



# Georgia Justice Project

An unlikely mix of lawyers, social workers and a landscape company

Thursday, July 29, 2010

## Antoine's Story - A Client's Perspective

Celebrating eleven years clean, and Antoine Stevens still calls himself a newcomer (N.B. Antoine Stevens is not our client's real name).

That's because Antoine recognizes that "to get to the 12th year, I've got 365 days to deal with." So he's learned to have a plan -- and a backup plan -- for each day: "I've got short-term goals and long-term goals. You plan your week; you plan your budget; then everything fits easy. If you don't have a plan, it's hard."

After years of addiction and the cycle of crime-and-punishment that comes with it, Antoine doesn't take anything for granted. "Recovery is for life," he says. "Only 10 percent of it is the substance. The other 90 percent is behavior. I know I can still learn more and more."

In the late 1990s, Antoine was on probation and working for New Horizon Landscaping when he "got in a little trouble," he says. "I found out I could pass the parole drug test," he explains, "but I couldn't pass the one at Georgia Justice Project. When I failed, they asked me if I needed help. I knew I had to do something. I figured I'd rather be in rehab than in the penitentiary."

He completed an intensive eight-month, inpatient rehab program, one he calls the toughest in Georgia. "I thought they were crazy at first," he jokes. "But I hung in. After six months clean, I started seeing blessings coming."

"I had a good foundation coming up," he says, but he credits Georgia Justice Project with getting him back on track. "When I didn't love myself, they loved me, and I didn't understand that. They sent me to school and used the resources they had for me. They show you like it is--they show you love, but it's also tough love. They set you up with all the resources, but it's up to the individual to take advantage of the opportunity. So I went to rehab and never looked back."

Still, Antoine takes it day by day. "I've got my network, and I stay connected with things that keep me clean. I go to meetings, get on my network. If I'm going through something, I can call them. The urge can come up but it's just a thought. Once I tell somebody, I'm through with it. It's a burden off me."

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## About Me

### Georgia Justice Project

is an unlikely mix of lawyers, social workers and a landscape company. We defend people accused of crimes and, win or lose, we stand with our clients while they rebuild their lives. We believe this is the only way to break the cycle of crime and poverty.

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In addition to working at New Horizon, Antoine is a regular around the Justice Project office and at functions. "Georgia Justice is like my second family," he says. "The staff, the Board, they all know me. They don't see me as a convict or an addict. Everybody respects me. I try to be there to show my appreciation.

"I'm grateful – at my age, a black man, an addict – I'm in good health, no disease. That's a blessing in itself. I could have AIDS. I could be locked up or dead. God's brought me this far. He's still got more for me to do. Even when you fall short, he'll make a way for you."

While he describes being clean as "a beautiful thing," Antoine also points out that "it's a matter of making my choices and being happy with the choices I've made. I try to be humble and show by example. Others might catch on. They might think, 'If my brother can do it, so can I.'"

Looking back, Antoine says, "It was a blessing that I failed that drug test. Doug (Ammar) said to me, 'Antoine, when are you going to grow up?' Then, cocaine was my girlfriend. Now I'm a trusting servant of God. I have to set an example for my grandkids, give them hope, and keep doing the right thing. One day at a time."

"I choose not to fall weak," he declares. "I'm going to prove to the system that I'm not a statistic."

*Posted by Georgia Justice Project at 7:56 PM*

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