

Success Story

KEVIN BOTHWELL

**A JOURNEY
OF RESILIENCE
AND HOPE**



Building Tables | Building Community | ReBuilding Lives

A JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE AND HOPE



EARLY STRUGGLES

I was born in 1987 in Marietta, Georgia. My parents divorced when I was very young, and shortly after, my mom remarried. That created a lot of tension at home, and from a young age, I struggled with anxiety. I grew up feeling like something was missing. My stepdad was strict, causing me to have anxiety and not feel safe at home. I moved in with my grandpa, but my anxiety followed me into my teen years.

In third grade, I met Peter. We quickly became inseparable. As we got older, we bonded over shared experiences—many of which were fueled by substances. With the lack of accountability, we started drinking and smoking weed; it made me feel like I was supposed to feel—relieved from that constant pressure.

What began as experimentation spiraled into addiction. By high school, I was already in too deep. I

was arrested for marijuana and was put on probation, but I was so far gone I didn't care. I secured a job at a pharmacy and was introduced to prescription medications. Abusing prescription meds took over. When I got to Kennesaw State University, my life was out of control. I stopped attending classes, and they eventually kicked me out.

My substance use continued, and I overdosed multiple times. One of my lowest points came after I had a seizure while driving due to withdrawal symptoms. My friend in the passenger seat had to pull me over into a neighborhood before being taken away by an ambulance. A few days later, I got the call that my dad had died in a motorcycle accident. I was so numb from the substances that I did not even grasp the reality of the accident. That didn't stop me from using his death as an excuse for continuing to abuse substances.



2011



2016

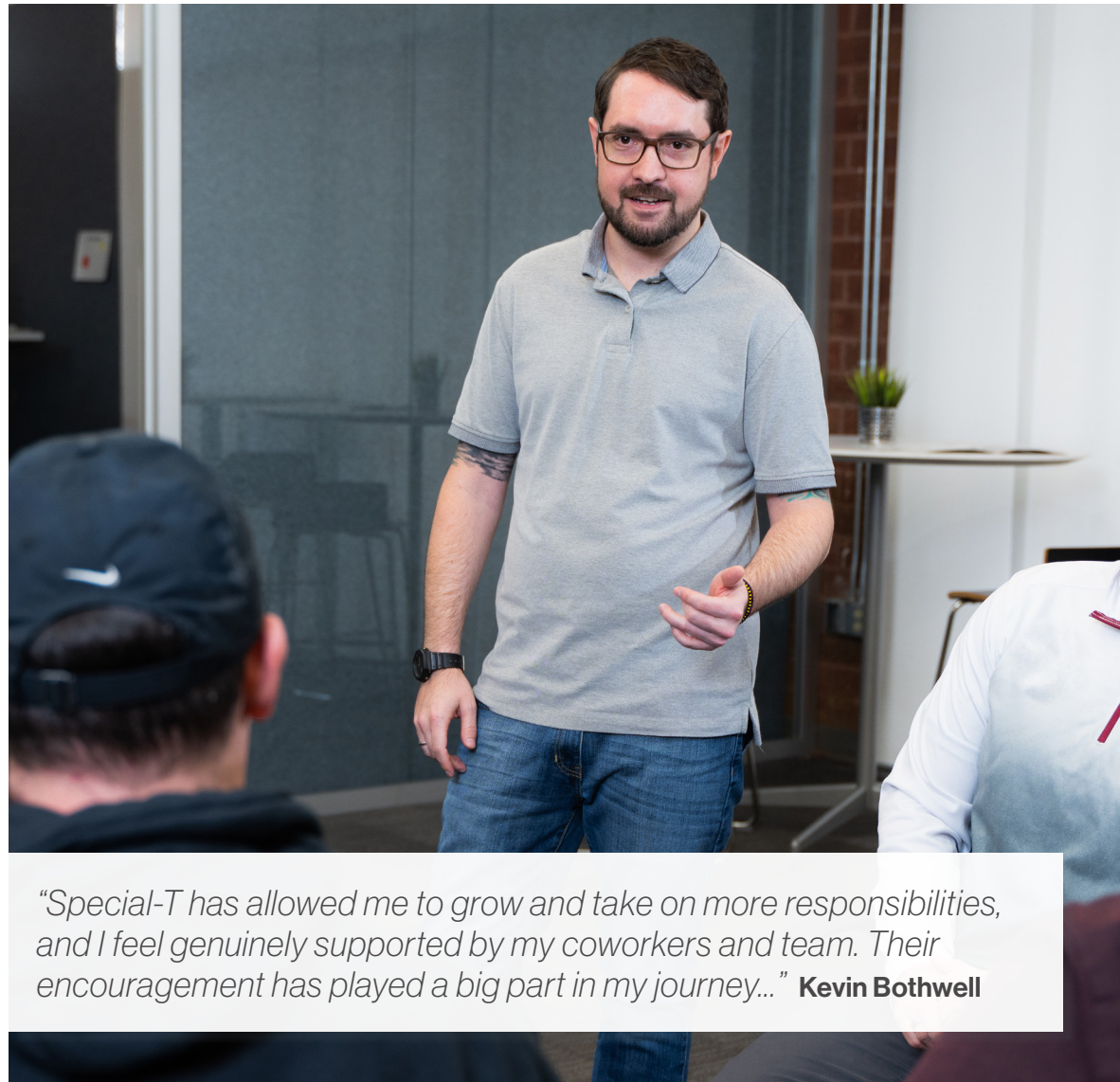
HITTING ROCK BOTTOM

Peter and I were still best friends. Through the years, it seemed like his addiction was surpassing mine. One night, Peter and I both took pills from someone we didn't know well, and we ended up overdosing together. After a traumatic rescue from EMS, Narcan, and a hospital visit, we went back to taking the same pills. A few weeks later, his sister called me to let me know that Peter had overdosed and died. Even this wasn't enough for me to realize my addiction had to stop. It was enough for my family to step in. They convinced me to go to a five-day detox and short-term treatment program.

