

## APRIL NEWSLETTER

When we tell someone all we can do for them, they are appreciative and very often will ask us: “What can I do to help you?”

We usually tell them just become one of our great success stories as that’s the best thing they can do. John has done that! We first met last December and began helping John with new clothing, eyeglasses, a bed set, tools and work clothes for his new welding job etc.

Fast forward to now and he’s been doing great. He’d been sharing his sister’s car, but that vehicle broke down and he desperately needed transportation to work. We came through with a truck for him and John said: “Thank you ssssoooo much. I’ll make you guys so proud and be a success story! God bless you!”

We told him he’s done that!



## **ANDRE:**

Sometimes when a returning citizen contacts us right after they get out of prison, we provide them information on how to fill out our short application, but then their life gets in the way.

For a variety of reasons, the person loses touch with us at that point and doesn't apply. We do follow up, but it is often a long time down the road they wind their way back to us. But that's okay. When they are ready, they are ready.

As it was with Andre, where months and months went by. His phone number changed, and we couldn't reach him and then out of the blue he reached out in need. We helped him the things he needed and began working with him on finding housing. He then advised us he had found a home to purchase.

It's a nice house and he'd done his homework on managing the closing costs, what his monthly mortgage payment with taxes would be etc. He got some aid as a first-time homeowner, and we contributed to the closing costs as this was clearly a good investment for Andre and us. His monthly payment was no more than renting would be and by owning he was building wealth.

We will furnish his home and provide home furnishings. We are very proud of how far Andre, homeowner, has come!



## **DENNIS:**

On the surface it seems simple enough. But it definitely isn't easy as Dennis told us when we met: "My main concern is just holding it together and staying on the right path and not going back to prison. It's difficult at times."

That's where we come in as we want to do all we can to make certain no one returns to prison. Though, at times, it is tenuous as jobs are lost when a background check occurs, housing is unaffordable at present and one is couch surfing, food is scarce etc.

Our goal is to remove all those issues and allow someone like Dennis to pursue his dreams and achieve success. Dennis is determined as he is enrolled in the Greening of Detroit program which will soon land him a landscaping job with the City of Detroit.

He is also planning to go to school in the evenings for HVAC and get housing as soon as possible so his 15-year-old son can move in with him.

We're helping him in a variety of ways to achieve his goals and assist him as much as possible with, as he said, in "holding it together." 🍑🍑



## **TIMOTHY:**

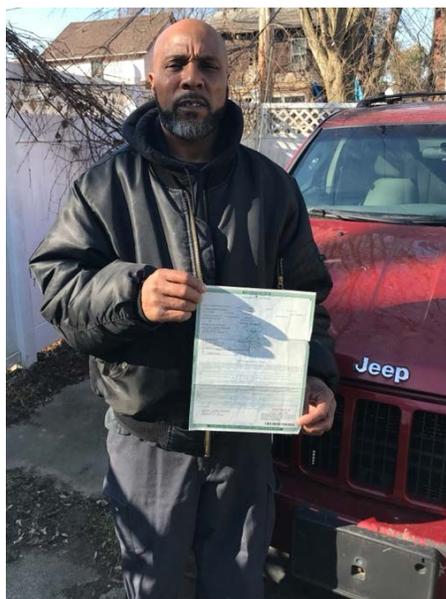
None of us has a crystal ball and sometimes with our assisting returning citizens and determining what we can do, we try to lean towards the side of optimism with the hope that things will work out.

This often occurs when someone applies to our used vehicle program after we've helped them get into housing by paying their move in costs and providing used furniture and home furnishings.

That alone is a large investment from us, but a used vehicle is even more of one and at times we struggle to determine if the individual is going to be able to afford the additional expenses of car insurance, savings for car repairs etc.

We do all we can to help and, as with Timothy, we determine if there are avenues for increased income to better afford these additional car related expenses. This usually involves picking up overtime at work as that's easier when having one's own transportation and/or picking up a part time second job, including doing Door Dash, Uber etc.

We've helped Timothy a lot, including getting in his own housing recently and he's had his job at Dana Containers for over a year now. We did also help him obtain a nice vehicle and we're very hopeful that with his plans for additional income, everything will fall nicely into place. He's determined and we are determined to help people like Timothy achieve as much successful as possible.



## **DEVAN:**

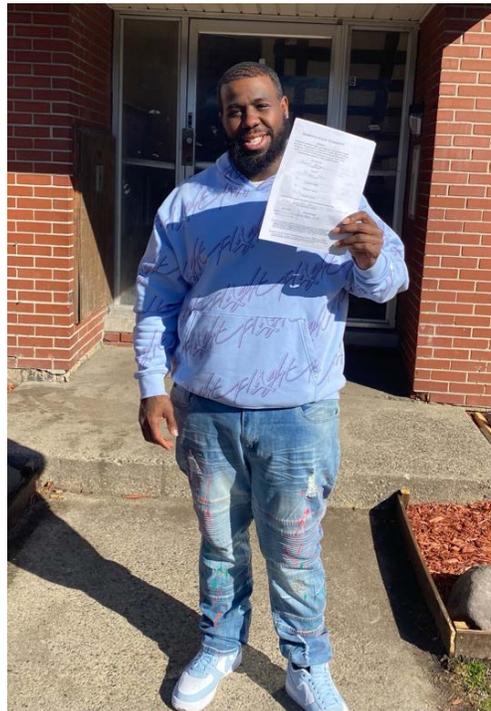
There really isn't much more joy to returning citizens (and us) than when they obtain their own residence to move into. There are many reasons including:

1. They have never in their lifetime had their own place.
2. They have now achieved complete self-sufficiency and are able to pay their monthly rent and all additional expenses.
3. They feel such a sense of accomplishment in putting their name on a lease.
4. They know their life has dramatically changed since leaving prison and everything is so good!

