



Everything changed for Richard Pearson that night in 2001 when he was shot in the head during a robbery.

Even after his recovery from devastating injuries, he was partially paralyzed on his left side, unable to move his toes, arm, and hand. Determination drove him and he was able to walk out of the hospital two months later. “With a walker,” says Richard, “but I walked out.”

Returning to ordinary life, however, was more challenging than he expected. At 31, he wasn’t able to live independently. “It’s like I had a stroke,” he says.

For awhile he lived with friends or family members but “that didn’t seem to be working.” He had a seizure, fell down his brother’s stairs, and suffered a concussion that sent him back to the emergency room. After spending several weeks in a rehab facility, Richard says the only place he could find to live was a nursing home. A temporary stay turned into 14 long months. There just were no other options.

“I didn’t like the way people were being treated,” he recalls. “I wanted to leave so bad. I wanted to get out on my own.”

A social worker told him about Accessible Space and Blackbird Apartments, a development especially for very low income people with physical disabilities.

It seemed too good to be true. In addition to a private one-bedroom apartment, he would have access to laundry facilities, a community room, even an outdoor patio and gas grill.

Hopeful, he filled out the paperwork and waited—and the good news wasn’t long in coming. He finally had his own place.

His one-bedroom home provides the dignity of freedom. No longer confined to the schedules and rules of an institution, he can live each day making choices— getting physical therapy, riding the bus to Walmart, or spending time with other residents. “We go down to community room and play cards. Everybody’s nice to everybody.”

“I have friends here,” he says. “If they don’t see me in a few days, they’ll call and make sure I’m all right. If I need something, they’ll go to the store for me.” Cleaning assistance is available, too.

“I don’t want for anything right now, to tell the truth,” he says of his new home, “I’m in the best place I’ve been in my life. I don’t have to worry about anything.”

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