Nam Nguyen could not have known what his life would look like when he fled Saigon in 1975 as the Vietnam War came to an end. At the age of 21, the war had so disrupted his life that Nam had not graduated from high school. Despite the hardship of having to leave friends, family, and country, Nam says that he chose to leave because he wanted to live in a “free country.”

Nam explains that life in America was sometimes difficult. Arriving in Houston, Texas, Nam was without a community for the first time and struggled to find work and housing. Within a few years, Nam moved to Atlanta where he found a much needed community as he began to conquer his biggest challenge of his life - overcoming mental illness.

In the late 1990s, Nam’s friends noticed a difference in his personality. He was having trouble coping with mild setbacks and seemed overly anxious. Close friends in Nam’s community recognized the signs of crisis, and they took him to a hospital where he received temporary treatment for symptoms stemming from anxiety and depression. After a diagnosis, Nam moved to a group home that often restricted his movements and did not offer the full range of support he needed. His mental health put him constantly at risk of becoming homeless.

After living in the group home during his recovery from hospitalization, Nam was finally able to secure the housing he needed at Phoenix House. In addition to being affordable, Phoenix House offers a wide range of supportive services for residents with mental illness and other health issues. Nam says the staff really care about his needs, and he is excited to live in an environment that allows him to make friends. Most importantly, the service support provides Nam with security and structure, which makes him feel “safe and happy.”