



UNITED WE FIGHT. UNITED WE WIN.

LIVE UNITED®

James Achterkirch enlisted in the Army at age 18 but he was honorably discharged six months later after an accident left him with a broken hip. He moved back into his childhood home, but a short time later, James and his parents had a falling out. It was at that time that James decided to move to La Crosse, despite having nowhere to live.

James chose homelessness for the next 10 years. When the weather would allow, he lived outside, but he also spent nights at the Warming Center and United Way funded partner the Salvation Army of La Crosse.

While James was staying at the Salvation Army, another shelter resident asked him if he had heard of “RAVE.” RAVE, or Recovery Avenue, is a mental health drop-in center that receives funding from Great Rivers United Way. RAVE is an accepting and safe space to seek resources and receive support from peers who have lived experience with mental health recovery.

Thanks to RAVE and the Wisconsin Department of Veteran’s Affairs Veteran’s Outreach Recovery Program, James learned

of several opportunities available to Veterans and civilians alike, including housing through a Couleecap program United Way funds.

James’ mental health diagnosis includes Depression, Anxiety, and ADHD. Every morning, he wakes up, takes his medication, and – more often than not – heads to RAVE. James has been off the streets for just over 18 months, and while he needs a cane to make the 21-step hike up to his second-floor apartment, it’s *home, sweet, home*.

Just like someone did for him two years ago, James tries to get the word out about RAVE and the other programs that have helped him. He acknowledges that choosing to live on the streets was not the best decision he has ever made, and he calls the choice to help himself was a “momentous shift in thought.”

RAVE’s impact is great, and it would not be possible without your support. In 2017, RAVE served 510 people who dropped in for more than 5,500 visits. It is not uncommon for sign-ins to reach 20-25 people in one day.

United we win. We have one life. To live better, we must Live United.

5,500

In 2017, 510 people “dropped in” to RAVE an estimated 5,500 times.



Great Rivers United Way