

# Michael Manigault

## A Story of Collaboration, Teamwork and Transformation

When helping-professionals work together as a team, great things can happen! Michael L. Manigault is a recipient of such teamwork. His story and personal transformation is evidence of the positive change that can take place when dedicated, knowledgeable and committed individuals get together.

Michael was incarcerated for 3 years when he was seventeen and then released into the Young Offender Parole and Reentry Services program (YOPRS). While in YOPRS, Michael was under intense supervision from his parole officer, Tony Garcia. Because of his crime, Michael was not allowed to return to his hometown of Charleston, SC, and was ostracized by his family. After his release from prison on October 15, 2014, Michael sought shelter in a transition home and from local shelters in the Greenville area, but none were good fits for him. Due to Michael's mental illness, he was unable to sustain shelter or employment. In the summer of 2015 Michael slept at nights on a park bench in Falls Park in Greenville. He found a place to shower, wash his clothes, and have a much needed sandwich at The Place of Hope, a United Ministries program, under the direction of Nick Bush.

Due to the efforts of Officer Garcia, Michael enrolled into the SC Works program called "GEAR" for the purpose of pursuing his GED. Because Michael tested on a 9<sup>th</sup> grade high school level, he required classroom instruction to achieve his goal. Despite his homelessness, Michael continued his efforts in the classroom at the Sullivan Center with the generous support of their staff.

During a brief stay in the Miracle Hill Rescue Mission, Michael came in contact with Mary Kay Campbell, director of Homeless Services at Greenville Mental Health Center. Along with Mary Kay's staff, Michael began the receiving mental health services and treatment he needed. Michael also received medical health care through the benevolent services of New Horizons Family Health Services.

In the fall of 2015 Mary Kay presented Michael's needs before a group of community professionals who provide services for the homeless. A plan was devised to provide temporary shelter for Michael until he could receive income and permanent housing. Through the generosity of a benefactor, Michael was placed into a motel temporarily. In the meantime, Mary Kay's staff worked diligently with the Social Security Administration to gain disability income for Michael. And through the joint efforts of United Housing Connections, the Greenville County Housing Authority, and Homes of Hope, Michael was provided permanent housing in March 2016.

When Michael was homeless, Pastor Todd Perkins of East North Church in Greenville befriended him and brought him into the fellowship of the church. To this day, Michael joyfully serves the youth and children of his church and helps clean the church facilities every Friday. In his free time, Michael visits friends that include the merchants and police officers in downtown Greenville. He hangs out at his favorite coffee shops and has become adept at climbing the rocks at Falls Park in Greenville – a place where he had formerly slept at night on a bench. These days,



GMHC staff with Michael left to right: James Butler, Von Reynolds, Michael Manigault, Mary Kay Campbell

you may even see Michael riding his bicycle down the streets of Greenville, wearing his signature suit and tie, bandana and Fedora, listening with ear phones to his therapeutic music.

In the spring of 2016, Michael's parole officer, Tony Garcia, nominated Michael for an annual award presented to an individual who exceeded all expectations while on parole. Michael was selected as the recipient for the Upstate of South Carolina and on May 9, 2016 Michael was accompanied by Tony and his Greenville Mental Health Center caseworker, Von Reynolds, to receive his award from the SC Governor, Nikki Haley. Michael's story is a wonderful testament to the commitment of a team of dedicated individuals. And a testament to his own discipline and commitment to transform his life into an amazing story of success!



Tony Garcia, Von Reynolds, Michael Manigault and Governor Nikki Haley

*(Note: The Greenville Mental Health Center received written permission from Michael to write and publish this article on this website.)*