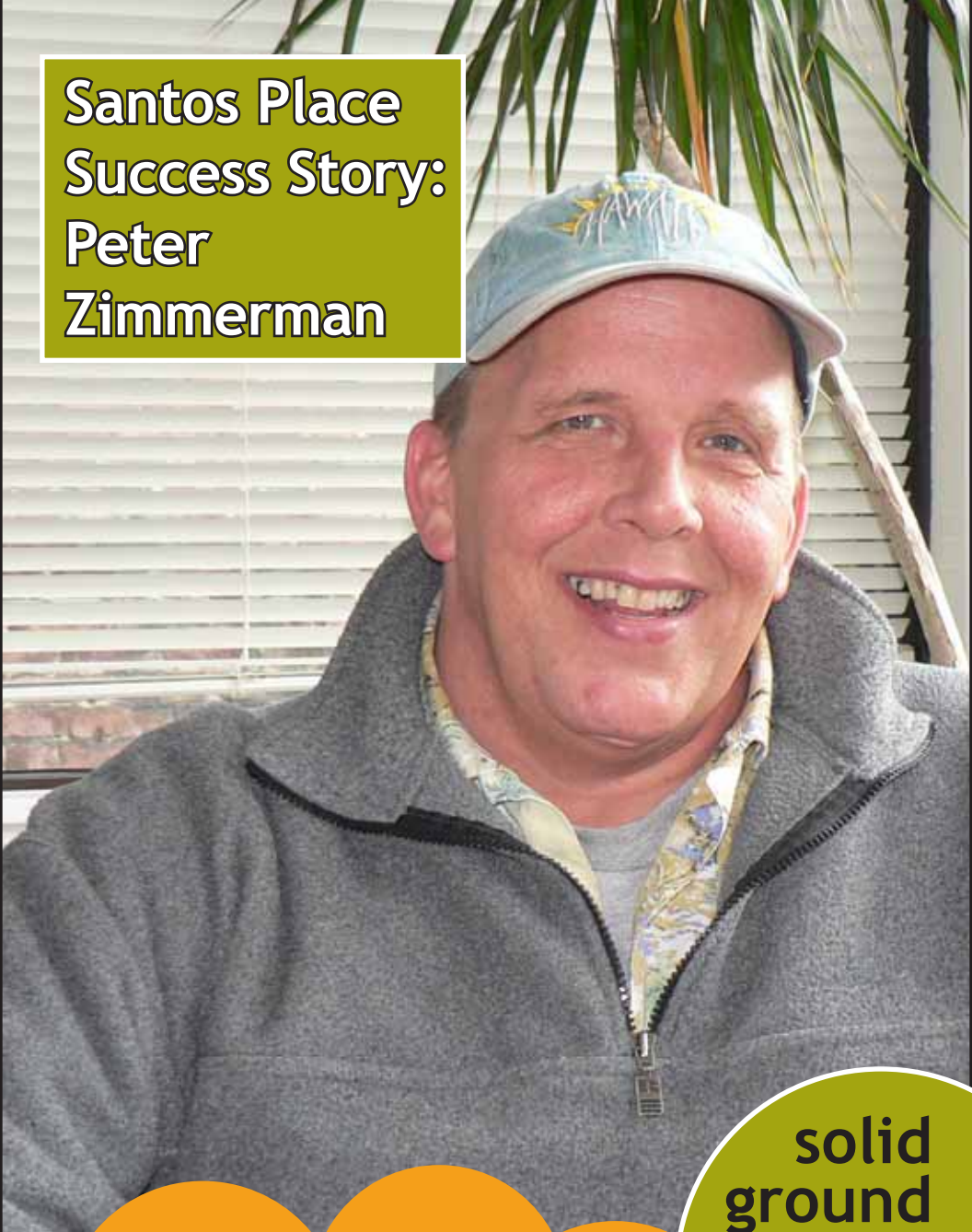


**Santos Place
Success Story:
Peter
Zimmerman**



SUMMER 2008



Building community to end poverty

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Santos Place Success Story: Peter Zimmerman

In the not too distant future, Peter Zimmerman will be leaving Santos Place, graduating from the transitional housing program for single adults at Sand Point where he got his life back on track. But, for now, sitting near the top of Seattle Housing Authority's waiting list for a subsidized apartment unit, he is torn.

