

SHEDX

From Enslaved to Empowered

My name is Mal. I grew up in Onehunga, I have two older brothers and we were raised by our mum. My dad was an alcoholic and he was very abusive towards my mum, they ended up getting a divorce when I was aged 5.

In my teenage years, I never really saw eye to eye with my mum as I always felt she was too strict on me. I would say I was rebellious, I always thought she loved my brothers more than she loved me. I was a daddy's girl more than anything, but at one point there I even had a fight with my dad and ran away from home.

I ended up living on the streets in the city where I met up with a group of girls who took me in. We all did what we needed to do to survive, but after spending a week with these girls, it dawned on me I had been ungrateful and selfish. Seeing that these girls had absolutely nowhere to go, I felt like I was taking everything for granted. So I decided to make amends with both my parents and come back home.

At the age of 16, I got in trouble again as I took the fall for a friend who had been staying at our place, she had left marijuana in my room and my mum found it and kicked me out.

I moved in with my friend and her mum and needed to find a job as they were already struggling financially. So my mate took me to where she was working and I got in straight away. Escorting wasn't the type of job I would have expected for myself, but I did what I had to do to earn my stay.

During this time I started taking drugs to escape the reality of things and to get through what needed to be done. However, I began to hate it and realised at one point I was so much better than this, and believed I shouldn't be living this way. I decided to leave at the age of 17-18 years and just walked out on the job, didn't tell anyone anything, just left...vanished as I'd had enough.

At age 18, I managed to complete a course and score myself a job. Things were going well for me, I met my partner and we settled down and moved in together. A few years went by and I fell pregnant. I was happy as, but three months into the pregnancy, I lost the baby. I took this really hard and began to feel more dependent on methamphetamine to get me through each work day. With the drugs came the drinking and

with the drinking came depression. I was good at hiding this from friends and family, so good in fact that I had kept it a secret for more than seven years. I was in such a dark place at this time, I even tried to take my own life... which obviously didn't work!

Once again, I'd had enough, I started to realise that what I was doing was not only hurting myself, but it involved my family as I was taking money from them to feed my habit, so I came clean to my partner. I felt like it was time to make a change.

A colleague at work convinced me to come to ShedX, out the back of Papsda's parking lot. It took a lot of courage for me to show up and when I finally did, I almost turned around and left but then my friend turned up and saw me so then I felt I had to go in and participate. Since then, I have never stopped.

Being part of this positive community has...

- Helped me accomplish personal goals. I participated in my first boxing match in October 2015, something that I never thought I'd do—but I did;
- It's helped me lose weight, all up 15kg;
- I have stayed off drugs and even quit smoking;
- I have competed in little challenges: Tough Guy/ Gal, 360 Trail Buster;
- I went on the 360 Connect Camp my first camping trip ever!

But the most important thing about getting involved in ShedX and this community was creating relationships with the people. I am so grateful for Luke Gagamoe who is my life mentor, who guides me and gets me to explore options and set goals. I have made new friends who had faith in me, and who I now can't get rid of and I can honestly say that I am happy and loving life and I have a sense and feeling that I finally belong.

Moving forward, I decided to share my story to encourage you that no matter where you are in life, how low or how dark things get there is always a light. Surround yourself with positive people, be part of a positive community. I know it helps because I am the example of how it changes lives.



Mal (foreground) at ShedX Leaders "Team Meeting" at Muriwai Beach—March 2016



Mal & Trena—Step Up & Go 2015

WHERE TO GET HELP IN NEW ZEALAND

If you need urgent help, please call one of the following numbers.

- **LIFELINE** (open 24/7) 0800 543 354
- **DEPRESSION HELPLINE** (open 24/7) 0800 111 757
- **HEALTHLINE** (open 24/7) 0800 611 116
- **SAMARITANS** (open 24/7) 0800 726 666
- **SUICIDE CRISIS HELPLINE** (open 24/7) 0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO). This is a service for people who may be thinking about suicide, or those who are concerned about family or friends.
- **YOUTHLINE** (open 24/7) 0800 376 633. You can also text 234 for free between 8:00am and midnight, or email talk@youthline.co.nz
- **0800 WHATSUP CHILDREN'S HELPLINE** phone 0800 9428 787 between 1:00pm and 10:00pm on weekdays and from 3:00pm to 10:00pm on weekends. Online chat is available from 7:00pm to 10:00pm every day at www.whatsup.co.nz.
- **KIDSLINE** (open 24/7) 0800 543 754. This service is for children aged 5 to 18. Those who ring between 4:00pm and 9:00pm on weekdays will speak to a Kidsline buddy. These are specially trained teenage telephone counsellors.
- **YOUR LOCAL RURAL SUPPORT TRUST** 0800 787 254 (0800 RURAL HELP)
- **ALCOHOL DRUG HELPLINE** (open 24/7) 0800 787 797. You can also text 8691 for free.

For further information, contact the Mental Health Foundation's free Resource and Information Service (09 623 4812).

LIVING THE DREAM

Martin Luther King is well-known for his famous speech, "I have a dream". This belief has often led to the beginning of something quite special.

ShedX, which first started as an experimental project to reach the community and show the love of Jesus, is no exception. It aims to meet a need in our local community, which is to exercise more, eat better, and to provide a safe place for anyone who comes. Initially the challenge was just to get anyone to come along, now however, the challenge is how to put everything together, and to have enough trainers/spiritual mentors, who all volunteer their time, to do it.

WHAT IS SHEDX?

We are the occupiers of the shed at the back of Papsda in the car park. We run programmes six days each week which include cardio/strength boot camps, Box-Fit, Zumba, and a couple of dance classes either before work at 5:30am or later in the day. Each session closes with a prayer, and we have over 100 people who attend these programmes each week. People's lives are changing though basic principles like creating a safe place, showing Jesus' love, and by being a supportive group of people who believe, through sharing and caring, that a true friend is always available to meet the need. ShedX comes under the umbrella of Papsda community ministry. You have seen some of our attenders baptised or tell their story at Papsda. We are ShedX, believing that we strive to do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31), and are boastful of the cross of Jesus Christ (Galatians 6:14).

This ministry has people who are not yet ready to attend church, but happy to text us a, "Happy Sabbath," message. This ministry could not run without the prayers and support of 360 Community Trust and the wider Papsda family. We are living the dream!

Mathew Carter

