

Personal Story: *Ronald Parks*



“This is my home
now... I love Buffalo.”



A native of Patterson New Jersey, Ronald Parks immediately delves into the make-up of his family. A brother of ten siblings; Ronald hails from a large family. He also discloses that he is a twin. Ronald is a people person. He tells of his favorite memory of watching movies projected between buildings in Patterson New Jersey on summer nights with “all the people”. He also tells of family reunions where his mother “cooked a lot of food and took a lot of jokes”. He explains, “My mom had to cook in big pots... people would tease that they were so big you had to get in them to wash them”. He goes on, “We didn’t have a lot of money but we had a lot of love”.

As he aged he attended Eastside High School. “You know *Lean on Me*”. Ron explains that the 1989 movie *Lean on Me* was actually based on his high school at a time when he was attending. “Mr. Clark chained us in school because we were bad”. He states that the movie was very accurate, that the students, prior to Mr. Clark’s arrival would go to school to do, “Gym, lunch, and whatever we wanted.” He speaks of Mr. Clark, “Had he not been there I probably would have been in jail a long time ago.”

After graduating from high school Ronald attended Ramapo College for 2 years and, after the birth of his first child, decided to join the Army. Ronald was deployed to Germany in 1975 he explains, “I loved Germany it was the most beautiful place I ever saw”. Upon return in 1977 Ronald studied for one more year and decided it necessary to get a job. “When I came back from the Army things weren’t the same... it was like we had grown up and changed”. He explains that he had grown apart from his wife. Upon separation Ronald lost visitation of his son and fell into drug and alcohol abuse. Tumbling in and out of rehab six times Ronald made his way from Patterson New Jersey to Bath New York where he heard of the WNYVHC.

Ronald explains of arriving at WNYVHC in 2005, “I felt like Columbus discovering some new land”. He was provided with new clothing, bedding, and furniture and with Shelter plus Care assistance. He explains, “You can’t do everything yourself”. He now lives a completely substance free life. Back to his old habit of being a people person, Ron enjoys spending his time with the “Three Rs”... Ronald, Ronald, and Reggie, a self-named group of three of his closest friends at the Coalition. They all enjoy fishing, baseball, and visiting the water front together.