



## AUGUST UPDATE FOR RETURNING HOPE TO RETURNING CITIZENS PROGRAM

Two years ago, we were a bit like, “Hmm. This would be a good idea. Let’s start a program at Here to Help that goes after recent parolees to offer complete wraparound assistance as they exit prison and do all we can to make sure they have the best chance at success.”

Admittedly, naïve would be a bit of understatement as to the large volume of applicants we were about to receive to our program, and which has continued unabated since that time.

However, it would be a similar understatement to say we have been pleased with what we’ve been able to accomplish and that we’ve enjoyed working with this group of individuals. We’ve been ecstatic to meet and forge wonderful relationships with so many people and equally elated to be a part of so many great success stories.

**In two years, we have assisted parolees on nearly 4,000 occasions!**

Here are some from the month of July where we had a lot of wonderful stories of perseverance, dedication, and success. Enjoy.

We are glad to share them with you and hope you are enjoying the summer months!

## **LAWRENCE:**

A great mentor inspires and helps others to reach their goals through key guidance and advice gained from their experiences. If there's one thing Lawrence knows, it's how to successfully reintegrate into society and be a successful returning citizen. He's now completing his Commercial Driving License training and has a great and critical job at the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries where he heads their reentry department and mentors returning citizens. We have had the pleasure of helping him in various ways and he's been able to help many others achieve similar success to what he's accomplished. Kudos to Lawrence!



## **LADARIUS:**

After being in a prison cell for many, many years, a job as a truck driver is very appealing to returning citizens as they can get on the road and see the wide-open country. It also provides excellent pay and benefits, and jobs are plentiful right now. So, it's always great when those we are working with get their CDL such as Ladarius who just completed training along with his fiancée and they have a “team driving” job lined up where they can drive together and really make a great income. Ladarius is a wonderful success story and we're very proud of all he has achieved in a short period of time.



**KVAN:**

Finding apartment buildings willing to rent to returning citizens is very difficult as most have a blanket policy against allowing them to be tenants. Which is a shame because those we assist are hardworking

individuals whose goal is to stay as far away from trouble as possible. Thankfully, landlords who own homes and flats are more than willing to rent to returning citizens and we've established great relationships with a lot of those homeowners.

We just helped Kvon, who recently got his degree from Green Door Initiative and is working in the field of environmental clean-up and doing great, who moved into his own home and is doing great. We helped with his move costs and are also helping with furniture and home furnishings (boxes of items as shown below etc.). A great deal for everyone involved!



### **TAMMIE:**

Working in a factory setting can be a physically difficult job at times and although there has been an increase of women working in this field they are still a minority. Female returning citizens often find this type of job available to them, but they do often feel the need to prove themselves and Tammie has definitely proved herself in working at Fisher America. She's doing great, saved money and we helped her also to get into her own home with furniture etc. Tammie's a hard worker and also very appreciative of our assistance as seen in the attached note she sent.



## **STEPHEN:**

It's hard to quickly adjust to life on the outside of prison and we stress to concentrate on simply making steps of progress each day. That said, some do make strides at a faster pace such as Stephen who got a job with Forge Staffing right away, enrolled in Truck Driving School, graduated, and got a job with Voyager Express as a truck driver. We initially helped him with various things and then assisted him in renting his first home and furnishing it for him and yesterday we got him into his own vehicle. A great success story and Stephen accomplished all within a short period of time. Way to go Stephen!



**TIMOTHY:**

Rebuilding positive relationships is important when returning from prison, and that starts with family and including one's children. Timothy was gone from his daughters lives for three years and since his recent release from prison he has made every effort to reconnect with them. We've helped him with those efforts as he also begins employment and can provide all his support to them. And his daughters definitely enjoy having dad back with as shown in this photo:



### **ANDREA AND JACK:**

We can't do what we do without the generosity of others, including those that discover Here to Help and really want to assist us helping others. Two years ago, Andrea Sanfield read a news article about our Returning Hope to Returning Citizens program and since then she has been incredibly generous to Here to Help. She just joined us as one afternoon when we met with the 14 people we were helping that day.

Afterwards she texted: “That was so very wonderful! A really good day! Thanks for the experience. It means a lot to me.”



**GREGORY:**

It's always wonderful to see those we began working with a long time ago, still doing great and staying with a good job for all that time. Gregory has been working for Best Wholesale Fish and Seafood for over a year now and doing deliveries by truck and, rightfully so, he is very proud of his accomplishment. We've helped him since he was



released from prison in a variety of ways, including with his road test to get his license in the first place. We met up with him again the other day and he proudly arrived in his delivery truck:



**CHRISTOPHER:**

It's always fantastic to have returning citizens graduate from a skilled job training program as they are then set with a good job and a career path ahead of them. Christopher is enrolled in the Rocket2Work initiative at Wayne County Community College providing careers in CDL licensed professional truck driving, skilled construction, advanced manufacturing and mechatronics, and technology and technical careers, and more. He's doing the skilled construction program and

will soon graduate with a bright future ahead of him. We've helped him along the way and could not be prouder of his success. 😊👍



**HOPE:**

An alarming stat is that 1 in 3 women are victims of domestic abuse. Some victims are in the desperate position of engaging in self-defense when they feel their life is threatened and they may fatally injure their abuser. It is an uphill battle from there, trying to avoid a murder conviction. Hope defended herself in 2001 against her long-time abuser and was eventually sentenced to second degree murder. She served her sentence and we have been assisting her a lot since her release. She is working hard at her job, and we just helped her get into her own home as she rebuilds her life. The future is now finally looking bright for her.



**JEFFREY:**

For employment, everyone needs some type of tools or equipment from those needing a computer, cordless drill, work boots, tool belt, crowbar, pneumatic nail gun, pliers, air compressor etc. We are always glad to purchase required items needed for returning citizens to begin their job as without our help the job doesn't even get off the ground. We go up to \$500 for the purchase of tools and equipment and we've done so with six people this week alone and are happy to make the investment as we did yesterday with Jeffrey who we have been working with for over a year and he's been working hard and now has a great job opportunity. We happily provided everything he needs.



**JAMES:**

Imagine if the year were now 2050 and you've been locked away in prison for much of your adult life and are finally released and have

to acclimate to everything new. To say it is an adjustment is beyond an understatement. Learning about cell phones, computers is challenging enough but often your family and friends are all gone. James was away for a long time and faced this difficult adjustment but has ALWAYS kept a great attitude and is constantly appreciative of all we've helped in with. He's in his own place, readjusted very well and stays in close contact with us. And, as is said, "When you look good, you feel good!":



**LATORIYA:**

Women returning citizens do have an extra task to manage as they usually resume full time custody of their children who were being raised by other family members. Latoriya is the proud mother of eleven-year-old twin daughters, and she is now taking care of them again after being away for four years. She's doing great and hit the ground running and obtained a good job with Amazon, saved money and we are assisting her getting into her own housing where she will live with her daughters and her mother. She is a very hard worker, and the future is very bright for her and her family. 🙌🙌🙌



Those are just a sampling of all the many wonderful stories of those we have been able to assist over the last month.

Stay well and enjoy the remainder of the summer.

All the best,

*Bob Schwartz*

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