We began working with Devan last May and have helped him in many ways and none more important than keeping him afloat while he finished his Commercial Driver License training and had no income coming in.

That was a great investment as he got his CDL and a great job with GFL Environmental. We then helped him get an apartment to rent and helped with his move in costs, furniture, and home furnishings.

And as you can see in the accompanying photo, Devan could not be happier as he proudly holds his lease! Way to go Devan. Congrats!



## **JOSEPH:**

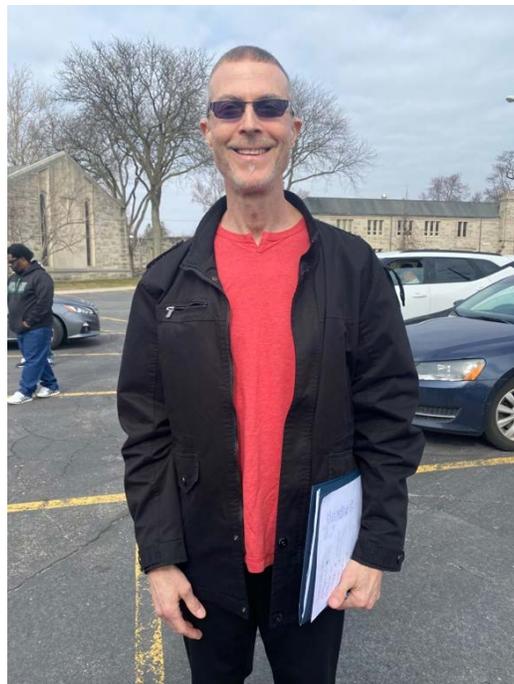
With over half your life in prison, it's not easy to make an adjustment to the outside world and especially when you went into prison at 24 years of age and come out at 60.

But Joseph appears to be an exception as we just met after he was released. Despite the 36 years he just served in prison, he appears very organized regarding his future plans and has set things in motion.

We helped him obtaining all his basic necessities as he currently is living with his cousin. After our meeting he texted the following:

“Please allow me to thank you for meeting with me yesterday. I do not take anything in life for granted anymore and what you do for people like me who are trying to navigate their way through a totally new world is commendable. This entire experience has helped to remove any remnants of cynicism I may have had about my future. You have helped set a positive tone for me going forward. I shared the experience with everyone I spoke with after meeting you. I look forward to staying in touch as I build my life from the ground up, one brick at a time. Please know that the brick which you have placed in my life is foundational and one which I will never forget.”

We look forward to helping Joseph move forward as best as possible and are confident in his becoming a wonderful success story!



## **RON:**

When we met Ron last July he'd been out of prison one week, after serving 20 years. He definitely knew what he wanted and heading that list was to purchase his own house.

We helped him at that time with basic necessities including clothes and food etc. and also provided him clothes for his training in Heavy Equipment Operation.

Fast forward until recently and Ron was able to purchase his own home through the Detroit Land Bank and he's been doing the necessary repairs to the home and is all moved in.

We helped him with furniture and home furnishing and what he also really needed right now was assistance with transportation to get to and from his job. He was paying someone to take him to work and that was expensive and not always convenient.

He qualified for our Working Cars for Working People program and Ron was excited, as were we, to get into his own Chevrolet vehicle! He was very appreciative and said: "I want to thank you for your help. I truly appreciate all that you have done, because it really has helped me with adjusting to this new world I have come home to."

Our pleasure Ron. A nice success story.



## **DEVAN:**

It is not hyperbole to say the greatest few days of Devan's life just occurred as it doesn't get much better than getting into your own housing for the very first time (along with new furniture and home goods) and getting a used vehicle the next day.

That's what we were able to assist Devan with as he has come a long way since we met last May, and we posted about him earlier this month when we got him into his own housing.

And he then qualified for our assistance with a used vehicle, which we recently provided to him as he obtained a very nice Dodge Sport Utility vehicle, and he could not be happier.

He has a great job as a truck driver, having gotten his Commercial Driver License and during which we had kept him afloat with help with food, clothing etc. But to get to and from work he had rented a vehicle, and that was costing him \$1400 per month and wasn't feasible.

Getting a car relieves that expense and concern. With his new apartment and his new vehicle, it doesn't get much better than this after having spent near 10 years in prison. Way to go Devan!



