



APRIL UPDATE FOR RETURNING HOPE TO RETURNING CITIZENS PROGRAM

Two new grants, progress for those impacted by January’s fatal fire and a fantastic prior four weeks of assistance for returning citizens:

March was a great month as we were able to provide furniture to 17 individuals who were in their own residence now as they continued very nicely on their path of success.

In total, we were able to provide 196 grants in March for a total of \$55,575.40 and all of which are show in the chart below:

March RHTRC	Number of Grants	Cost of Grants
Walmart Gift Cards	104	\$19,350.00
Furniture	17	\$10,440.00
Cars	2	\$5,000.00
Car repairs	4	\$2,700.00
Rent	4	\$3,100.00
Security Deposit	4	\$2,350.00
Tools/equipment	7	\$1,859.34
Home furnishings	11	\$2,559.74
Clothing for Work	25	\$4,350.00
Utilities	1	\$841.51
Miscellaneous	17	\$3,024.81
Total	196	\$55,575.40

FATAL FIRE:

For those who recall the February newsletter and the reference to a fatal fire occurring at a home for parolees, we have assisted over the last few months in getting all those impacted back to square one, once again. Everyone is now in new housing, and most have been able to return to employment and all of them were “re-stocked” by us with clothes and furniture etc.

GRANTS:

Lastly, we greatly appreciate the very nice grant from **Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration.**

Here to Help also received an incredibly generous grant from the **McGregor Fund** for all our programs including the returning citizens program.

The McGregor Fund was established nearly 100 years ago by Katherine and Tracy McGregor and designed at that time to “relieve misfortune and promote the well-being of humankind.”

The **McGregor Fund** remain steadfast in honoring that approach of meeting basic needs and providing opportunities for those living in poverty in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb County.

We have established a wonderful relationship with the **McGregor Fund** and appreciate their ongoing support of what we do at Here to Help and recognize that our ongoing work remains critical in helping hard working individuals facing an emergency situation that threatens their ability to keep moving forward with self-sufficiency and independence.

Here are some of the stories of some of the returning citizens we have recently been able to assist:

CAREMA:

It's definitely one step at a time for those returning from prison as there's a lot of adjustment returning to one's community after having been away for a while. There are those who from the get-go are striving to accomplish more each day and that's definitely the case with Carema. She's got a good job, a car, housing etc. and she's going back to school for additional training to gain more skills for her employment. She's definitely one of the most successful of the thousands of returning citizens we've worked with and we're more than happy to have assisted her along the way.



DESHAUN:

A positive attitude is often the key to success and when you're coming back from prison after six years, like Deshaun, you try and stay positive.

Deshaun does not yet have a place of his own to call home and was struggling with transportation to and from his Commercial Driver License classes as he didn't have an income while in training. But that didn't stop him from being incredibly positive and excited about his future and very appreciative of all we were able to now help him with. His smile is infectious and we know he's going to be tremendously successful, with many positive outcomes as he moves forward. We helped him get around his current hurdles and he's about to complete his CDL and get a good job.



TRAVELL:

Making up for lost time is how some returning citizens approach being released. Travell is one of those as he quickly enrolled in Green Door Initiative's environmental training program (learning construction, weatherization, lead, and asbestos abatement), is also working for SER Metro Detroit and living with and caring for his elderly mother.

He's also pursuing the purchase of a home with Detroit Land Bank. He has solid dreams and is going after them with great energy and enthusiasm and will definitely be very successful. We welcome the ongoing opportunity to assist him in various ways. Definitely a "go-getter" who has quickly achieved a lot in just a few months.



DEANO:

We mentioned Deano last month but failed to include some of his artwork. In 18 years of prison, Deano chose to accomplish a lot and served as a tutor, worked as a porter, became a talented artist etc. Continuing that desire to achieve, Deano became employed promptly after leaving prison. In March, we began our ongoing assistance for Deano and next step will be getting him into his own housing, complete with an area to pursue his paintings given his artistic talent!



CURTIS:

A smile is indeed worth a thousand words, and we love seeing the smile of a returning citizen getting into his/her own residence for the first time in their life.

Curtis just obtained the keys to his new home. We began helping him last October and are happy to help him now with the move in costs, furniture, and home furnishings. He is doing great, with a good job and has been working hard to get to this point that he can rent his

own home. He has often worked two jobs and has been incredibly appreciative and courteous with all we have done for him, and his smile is indeed worth a thousand words:



BRIAN:

The Miscellaneous category in our records of help, has a lot of different ways we assist including car insurance, car note, eyeglasses, phones, work tools/equipment, computers for school, bus passes, work clothing, bicycles, gasoline, food, school supplies etc.

Brian was in prison at 18 years of age and never learned to drive. At 26 now, he needed that skill so he could get his license and a car, all helping him to get to and from work. He got his permit and we just paid for him to take a Driver's Training course. He'll begin that this week and a license is in his future. A first-time form of assistance in our very large and ever-growing Miscellaneous category.



Lacresha:

Removing emergency situations is what we are designed to do as we just did for Lacresha whose car loan payment was overdue, and she was hours away from having the vehicle repossessed.

