

## Recipe for Change

**By SUE GLEITER, The Patriot-News**  
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"I was done dealing with drugs. I had had it," he said. For more than a decade, Taylor dealt drugs on the streets of Philadelphia, spending time in and out of prison, he said. At his lowest point, he was addicted to crack cocaine. "My self-esteem was low. I was always told things wouldn't work out. I used drugs to compensate [for] that," Taylor said.

Had it not been for Channels Food Rescue and its Kitchen School in Susquehanna Twp., Taylor, 55, might still be living the life of a drug dealer, he said.

Today, he works fulltime as sous chef in Channels' kitchen and is responsible for preparing more than 400 hot meals a day for underprivileged children he fondly calls his kids. The nonprofit Channels collects perishable food from donors and distributes it to agencies including homeless shelters and food kitchens. The Kitchen School provides on-the-job training for low-income people who want to pursue careers in the food service industry.

His path toward recovery started in 2000. Having spent his last \$11 on the one-way bus ticket from Philadelphia, Taylor arrived in Harrisburg at the prompting of his younger brother, who was living here.

Taylor's first stop was the Bethesda Mission, where he enrolled in a nine-month drug and alcohol recovery program.

He later stayed with the Firm Foundation of Pa Inc. in Harrisburg and participated in a program for former offenders.

It was there that a notice tacked to a bulletin board caught Taylor's eye. Channels was looking for people interested in enrolling in its Kitchen School.

Taylor had been cooking for the male residents at the Firm Foundation and enjoyed working in the kitchen. With the aid of a \$10,000 grant, he was able to enroll in the 15-week culinary program. "It gave me the opportunity to be myself and do what I like to do -- cook and give back to the community," Taylor said.

He now rents an apartment in Harrisburg, pays his bills and has medical coverage. Next spring, he will celebrate a milestone -- one decade of being drug free. "Fortunately, I took heed and listened to some people and made some changes," he said. "I owe a lot of people thanks."