



Bobby's Choice

Have you ever looked back and thought, "And at that moment I knew...?" That this particular moment was of such significance that you could not separate your identity from the moment itself? Or you recognized, "I am who I am because of this moment?"

I think all of us at one time or another have experienced these moments. Sometimes they appear to us as crossroads where we feel forced to choose a particular path. I'm reminded of Robert Frost's The Road Not Taken:

**Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
Took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.**

I was fortunate this spring to witness this moment in the life of one of MIRCI's Youth Home residents. It was one of those rare, enduring experiences that I hope will long linger in my mind's eye.

Through a partnership with his high school, MIRCI was able to provide ongoing behavioral healthcare and housing support to Bobby and he was invited to move into MIRCI's Youth Home. Really, he's been a model resident. He was a senior this year and was a few months shy of graduating. He was working hard – not only to graduate but also at his part-time job. Bobby was working to strengthen his relationship with his mother, too. He had a full plate. He dreamed about graduating high school and enlisting in the United States Army.

Unfortunately, due to some poor decisions, Bobby's dreams very nearly toppled like a Jenga tower. Two credits shy of graduation, Bobby was led by peer pressure into a situation that resulted in a disciplinary hearing with the school district. Bobby had a choice to make. He had to choose between denying ownership of a particular situation or taking responsibility for his actions and facing the consequences. On this particular day, Bobby became an adult. He chose to take responsibility for his actions, and he did so with humility and composure. He was confident but not cocky. He asked forgiveness and vowed to take another path. He looked at the roads in front of him and he chose the path less traveled.

In June, that path led Bobby to cross the stage at Spring Valley High School, where he received his high school diploma. I am confident that years from now, if I am fortunate enough to meet this young man again, we will celebrate what he has become and what he has accomplished.

*Graduating high school has huge implications because not completing a high school education is **the single leading predictor of future homelessness** among youth.*