



For Immediate Release  
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**From Sadness to Success:  
A troubled teen returns to help those who gave him hope**

Burlington County, NJ...In 2005, Mike Koines was just one more troubled youngster headed down the wrong path. He first entered the Crossroads Program as a 15 year old, seeking the shelter of Dalton group home in Lumberton. Today he's returning to that home - this time as a youth counselor to help others find their way back from trauma and heartache to a successful future.

A successful chef and restaurant manager, Mike returned to Dalton House this month to make good on his promise to help others the way he was helped.

"With my background, anything could've happened to me," says Mike. "But these people took good care of me, they made my problems their problems. If I had to go to work, they were there. If I had to get to school, they were there. Before I came to Crossroads I felt I could do everything for myself, I didn't have to ask for help. I found that was not true – it's always good to feel safe enough to ask for help. And I always got it."

"We specialize in providing a safe and stable environment," explains Program Director Darlene Dalton, after whom the home was named. "The most important thing is to have a trauma free environment. These kids have seen enough trauma to last a lifetime." Like many other Crossroads group homes, Dalton House provides shelter, counseling, school and job mentoring and around the clock personnel to get the children back on track toward health and hope.

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Working with him to build on his interest in cooking, Dalton House personnel encouraged Mike to apply to Atlantic Cape Community College. He graduated in 2009 with an Associate degree in culinary arts. He went back to a restaurant that hired him as a teenager and successfully secured a position there as general manager.

And then he returned to Dalton House as a part time youth counselor.

Now at 28, he looks around him to see how far he has come. "I see the kids here trying to work, saving their money, and they remind me of myself" says Koines. "The main thing I learned is to ask for help. Never be afraid to ask. Even if you think you know what you're doing, it helps to have an adult you like and respect to give you a second opinion." He thinks about this for a second and smiles. "Guess I'll be that adult to these young kids now."

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*Crossroads Programs empowers youth who are homeless, abandoned, abused or at -risk to lead healthy, productive lives.*