“I’ve been a kitchen manager my whole life... my first job was at Dairy Queen, flipping burgers. I was 13... I lied and said I was 15. They paid me cash.”

James grew up in poverty, first in his home country of Ireland where he was born and then in the United States when he and his parents moved to Indianapolis when he was ten.

He’s named James Gallagher the Third, and part of that heritage is a long family history of alcoholism, with which he also struggles. His father left the family and cut off contact soon after they moved to the States.

Raised from then on by his mom, he’s been cooking for much of his life.

James has mostly managed to balance work and his struggle with alcohol. But when his mom developed lung cancer and then brain cancer, his drinking got much worse.

When she died, he lost his home, but still managed to stay working. He lived with a girlfriend for awhile and became the regional kitchen manager for Brothers Bar & Grill.

And then he got himself in serious trouble. He caused a car accident when he was intoxicated. Fortunately and very luckily, no one was hurt. But he lost his job and spent some time in jail.

After his release, he discovered Shalom.

We helped him with all the survival basics and a move into a new home, with our rapid re-housing program. But he tragically came down with Guillain-Barré Syndrome and spent more than four months in the hospital learning how to walk again.

Unable to work during his illness, he lost his home again, but James has recently been hired as our assistant chef.

When asked about what the job means to him, he said, “I’m proud to work here... I’m proud of making [the guests] feel good, making them a good meal... I’m grateful for the opportunity, just ‘cuz it feels good to help people out.”

When you support Shalom’s hunger relief program, you not only support those in our community who struggle with hunger, but you also provide jobs for people like James.

Because of you, Shalom served over 79,000 meals last year. Please make a gift right now to support Shalom’s hunger relief efforts. For every dollar you give, you provide one meal to a person who needs it, many of them prepared by James.

With blessings,

Rev. Forrest Gilmore,
Executive Director

P.S. The months of February and March are the most important time of the year for our hunger relief program, when we raise half of our hunger relief funding. Please make a gift today!