



# Sam's Story

When Sam lost his dad, he thought he could make it. As hard as it was to cope with his loss, his mom was still there for him. But not long after, Sam's mother told him she had AIDS.

Soon, Sam's mother had passed away, too. Without any other relatives, he felt his life was over. Everything he ever knew – his family, security, sense of belonging – was suddenly gone. Desperation and fear took over, and he felt he had no other options. He was only 17 years old, and he was homeless.

Sam thought he had no choice but to try to live on the streets. He figured it wouldn't be that tough if he just kept moving. During the day he could roam the streets, and then he could hang out in coffee shops and bus stations at night. He made it through the first days without too much trouble – sheer willpower got him through. But the stress of finding a safe place to sleep soon started to be more than he could handle.

A Covenant House outreach van passed by at 2:30 a.m., just when Sam was ready to give up. Our outreach workers asked Sam if he wanted help, and talked with him for awhile until he felt comfortable. They gave him a sandwich and something to drink and explained that Covenant House could help. Sam accepted a ride to the shelter, and soon realized it was a far better option than living on the streets. He found new hope.

Things still aren't perfect in Sam's life. He faces huge challenges that a young person his age isn't usually prepared for and, like most young people, will likely stumble and flourish in unexpected ways. But what Covenant House offers Sam, and other kids like him, is the absolute respect and unconditional love they need to know they can make it.

