

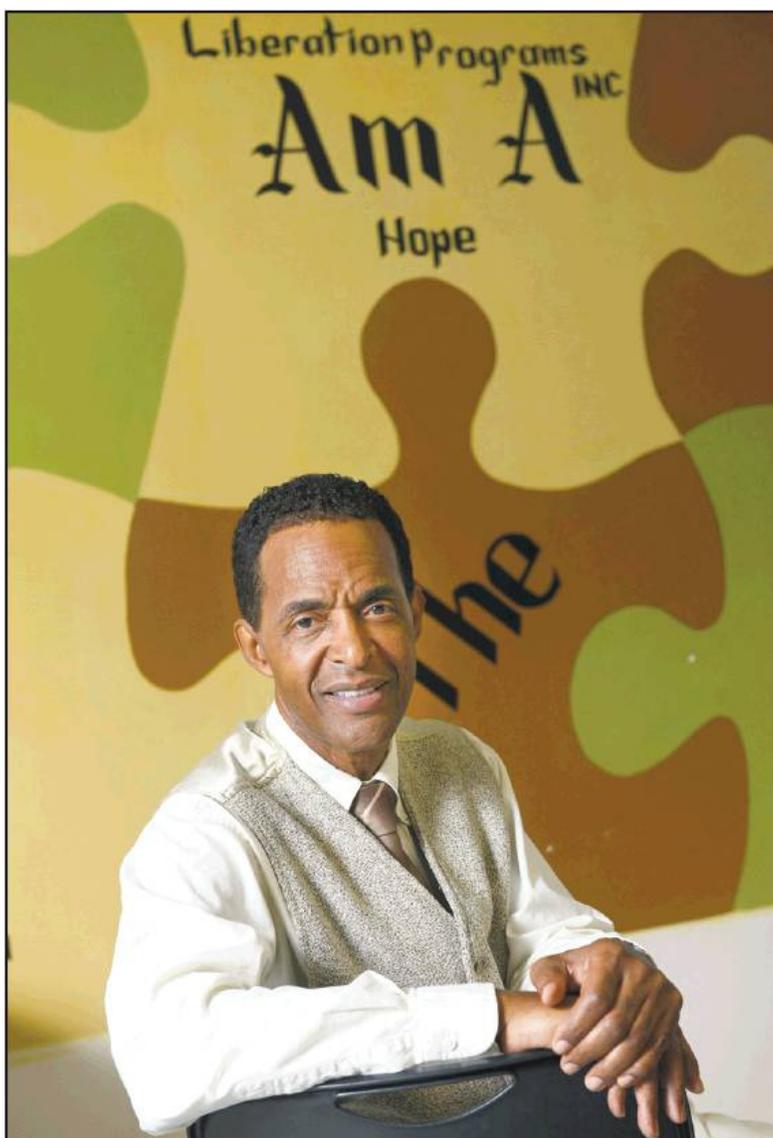
The ADVOCATE

'BIGGIE'S CHRONICLES'

A SUCCESS STORY

Stamford native pens memoir about his journey to sobriety during his young adulthood

By Nora Naughton



Matthew Brown / Hearst Connecticut Media

Malcom Spears, a Liberation House success story, at the Stamford-based residence home and treatment center. Spears spoke to clients of the center to promote the book he wrote about his road to redemption.



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Malcom Spears, a Liberation House success story, at the Stamford-based residence home and treatment center. Spears spoke to clients about the center on Thursday to promote the book he wrote about his road to redemption.

STAMFORD — Malcolm “Biggie” Spears wrote the book on recovery.

The Stamford native recently penned a memoir, titled “Biggie’s Chronicles,” about his journey to sobriety during his young adulthood, when he struggled with cocaine and marijuana abuse.

By the time Spears, 60, was 17 years old, he had already been convicted of a felony and was serving a prison sentence at Cheshire Correctional Institution, which he views as the first step on his road to redemption.

Now sober for more than 40 years, Spears said he caught his first break when a judge allowed him to complete his six-month prison term at an addiction treatment center. That’s how he landed back in his home city at Liberation House, which was newly opened when he arrived in 1974.

"This place saved my life," Spears said during a visit to Liberation House last week. "I learned here that being a good person isn't tied to all the good things you do; it's about how the things you do and the things that happen to you shape you."

Today, Liberation House is a men's inpatient addiction treatment center, which runs programs at four additional facilities in Greenwich, Norwalk and Bridgeport. In 1976, when Spears completed Liberation's recovery program, he was one of the organization's first graduates. He is still heralded by the staff as one of their original success stories. That's why when he told program directors about the book he had written about his formative years at Liberation House, the organization offered to publish the first 200 copies.

"Malcolm is proof that treatment works, and there is life after recovery," said Johnnie Malloy, chief development officer of Liberation Programs. "At a time when there is so much negativity about addiction, we were excited to get a positive story out there."

After its print run, "Biggie's Chronicles" will be available for digital download on Amazon-.com. Half of the proceeds from book sales will be earmarked for substance-abuse treatment for those who otherwise could not afford rehabilitation. "There is this thread that runs through my life and it always connects back to Lib House," Spears said. "I got a new life here; I started a new chapter. That's why it's so special that they have published this book for me."

In his book, Spears shares his journey from a punky teenager holding up a convenience store with a gun-shaped stick to an award-winning college student and aspiring actor. He said the act of writing his story was cathartic, and felt like part of his recovery process even now, four decades after he last received treatment at Liberation House.

"I didn't even have a clue I had the ability to write a book," he said. "But as I wrote I identified this thread throughout my formative years and I had a new sense about what I could do. I felt like I could do some real good with this." The West Side native returned to Stamford to celebrate the publication of "Biggie's Chronicles" with a book signing at Ferguson Library on Saturday.

"We packed that room out," Spears said. "It was amazing to see how many people came, and they sold every copy they brought." Spears lives in Atlanta with his two children now, but he still finds his way back to his hometown and Liberation House whenever he can. During his most recent visit on Thursday, the self-employed writer and entertainer captivated a room full of Liberation House patients with an impromptu motivational speech.

"I love coming back here and talking to the gentlemen here," Spears said.

"I know there are some brilliant minds up in this piece, and I want to inspire them to achieve their dreams." nora.naughton@scni.com; twitter.com/noranaughton