

# Damascus Way

Damascus Way Reentry Center • 1515 E. 66<sup>th</sup> Street • Richfield, MN 55423 • 612.866.0462 • [www.damascusway.com](http://www.damascusway.com)

Date

Name

Address1

Address2

City,State,Zip

Dear Name,

If you had the chance to get to know him, you might decide that Allen Rasmussen\* grew up on the other side of the mirror. And he might agree with you.

He appeared to be doing all the normal things in his youth. He went to Sunday School, attended Awana (a boy's ministry club), had friends, did OK in school, enjoyed relationships with his extended family, and knew his parents cared about him. They saw that he and his siblings had all the things other kids had.

He was second oldest of six, raised in a middle class area of North Minneapolis. He describes his parents as decent, moral folks who instilled traditional values in their children. At one time, Al says, his father was "very religious." He indicated a tall stack of Bibles and study books he saw his father reading.

Like his peers, Allen experimented with "weed" (marijuana) during his mid teens but found more appeal in selling it for profit than in using. There was a reason Al turned naturally to selling – first pot then escalating to harder and harder drugs, including "coke and meth" (cocaine and methamphetamines).

The reason that Al found peddling drugs so natural is that his respectable, responsible parents raised all six of their children from the proceeds of illegal drug trafficking. Cousins did the same. Uncles did the same. It was the family enterprise.

Perhaps it seemed inevitable to Allen's parents that their offspring would go into the same business, so they warned their children never to use the drugs. Selling was one thing, but using was off limits. His mother, especially, harped on the dangers of using.

In the end, it was mere curiosity that prompted the 31-year-old to sample meth, then "ice" or "glass," derivatives of cocaine. He was living very well by then, easily able to afford a house, cars, and Las Vegas vacations ... but he was shocked by how quickly the drugs took over his body and his life. His

mother watched it happen right before her eyes, and agonized, pleading for him to get help and trying to intervene.

But Allen had no control. Going without sleep for a month, he went into such a zombie-like state that he no longer knew what was real and what was hallucination. “Waking sleep” came upon him in tiny intervals, sometimes while Allen was driving. He sold drugs so he could afford his own habit. He was in constant panic as he tried to reason but only floundered in a hellish place of senselessness in his tormented brain.

“Things could have been a lot worse,” Allen says now of that time. That is hard to imagine but he declares that God has been watching over him since even those early days in Sunday School and boys club. God was there when Al was arrested. When the judge offered him an easy sentence, Al had enough sense to refuse. “Put me away,” he flatly stated, defying his own attorney’s advice. The judge took some persuading but when the gavel came down, Al went to prison. The sentence was Al’s lifeline.

It took 18 months for the drugs to clear out of his brain and body. Al says that his eyes were opened there in prison, and he began reading the Bible and attending prison church services. He cooperated with prison rules and although he knew nothing about Damascus Way, when he was eligible for parole, the faith-based program seemed better than the other options.

Now he’s getting ready to graduate and continues to see God’s hand in his life. “Jesus is my Lord and Savior,” says the soft-spoken man, “and the staff bends over backward to help. They’ve been able to accommodate any [of Al’s] issues since I came here.” “No other program would do that,” Al adds with conviction.

Al Rasmussen is living on the right side of the mirror these days. He needs a job since he lost everything he’d ever acquired. He needs a home, and he needs to build relationships with his family. But he’s walking with God and has a quiet sense that God will take care of the details.

I wish you would make an extra effort to pray for Allen. And you can be sure that as soon as he moves out of the Damascus Way house and we put fresh sheets on the bed, God will send us another man in need of direction, teaching, shelter and the love of Christ as demonstrated by our dedicated staff. So we need both your prayers and a generous donation. With your help, we can be God’s hands and heart to men in tremendous need. Thank you!

For the men of Damascus Way,



Dick Harden, Director  
Damascus Way Reentry Center