



Jack and his dog, Pilot, have been part of Gardenview Tiny Home Village since it opened in 2021. The village provides shelter for people over 55 or those with medical conditions, offering support to help them build hopeful futures. Jack recently qualified for permanent housing and has now moved into his own place.

Jack's childhood was unstable—his mother worked at a carnival, and by age three, he entered foster care, constantly moving between homes. As an adult, he spent years living outdoors with his two beloved dogs, Pilot and Bandit. Bandit, who recently passed away, helped Jack connect with others, easing the isolation of homelessness.

Despite frequent offers of shelter, Jack often declined, believing others needed it more. He took on the role of peacekeeper in encampments,

creating safe spaces, particularly for vulnerable women. His experiences taught him that survival isn't just about oneself—it's about looking out for others.

Jack dreams of a home with a fenced yard for Pilot but acknowledges the bittersweet nature of his transition to permanent shelter without Bandit. He encourages others to focus on needs over wants, finding fulfillment in simplicity.

Grateful for the support of Gardenview Village, Jack is committed to giving back even after moving. His case manager, Heidi Theisen, sees his compassion and potential to help others. Jack agrees, promising to return weekly to assist with tasks like taking out the trash.

His journey is more than finding a home—it's about resilience, connection, and kindness. Even as he moves forward, he remains dedicated to uplifting those still facing homelessness, proving that small acts of care can make a lasting difference.





Tim at Gardenvue Village

TIM'S JOURNEY

I guess my whole story of how I ended up here starts when my best friend and soulmate was taken from me because of a flu shot she received. She unexpectedly had a reaction and died and I was in a state of shock and I wasn't prepared to deal with such a significant loss. I wasn't prepared financially, physically, or mentally and it wasn't long after my loss that me and my kitty became homeless. I was seriously hurting, my heart was broken and I wanted so badly to join my wife.

I even considered going to Deception pass and jumping off the bridge, but I had a kitten named Trouble by my wife and I couldn't abandon our kitty. So I refrained from taking that last step off the bridge and got a harness and leash and me and Trouble kitty took up residence in my Jeep Cherokee.

We stayed at a couple of parking lots in Bellingham for about a year and a half before Road2Home and Opportunity Council were able to help us out with shelter. Until I moved into the tiny homes, I didn't even have a clue that there was even a place like this available. I have to say that I am so very grateful for this place and for everything you people do for me.

When I moved in I was required to visit a case manager once every other week. Since then I've got financial assistance, medicare dentures, glasses, hearing aids, and my life has become much better. I am able to live with some dignity. I am learning how to cope with my loss, and go on living with nobody passing judgment on me.

I had a severe heart attack soon after taking residence at the tiny homes, but the heart attack was a wake up call and I've quit smoking cigarettes, I don't drink booze, I eat healthier, I sold my jeep and got an e-bike which turns out to be a lot of fun! So I'm getting plenty of exercise and I am really close to getting an apartment.

I am Happy, Happy now. Thank you for all you do.



