

Meet Shehym Naranjo



“When I first met Shehym, he was spiraling down the wrong path, but I told him ‘what I see in you, you don’t see in yourself yet’” – Julissa Torrez, CYC Educational Outreach Specialist.

Shehym Naranjo grew up surrounded by drugs and violence. Gangs were a way of life for Shehym and without their protection, he could never feel safe. He described himself as “a cold, empty shell of armor.” Shehym told Julissa that if he makes it past the age of 25, it would be a miracle.

CYC began working with Shehym when his father went to prison. He was forced to start providing for his family. He became depressed and overwhelmed and turned to drugs. When Shehym first met with Julissa, he wasn’t ready to go back to school. He would go missing for weeks without any contact, but Julissa knew she couldn’t give up. Julissa continued to slowly build her relationship with Shehym over the course of two years. Although he was still not ready to go back to school,

Shehym started providing student referrals to Julissa. One of these referrals included Shehym’s girlfriend, who became a huge part of Shehym’s support system. As Shehym’s village of support began to grow, so did his motivation. With Julissa’s help, Shehym went to rehab and enrolled in Justice High School.

With his newly found determination, a small school, and a supportive atmosphere, Shehym is not just surviving, but he is thriving. He currently has all As and Bs and has a 90 percent attendance rate. He has become a leader at school and advocates for himself and his classmates. He is on track to graduate in December of 2016.

When Julissa asked Shehym if he would share his story as a successful student, he beamed with pride. No one had ever described Shehym as successful, but he has changed his life and continues to work towards his future goals. He is exploring many different areas to study in college once he graduates from high school, including psychology and zoology.