

Medical Respite Program Turns Around a Man's Life

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Assembly Member James Beall, right, presents Willie J. Mackey with a Certificate of Commendation from the California State Assembly.

With no job, home, or medical insurance, Willie J. Mackey's health was quickly deteriorating. A diabetic foot ulcer, left untreated, turned into a health crisis. He eventually needed a partial foot amputation. Mackey was in his mid 50s with over 30 years of work experience, but could not find new employment. Homeless for six years, alone, unable to walk, and sleeping on a slab of rock next to Palo Alto's California Avenue's train station, Mackey's situation was dire.

"It is well documented that in 2008, 55 homeless people died on the streets of Santa Clara County," says Mackey. "When I entered the Medical Respite Program in October of 2008, I was on a path to become victim number 56."

The Medical Respite Center is a project headed by former SHC CEO Malinda Mitchell, and is financed by Stanford Hospital & Clinics, along with several hospitals in Santa Clara County, local shelter provider EHC LifeBuilders, and the County's Valley Homeless Healthcare Program. The project provides a 15-bed unit in a clean, safe place for homeless individuals with medical issues, as well as assisting with job training, meals, permanent housing, and other social services.

"The medical respite program is a great example of the good things that can happen when hospitals and other organizations work together on a common goal," said Sharon Keating-Beauregard, Director, Community Partnerships, Government and Community Relations Department at SHC.

"Stanford Hospital's community investment enables the Respite team to provide me and others with medical, mental health and social services, regular meals, and a safe, dry place to sleep," said Mackey. "I can never say thank you enough to the Stanford Community for always treating people with compassion, dignity and respect."

Thanks to the services of the Medical Respite Program, Mackey's foot healed properly, he found permanent housing, and is back on track to finding a full time job. Mackey now serves on the Santa Clara Homeless Healthcare Advisory Board and was a presenter at the National Health Care for the Homeless Council conference in San Francisco last June. He is a resource volunteer at the Silicon Valley Poverty Simulation workshops, which are part of Step-Up Silicon Valley: the Campaign to Cut Poverty in Half. Mackey also received commendations from the California State Assembly presented to him by Assembly member James Beall, from Senator Elaine Alquist, and from Santa Clara County Supervisor Liz Kniss.

"No matter where our journey takes us, the Respite team will always walk with us. This program saved my life," says Mackey.

For more information on Stanford Hospital & Clinics' community benefits programs, visit: <http://stanfordhospital.org/aboutUs/communityPartnerships.html>