



Anchor House teacher's remarkable success story

By Rob Virtue on October 25, 2010 10:31 AM | Tagged with: Aggie Chikiwa, Anchor House, Canning Town, National Training Awards

After an injury at work Aggie Chikiwa ended up separated from his family and sleeping rough in a van.



Eight years later he is an inspiration to the people he teaches life-changing skills to at Canning Town's Anchor House, the charity which helped him get back on his feet.

Last week, his remarkable journey was recognised at the National Training Awards, where he picked up regional and national prizes.

"I was totally overwhelmed," said Aggie, 51, after winning the awards at The Brewery, in Chiswell Street, where Anchor House also picked up two prizes. "It's more motivation to keep doing the best I can.

"This job is not about money. It's about changing people's perceptions of themselves and making sure they make the best out of what we can offer."

Determined Aggie arrived in England when his wife secured a teaching contract and the family moved over from Zimbabwe.

Aggie, who was a headmaster at two schools in Africa, found two jobs – an evening role as a street cleaner and an early shift delivering furniture.

This left him to get two to three hours sleep before heading out to a part-time university course.

The tough workload resulted in an accident when a sofa fell on him and he lost the use of a hand for seven months.

During that time he was forced to go on the dole to pay the bills, but when his landlord refused to accept benefit payments he sent his children to live with friends and relatives.

His wife stayed in student accommodation, but Aggie had to sleep in his van.

After a month of sleeping rough he heard about Anchor House, a hostel for homeless people, and applied to stay. After winning a place, his fortunes changed dramatically.

It allowed him somewhere to complete his studies and that year, in 2006, he earned a degree from the University of London.

He added: "I was delighted to get a roof over my head.

"While I was there I started helping the other residents. As people got jobs, they were asked how they did this and many mentioned my name."

His hard work saw him earn a job at Anchor House, where he is now head of education and training.

He began a course teaching skills in construction, which has so far benefited 2,500 people.

"The scheme brings the residents and the community together, which is a big part of the Anchor House ethos," said Aggie.



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This helped the charity win The Michael Whippman Award in 2007.

Aggie, who has now secured accommodation where he lives with his reunited family, said it was important to give back to Anchor House.

"If there wasn't programme like this I know for sure I would be in a much worse scenario," he said.

Go to anchorhouseuk.org.

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