Alumni Profile

James Kennedy
Honors Specialization in Social Justice and Peace Studies; Major in Criminology
Graduation Year: 2012

Current Career
Organization: Options Bytown
Title: Housing First Practitioner

Career Overview
The Housing First Program is designed to provide case management and housing assistance to individuals who are homeless. We work one-on-one with individuals facing chronic and episodic homelessness to establish client-centred goals and individualized housing plans. As a housing first practitioner, I conduct assessments, develop individualized support plans, support the individual in finding permanent housing, develop good working relationships with landlords, link individuals with community resources, conduct visits and teach life skills in the home, and provide case management services in conjunction with community partners.

How has SJPS helped prepare you for your current work
As cliché as it may sound, SJPS changed my life. The SJPS faculty sparked a passion for social justice issues that took me overseas for two experiential learning programs in Ghana and the Philippines. It also began the crusade towards addressing some of the challenges we face in our own communities involving homelessness, mental health, and addictions. SJPS offered so many different opportunities for me to find my true passions. Many of the friends I made at King’s continue to be close friends and colleagues to this day. After my graduate thesis, I wanted to break down many of the silos within social service agencies. I started working front line as a Housing First Practitioner in Ottawa. SJPS laid the foundation for a lifetime of work surrounding empowerment and advocacy for some of the most marginalized in society.

Have you volunteered with any organization or cause that seeks to promote social justice and peace?
During my undergraduate and graduate degrees, I volunteered with a variety of organizations in London. I volunteered with the Community Mental Health Programs at Mission Services of London, the London Food Bank, as a Game On! group mentor for the Big Brother Big Sister Foundation, and with newcomers and immigrants at LUSO Community services. When I moved to Ottawa, I volunteered with Jewish Family Services as an outreach volunteer, got involved with the Alliance to End Homelessness and worked as a volunteer driver for Why Can’t We Feed Everyone. Outside of promoting social justice, I also spend time volunteering with Ottawa Tool Library trying to bolster the sharing economy in my community.

Further Degree/ Certifications
MA in Political Science, Specialization in Conflict and Conflict Resolution
University of Waterloo