"I don't want to leave Santos Place," he recently explained. "I like it here." For Zimmerman, Santos Place has been a place to heal and engage in the world in a new way.

Zimmerman began drinking at a young age and progressed rapidly to full-blown alcoholism. After 28 years of abuse, the last four "camped" homeless in the Oregon woods, he realized he "couldn't do what I was doing anymore." He moved back to Seattle, ending up in a rehab center. But it was almost too late. His liver failed and he nearly died at Harborview.

After a month in the hospital, Zimmerman moved in with his brother. He was placed on the liver transplant list and was told he had three months to get a new liver or he would be dead.

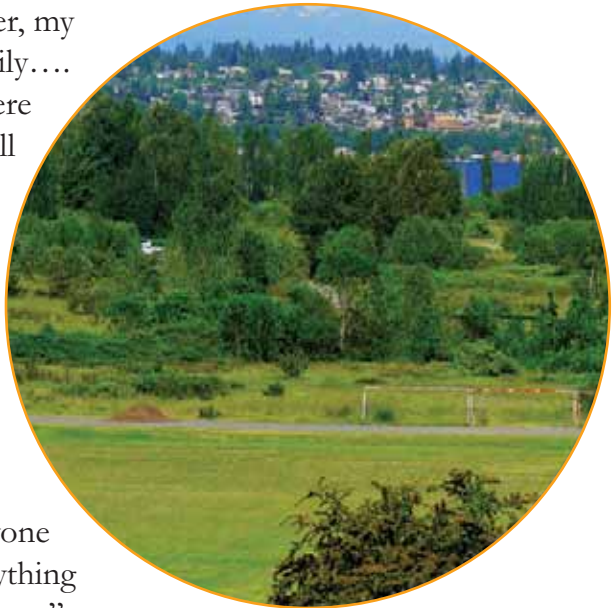
About a year later and still holding on the transplant list, his case manager told him about Santos Place. "She said, 'There is a place that would be just perfect for you.' She was right!" he said.

Zimmerman remembered the area well and now credits the calm, quiet beauty of the park and the supportive relationship developed among Santos Place staff and residents with setting the stage for his miraculous recovery. "It is quiet and peaceful but close enough to all the services I need. There is a 77-acre

front yard that you don't have to mow! But, really, I am blessed because the minimum amount of effort I've put forth has gotten me here. I'm not going to take credit for everything good that has happened to me since I've been at Santos Place, it has taken just a little bit of effort on my part. I'm really just one of the worker bees aiding my recovery. I used to be bull-headed, hard-headed. Now, I do the next thing indicated by my doctors, my brother, my case manager, my family....

The programs here were presented to me and all I had to do was say 'Yes!'"

"Anybody can be unhappy no matter where they are at. So I look around here and say, 'You know, let's go for it.' And, with the help of everyone at Solid Ground, everything I've done has worked out."



The backyard at Santos Place

Zimmerman learned how to shop and eat better on a budget through cooking classes presented by Solid Ground's Operation Frontline. A bike enthusiast, he rides almost daily on the Burke Gilman trail and has fixed up bikes for other Sand Point residents. He writes for the Santos Place newspaper and has accepted leadership positions as a volunteer member of the Santos Place Executive Committee

and a member of the Solid Ground Advisory Council. He has also joined in statewide homelessness organizing efforts.

Zimmerman credits the local community for playing a big role in his progress as well. “We have a community resource room here that is staffed by volunteers from the neighborhood. A couple of friends and myself go to the AA meeting on the top of the hill, called the View Ridge Big Book Study. I’ve met a lot of neat people from up there. We were welcomed with open arms! They treated us like they’ve known us forever.”

And through his stay at Santos, as he became more active and involved, something miraculous happened: his liver regenerated and healed itself.

Zimmerman said that almost dying turned his life around. It changed his attitude and gave him a chance to rebuild a healthy life. “You can make yourself miserable, or you can make yourself happy. I spent a lot of time doing the former, and I like it better this way,” he said. “I used to think everything was permanent, that my situation was never going to get better. But that has proven wrong and that has changed my outlook in general.

“I think a lot of what changed about me is that failure is not such a dirty, filthy word. I am willing to try something and fail miserably at it now and not feel bad about it...I was willing to do just about anything I had to do to get to move here to Santos Place. Now, I don’t know what life has in store for me in the future, but I am up for it.”

