

MY

Who faces hunger in Arizona?

STORY



My name is Dimetrias. I am 26 years old and seriously mentally ill. I was born to a drug-addicted mother and, because of the health issues that came with that, I got Social Security Disability and other benefits. When I turned 18, I lost my benefits and had to reapply as an adult. But how was I going to do that? I can't read or write. Also, when I turned 18, I entered the criminal justice system. Life seemed hopeless.

Through the Maricopa County Superior Court, I heard about Hope Lives, a peer-support and diversion program. Hope Lives has taught me self-care, daily living skills and has given me job-training opportunities. The staff are helping me to apply for Social Security Disability, and I recently completed work-adjustment training. I earned a certificate as a licensed Peer Support Specialist. Someday, I hope to help others as they have helped me.

Things are going pretty good for me now. I live on my own, and with help from SNAP, I have food to eat. I receive the full SNAP benefit of \$192 per month, but I also need a food box to help me get through the month. Currently my case worker helps me submit my SNAP paperwork. I'm not sure I can do the paperwork on my own, since I can't read or write and I don't own a computer. I want to be successful, find an employer who understands my mental illness, and go to school. I am learning to not be stigmatized by the label of mental illness.

Dimetrias Arrington
Phoenix, Arizona