

## From Flipping Burgers to Pouring Iron

Michael McNamee needed a fresh start.

“I was a troubled young kid that drank and used drugs and acted out,” he explains. “I had no guidance and didn’t have proper medication to help with my bipolar. I kept relapsing and getting in trouble with the law. I needed to get out of Delco where I am from and start a new life.”

Michael found the opportunity he’d been hoping for when he met Brad Weaver, Community Education Instructor for IU13. Brad provided adult education services at The Gate House for Men, a recovery house where Michael was living temporarily, trying to get on a new path. Michael had been working at a dead-end, low-paying job flipping burgers at a fast food restaurant and thought, because of his past, that was his only option.

Brad told Michael about a job skills training program in metal-casting offered through Thaddeus Stevens College that could lead to a good-paying job and a real career path.

Michael jumped at the opportunity and immersed himself in the intensive three-week program, going to classes every day from early morning until late afternoon. A local foundry sent a hiring manager to the graduation ceremony for students who completed the program. Michael talked with them about job opportunities with their company. Two weeks later, he traded in his fast-food cloth apron for a protective aluminized apron for his new job as an iron pourer at the foundry.

He’s worked there for over six months now and is excited about his career future. “They have all types of opportunities to move up and people tend to have long careers there,” he says.

Michael credits Brad Weaver for encouraging him toward this new path.

“Brad really wants to help people and took this process very seriously. He has helped a lot of guys at Gate House and has been a reference for me. I point other people in his direction,” Michael says.

“What a difference,” he concludes. “This was a great opportunity that they have a program like this for people like me who have made mistakes in our past. I’m very grateful for this opportunity to get back on my feet.”