She'd just started a great new job, with much higher pay but didn't have the money to prevent her car being taken and no way to get to work if that happened. She was very distraught when she contacted us. We quickly took care of the loan bill and prevented the repossession. She texted us: "Thank you SO much. I'm crying right now. Truly, tears on my face. I can't thank you enough. You saved my car, my job and my life. Without my car I had no way to work every day. Thank you over and over again. I can't say it enough. I will pay this forward in the future! Much love for all you do. THANKS!"



DUJUAN:

When you spend most of your 20's in prison, you have a lot of time to think about the future and what you'll do when you get out. Dajuan wanted to make up for lost time in helping his mother, get a job and start saving money, obtain a home of his own, and then begin training to obtain his Commercial Driver License.

In just about eight weeks, he has now accomplished all these goals. We have helped him obtain basic necessities with many gift cards, assisted him with his move in costs on his new home, provided furniture/home furnishings and watched him be the son he can now be. Here is Dajuan proudly displaying one of the many Walmart gift cards we provided him, and the future is bright:



JAMES:

When someone has been incarcerated for a long time, many of their family members may pass away. Upon their release, sometimes the only remaining family member will take them in.

As James' Aunt Exie did as she welcomed him into her home while he readjusted to life outside prison. She was critical in his recent success but tragically passed away the other day. James not only had to scramble to find proper clothing for his Aunt's funeral but had to

gather money for upcoming rent and utility bills which he's now fully responsible for. He has a good job but needed help and we were there for him during this emotionally difficult time.



ISAAC:

One of the largest hurdles for returning citizens, living on a fixed income, is eyeglasses. It can transform the lives of those facing financial hardship with the simple, yet critical, tool of eyeglasses.

People like Isaac, who we just helped with a pair of glasses which will allow him to pursue a better quality of life in so many different ways. Glasses are becoming one of our most prevalent forms of help in

our “Miscellaneous” category of assistance. So necessary and yet so difficult for so many.



COREY:

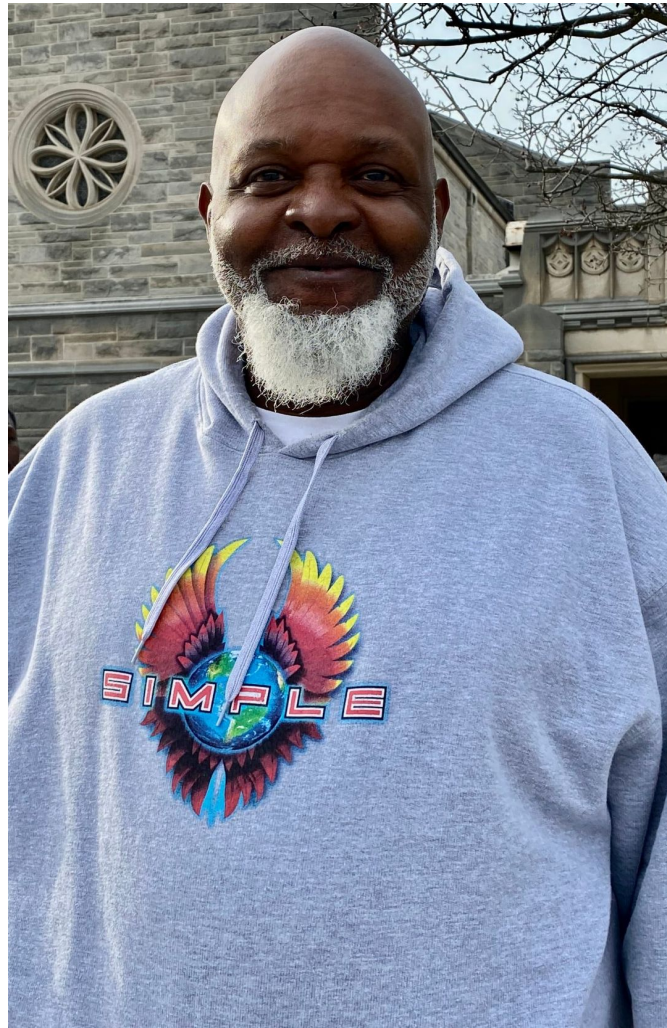
Taking advantage of a situation is often the key to success. Sometimes that opportunity is in the unlikeliest of places but when Corey was imprisoned in a Florida federal prison, he met others who had been sentenced for “white collar” crimes and who had some knowledge to impart regarding positive careers to pursue.

Corey learned there was a good future as a drone pilot. Since his release he enrolled in training for that expertise/skill and is on a path towards tremendous success. We are very impressed with how well he’s doing and glad to be a part of that with the help we have supplied and will provide in the future.



DARREN:

Often the kindness of a stranger is all that is needed to help one keep moving forward. Darren was imprisoned for many years and contacted us right as he was released. We immediately scheduled a meeting. That day his ride fell through, and he needed to take the bus. One problem. Returning citizens have no money upon release. Not even a few dollars for bus fare. So, he took a chance and got on the bus and talked to the bus driver about his current situation and the driver allowed him to travel for free. We met; we began helping him including a month-long bus pass to help him get a job etc. Darren is moving forward and doing well now. All started by the kindness of a stranger, a bus driver.



Those are just some of the wonderful stories of this past month.

We are glad to share them with you and have a great April.

All the best,

Bob Schwartz

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