportunities.

“By generating these resources and building collaborations, I can benefit multiple ARCs and help even more people,” Firey said. “It’s a purpose I never would have imagined.”

Driving down a hill one day, looking out over downtown Los Angeles, Firey said God confirmed his new path.

“I saw an arc extending from the city below to the top of the mountains and knew it was God showing me where I’ve come from and where my new purpose lies within the ARC,” he said.

One of the most rewarding aspects of his life today, he said, is the chance to share his story and inspire others in recovery that change is possible.

“I recently shared my testimony to men in the ARC in New York City, and it was so rewarding because afterward, there was a line of guys coming up to me and letting me know that my story inspired them or kept them from leaving the program that night,” he said.

He said his house is no longer built on sand, but on rock.

“I have a solid and spiritual foundation now,” he said. “And my purpose is reflected in John 21:15-19, where Jesus speaks about picking up your cross, following him and feeding his sheep. It’s about serving and caring for others and that’s my life now.

“[I’m incredibly grateful for the ARC and the spiritual awakening it provided](#),” Firey said. “It helped me realize that there is a greater plan for me and that my story has a purpose.”

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