

The Tortoise and the Hare

In one of the most enduring of Aesop's fables, the tortoise and the hare had a race. At the beginning, the hare raced off, leaving the old tortoise in the dust. In fact, he got so far ahead that he laid down to rest and fell asleep. Eventually that speedy hare woke up to find that the "slow but steady" tortoise had already won the race. At New Horizons Ministries, our emphasis on building long term relationships and trust with the young people we serve often makes us feel a bit like that slow but steady old tortoise.

We live in a world filled with slick marketing campaigns and easy answers. Got a headache? Take a pill! Want a new TV, a new appliance, a new car? No problem! Get it today with no money down and 60 months same as cash to pay for it. After all, you deserve a break today! Even our current president was elected based on a desire for change. At political rallies we heard, "What do we want? Change! When do we want it? Now!!!" This world set on easy answers and quick solutions really doesn't have much interest in a slow but steady tortoise – until none of the quick and easy answers work. And that is often the case when working with homeless and street-involved young people.

I was recently visiting with a young woman we've been working with for many years. We've walked alongside her through incredible ups and downs in her life. On this day, she was excited because after 3 years she had finally decided to apply for housing and her interview was coming up on Thursday. On Friday morning I heard that she failed to show up for her scheduled interview appointment. She has a history of sabotaging herself whenever anything positive is about to happen in her life and she did it again. It takes a long time and hard circumstances to force a young person out onto the streets and it often takes a long time to build the trusting relationships that help them move away from street life.

A quick fix program would throw her away, saying she doesn't meet their parameters for assistance. But she knows that at New Horizons she will continue to find understanding and support as we work to help her see herself not as a "throw away street kid" who deserves to fail, but instead as a beloved and valued child of God. On days like this, it's great to be the tortoise!

Dan