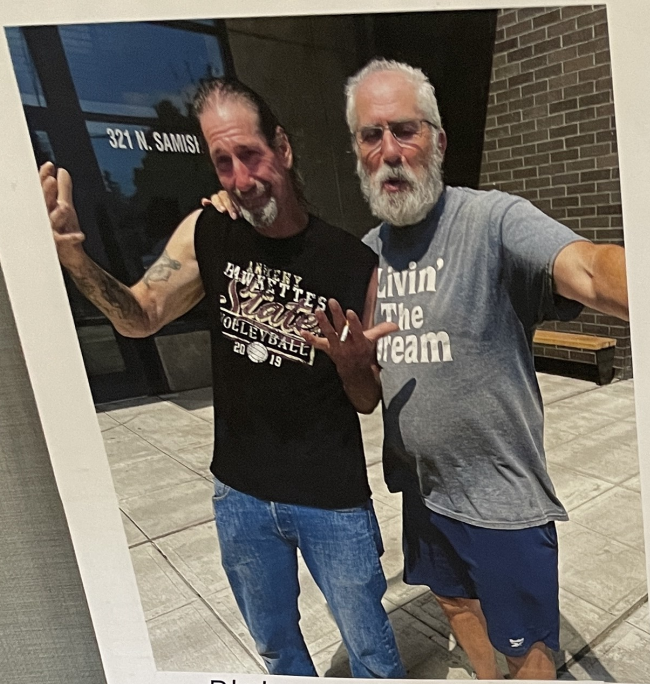


At 60, Splash has faced many twists and turns. Raised in California, he earned his nickname as a child when he nearly drowned. Splash moved furniture for a while and subsequently moved to Arizona to live with his sister. He built a restaurant career in Arizona and later Minnesota, where he lived for 23 years to be near his son, Nicholas. Though separated from Nicholas' mother, Splash remained a supportive father, cheering his son on in wrestling and baseball tournaments. Today, they talk almost daily.

Three years ago, hip trouble ended Splash's work life. Unable to pay rent, he stayed with family in Whatcom County until his sister's illness left him homeless. For a year, he slept at Bellingham's bus station, relying on food banks and strangers' kindness. Holding a sign reading, "Need new hip, please help," he was met with unexpected generosity.

His life changed in September 2024, when Road2Home's Ally Program Manager, Bart, helped him secure a tiny home at Gardenview Village. "I'm happy here," Splash says. "I'm at peace. Nobody messes with me." And though delays in his hip surgery are frustrating, Splash stays strong, refusing narcotics and holding on to hope. Once healed, he plans to find permanent housing and return to work.

He visits friends still struggling downtown, understanding their hardships more deeply now. Though he dreams of having a cat, he's grateful for the roof over his head and the support he's found. Thanks to Gardenview Village, Splash has a place to heal and rebuild—a path to stability, dignity, and hope.



Blake and his Ally, Mark

BLAKE HAS ARRIVED

When Blake was 15, his parents informed him they were moving. There was one catch, however: he wouldn't be coming with them. Blake's parents told him he had 30 days to find another place to live, or to continue renting the unit they were about to leave. His life became a painful journey of survival marked by alienation, substance abuse, violence and recurring bouts of homelessness. In a world where no one seemed to care about his well-being, Blake made his own way.

Over the decades, he lived in various areas of the country, doing carpentry and manual labor while living in hotels, motels, or wherever he could afford.

Eventually returning to the Everett area in 1980, Blake married in 1985 and became a father. When the relationship ended, he was unable to see his children, and his wife eventually went to prison for murdering a man. Blake attempted suicide by shooting himself in the head.

After a period of wandering Western Washington on his bicycle, Blake arrived in Bellingham in 2021. He stayed at the downtown Base Camp for a time, but when he felt he wasn't getting enough help finding housing, he left for a winter campsite by a river. Police showed up after three days, giving him a week to relocate. The next day, law enforcement returned with a social worker who assured him they could find housing. That's when Blake was referred to Gardenview Village.

He spent a year and a half at Gardenview Village, getting his anger and substance abuse further under control while learning to trust people who actually cared about his well-being. While he is not sober today, his substance use is dramatically reduced.

While at Gardenview Village, Mark — a retired Bellingham School District teacher — was paired with Blake as an ally to provide emotional and practical support, like taking him to appointments and running errands. Not every allyship blossoms into true friendship, but Mark's presence was a game-changer for Blake's ability to accept help.

With Mark's help, Blake has left Gardenview after receiving a voucher from the Bellingham Housing Authority, and now has his own apartment in Samish Commons.

Blake's case manager, Carol Oulette, is the first to attest to this. "Relationships wound, and relationships heal. With Mark and Blake, it's gone to really high levels because Mark has invested himself in Blake. And I think Blake has been able to respond to that, and it's just been beautiful."

Permission was received from Mike Sato, the Salish Current to re-print this excerpt written by their reporter Matt Benoit in the 10-26-2023 edition of the Current.