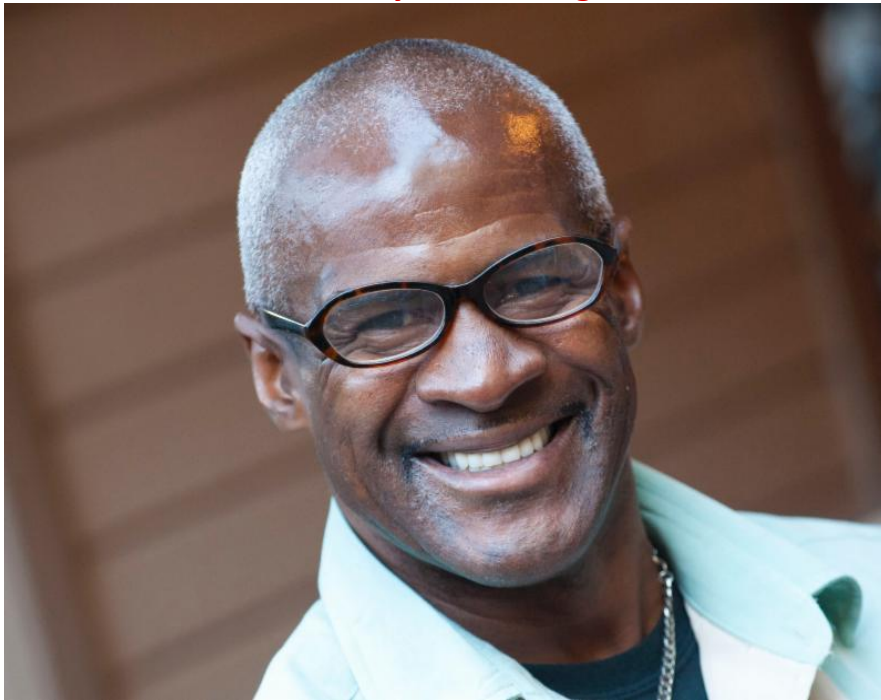


## Mark's Story: Rebuilding a Life



*"I am so grateful I was guided here."*

*- Mark Tate, referring to ECS' Downtown Safe Haven and Friend to Friend programs.*

### **December, 2013**

MARK TATE will be home for the holidays this year, celebrating the challenges he has overcome. For the first time in 17 years, this 56 year old has his own home. He has been homeless since depression put him on a downward spiral in the late '90s.

Born in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts, Tate was the fifth of 10 children. His mother was only 13 when she got pregnant for the first time and was forced to marry his father, who was 17 years her senior. His teen years were tumultuous. Gang warfare took the lives of many of his friends, and the street life put two of his brothers in prison.

Tate escaped the violence by focusing on athletics through high school and then following his girlfriend to San Diego. They married and had four children. He had a stable job as a custodian at University of California, San Diego. He was passionately involved in the training of his wife's sister, Florence Griffith Joyner, who went on to win four Olympic gold medals.



Mark Tate shakes hands with ECS manager, Bernie Miles, on his last day at Downtown Safe Haven.

Mental illness, then undiagnosed, created a strain on his life. His marriage broke apart, and then, so did he. He lost his job, his home, and ended up on the streets, where he self-medicated with illegal drugs. He was in and out of prison for selling narcotics until he faced a 21-year prison term. Then he experienced his first significant act of grace: A caring judge gave him a reduced sentence with probation and sent him to rehab instead of prison.

He got a second gift of grace when he joined ECS' Friend to Friend program and moved into Downtown Safe Haven. Our staff supported him as he faced his trauma and mood disorder. He became a Peer Support Specialist and was certified to facilitate group sessions (Roadmap to Recovery and Transformational Advocacy). He learned to tell his story in a way that helps others. Now, he has a plan for making a living doing something he loves. He is in touch with his children and grandchildren. He is excited about his future.