I stayed an extra 30 days, but I fell back into drinking and using with people I thought were sober; this got us all kicked out, and I moved in with a friend of mine. Shortly after, I was arrested while picking up drugs. This time, I had drugs and a gun in my car. I was charged with multiple felonies, and my bond was set at \$54,000. Sitting in jail, going through withdrawal, I had nowhere to hide. I had to face myself and the reality. It was like God was making me choose between drugs and jail or sobriety and a full life. That's when I knew I'd had a second chance and took it.

Something unexpected happened before entering the Blake House, a long-term recovery program — I met Carolina. We met at a restaurant bar, and I immediately felt a sincere connection. I told her about myself but kept my skeletons in the closet. Eventually, I had to tell her that I was going to rehab for 45 days, even though I knew it was a 10-month program. I thought 45 days wouldn't be enough to scare away. She didn't run, and when I completed the program, she was there with my family to welcome me home.





“Special-T has allowed me to grow and take on more responsibilities, and I feel genuinely supported by my coworkers and team. Their encouragement has played a big part in my journey...” **Kevin Bothwell**



GROWING THROUGH OPPORTUNITY & SUPPORT

After finishing my long-term recovery program, I got a job at Special-T. I started in the paint department and later managed that department. Eventually, I moved into customer service and, two years later, into purchasing. Special-T has allowed me to grow and take on more responsibilities, and I feel genuinely supported by my coworkers and team. Their encouragement has played a big part in my journey, and I’m grateful for the chance to continue building a meaningful career here.



LOVE AND REDEMPTION

In 2018, after years of building a strong foundation and being honest about my past, I proposed to Carolina on Christmas Eve. She said yes, and we began making plans to include both our families.

We had a wedding here in the States, and then in November 2022, we celebrated our marriage in Colombia with Carolina’s family, surrounded by beautiful green mountains and flowers. It was a dream come true.



HEARTBREAK AND HOPE

Life, however, wasn't done testing us. When Carolina became pregnant for the first time, we were overjoyed—but that joy quickly turned to heartbreak when, during our first ultrasound, we couldn't hear a heartbeat. We were crushed when we learned we had lost the baby. But we didn't give up. We kept trying, and Carolina became pregnant again. It was like Deja Vu until we heard the heartbeat come through the ultrasound speakers. Our baby was going to be okay.

Before we were even able to process the excitement of a healthy baby, Carolina discovered a lump in her breast. After receiving a crushing diagnosis, Carolina started chemotherapy for her breast cancer, and I was by her side every step of the way. The support we received from my coworkers at Special-T made all the difference.

Then came the day we'd been waiting for—the birth of our son, Levi. Due to the risks a natural birth could pose, Carolina had a scheduled C-section. Immediately after Levi was born, she underwent a lumpectomy to remove the cancer. While Carolina was in surgery, Levi was taken away for care, and I was left waiting anxiously for updates on both of them. Those hours felt like an eternity. Everything was surreal; time stood still until a nurse finally brought Levi to me and assured me that he and Carolina were doing well.

Both surgeries were successful, and when we were finally together as a family, we could finally breathe a sigh of relief. Carolina and I have built a life grounded in love, faith, and perseverance with Levi in our arms. Life hasn't been easy, but it's been worth it. Through all the pain and struggles, we've made it. Our story is one of survival, strength, and love—and it's just beginning.

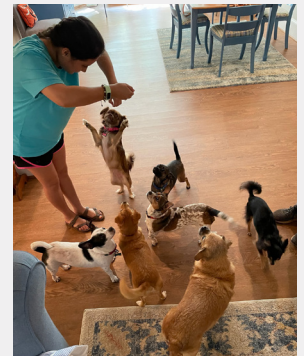
FOSTER-RESCUE *Update*



Throughout my life experiences, I've learned the value of resilience, compassion, and second chances. That's one of the reasons Carolina and I started fostering dogs, even while she was undergoing treatment. We help dogs who've had a rough start to life prepare for their forever homes by crate training, potty training, and leash training them.

We show them the love most of them have never had. Our commitment to each dog usually lasted about three months until we met our last foster dog, Eva. Eva was our only failed foster because we couldn't let her go during Carolina's treatment, so we adopted her. She became part of our family and is now a reminder of the love and strength that carried us through such a challenging time.

Eva has been incredible with Levi. She has a strong maternal instinct and seems to care for him in her way—she's gentle, loving, and the perfect companion for our little boy. Watching them together is a daily reminder of the joy and healing that family, in all its forms, can bring."



▶ Watch Kevin tell his Special-T Story



BUILDING TABLES | BUILDING COMMUNITY | REBUILDING LIVES