



## Richard Owens

### *Housing Success*

**Richard Owens knows what it means to rebuild a life piece by piece.**

Thoughtful, self-reflective, and deeply compassionate, Richard speaks with the kind of honesty that comes from surviving hardship without losing sight of other people along the way. Even during some of the most difficult moments of his life, he remained focused on dignity, respect, and finding a path forward.

Before becoming unhoused, Richard spent years building a life with his partner, Tracy. Together, they created a home centered around family, laughter, and the everyday routines that make a life feel stable. **Richard speaks about Tracy with deep warmth, remembering her adventurous spirit and the life they shared together.**

That stability was shattered in 2024 when Tracy suffered a series of strokes and eventually passed away. **At the same time, a web of systemic failures began to unravel around Richard.** The apartment voucher connected to their housing remained under Tracy's name, and despite her prolonged hospitalization, Richard never received communication about missed certifications or mounting rental arrears. By the time he learned how serious the situation had become, the debt had grown beyond what he could realistically manage.

**Grieving the loss of his partner while simultaneously trying to navigate housing systems, paperwork, hospitals, and uncertainty pushed Richard into homelessness.** For a period of time, he lived on the street, moving between hospitals, drop-in centers, subway stations, and temporary places to rest. The traditional shelter system often felt overwhelming, especially while he was coping with grief, chronic pain, and declining health. Large congregate settings and endless administrative hurdles made it difficult to feel stable or safe.

Richard reflected on the importance of understanding how someone arrived where they are, and how healing sometimes requires retracing your steps.

Everything began to shift when Richard was connected to the Care For the Homeless' Safe Haven in the Bronx. Unlike other environments he had encountered, **Richard described the program as a place where staff treated people "like human beings."** He credits the Safe Haven team for helping him regain a sense of direction.

Richard quickly became someone who encouraged others around him. **He understood that everyone in the shelter system was navigating different struggles, but he also knew how easy it could be to lose hope while experiencing homelessness.** As he worked to secure identification documents, attend appointments, and stabilize his health, he often encouraged fellow residents to do the same, reminding them to keep moving toward their goals.

**For Richard, that determination came from finally being met with compassion and support at a moment when he needed it most.**

“I’m at peace right now,” he said.  
“All universal guards are working with me right now.”

Today, Richard is celebrating a major milestone: permanent housing. But for him, success is about more than simply having an apartment. It is about peace.

Richard continues to focus on his health, his stability, and the future he wants to build for himself. **He expressed interest in becoming a peer advocate so he can support others experiencing homelessness in the same way others supported him.**

Looking back on his journey, Richard reflected on the importance of understanding how someone arrived where they are, and how healing sometimes requires retracing your steps.

“You know the road you traveled to get where you are,” he said. “Sometimes you have to go back and pick another road.”



Richard’s story is a reminder that homelessness can happen for many different reasons. Grief, bureaucracy, health crises, loss, and systems that fail people when they are most vulnerable. But it is also a reminder that compassion, persistence, and the right support can help people find a path to stability.