"No matter what life gives you, you keep on rolling!"

Sometimes, all you need is a friend. For 69-year-old Nolen, finding a friend at Tempe Community Action Agency gave him a reason to keep trying.

Before coming to TCAA, Nolen had been experiencing homelessness for nearly a year. Rising rent costs had pushed him out of his apartment, and with a fixed income, he had nowhere to turn. He spent that year staying on the streets and in unsafe environments, facing challenges like poor nutrition, lack of medical care, and frequent danger. He was even robbed and assaulted. On top of that, mobility issues made daily life more difficult.

He was eventually referred to TCAA by a street outreach worker who connected him to shelter and services. At first, he wasn't sure it would help. He had been asked to leave his last program after an altercation and expected the same thing to happen again. Still, after learning about the supportive programs available through TCAA, he decided to give it a try.

Once enrolled in TCAA's I-HELP Emergency Shelter Program, Nolen began to regain stability. He received safe shelter, daily meals, hygiene supplies, and transportation assistance. Through case management, he was connected to healthcare services to address chronic conditions like high blood pressure and arthritis. He also began working with a housing navigator to explore permanent housing options and applied for Ozanam.

When Nolen first arrived, he felt ready to give up. Over time, though, that began to change. With encouragement and consistent support, he started to trust the process and make progress toward his goals. He applied for his birth certificate, attended medical appointments, and began to show a renewed sense of hope.

“Every time we asked him to do something, he did it,” said TCAA Case Manager Kandes Misik. “It may have taken a few times and some coaching, but he absolutely blew me away at the difference in him. Now he refers to me as his ‘best friend’ because I was able to help him through most of this.”

Through his journey, Nolen has found a new motto to live by: “No matter what life gives you, keep on rolling.” He shared that he is extremely happy with TCAA’s I-HELP program because the team took the time to listen and meet him where he was at “It’s people like him that really make what I do worth it,” said Misik.

Now, Nolen is preparing to move into permanent housing, which was a step that once felt out of reach. His story is a reminder that progress often begins with one act of trust and one person who’s willing to believe in you.