## **RICARDO:**

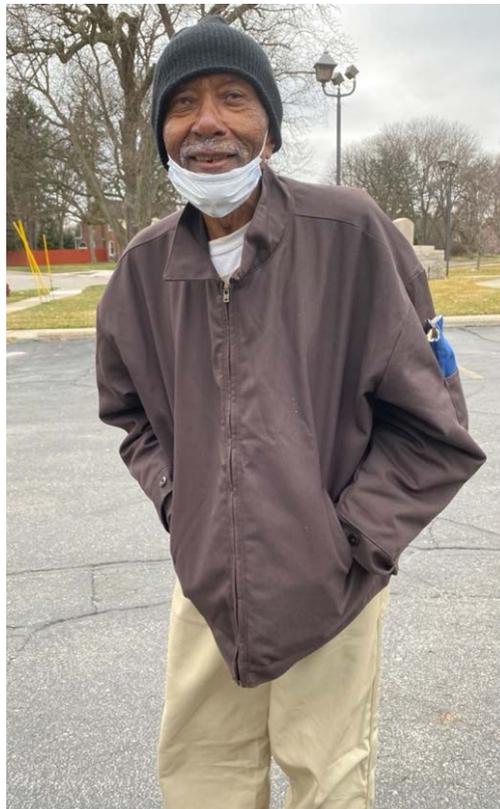
Unfortunately, we see a lot of returning citizens coming out of prison in their 70's and 80's and having been behind bars for 30, 40 and even 50 plus years.

It's hard enough for a returning citizen who has served only one year to come out and adjust to being away and reconnect with their family, have some stability with housing, finding a good job while having a felony background etc.

So, when we first meet with someone, like Ricardo who has been away for nearly 40 years, we really have to take it slowly and not overload anyone with too much information. These individuals don't know how to use a computer let alone a phone, don't even understand the bus system, how to locate housing, apply for Social Security, how to use a gift card at the store etc.

They need a lot more guidance and teaching moments which is all well and good as eventually we can get them into their own housing with an income in place and make sure they are safe and adjusted and have the basic comforts they need.

Soon enough, Ricardo will be in that category!



## **LINDBURG:**

Some individuals definitely do take advantage of their time in prison to further educate themselves, via either skilled trade training or getting their college associate degree or bachelor's degree.

Lindburg definitely did so as he earned an associate degree from Montcalm Community College and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Spring Arbor University, while in prison.

He was released a few weeks ago and is staying in transitional housing. Lindburg has as very admirable goal of becoming a certified addiction counselor so he can begin helping others.

He's already taken care of getting his license restored and will begin work at Amazon to start generating some immediate income and we can then get him into his own housing etc. We've currently assisted him with all his basic needs including clothing etc.

Lindburg is organized, a go-getter and intelligent. A great combination of traits that will definitely make him a wonderful success story and his goal of helping others as an addiction counselor will come to fruition!



## **DERRICK:**

It's said that records are made to be broken, but we feel confident that a record just set by Derrick the other day is going to remain for a pretty long time.

We first met Derrick ten days ago and at that time he had just started training with the City of Detroit and Detroit Department of Transportation as a bus driver. He was living with his mom and was ready to start looking for his own place to live.

Fast forward a mere one week later and he'd found a place to live. We sent him our housing assistance related application and he immediately completed it; we approved our assistance with his move in costs and our help with brand new furniture and home goods. Within eight days of our first meeting, he had signed a lease and was moving into his new residence.

That's fast. Real fast. But if you're on top of things like Derrick is then you can make it happen that quickly and all of a sudden you have your keys to your new place and are spending your first night in the comfort of your new bed. And just like everyone else we help with their moving, your new place is completely filled with all the things you need to have to make your house a home.

Derrick was very, very appreciative and we are glad to have been able to help!



## **CARRIE:**

As we've said before, the work ethic of returning citizens is very impressive. As shown by Carrie who we just met after she was released from prison a couple of weeks ago.

She'd immediately obtained a job working at a laundromat and working six days a week, eight hours a day. The pay wasn't great, but she kept at it while looking for another job and she was just hired by Dana Incorporated at a much higher rate of pay.

Although the Dana job is full time she will continue to work at the laundromat on a part time basis so she can save as much money as possible. We helped her with all her basic necessities including work clothing to her new job and we will soon work on getting her out of her current living situation in transitional housing.

We will assist her in finding a place to live, help her with the move in costs and furnish her entire home with everything she needs. She was very excited to hear that when we met and we know that Carrie will be a great success story in our program as her work ethic is strong, and she'll be self-sufficient and able to timely pay all her monthly bills etc.

She also has dreams of attending culinary school in the future and we can help with that enrollment as well. The future is very, very bright for Carrie!



## **ANTOINE:**

Taking advantage of learning a skilled trade while in prison allows a returning citizens to really hit the ground running. As Antoine did, until he hit a major roadblock.

Antoine had earned many certificates in training as an Auto Mechanic while in prison and he secured a good job when he was released with Bill Snethkamp, a Chrysler car dealer.

Antoine was doing well and was promoted to being an apprentice in the car repair department but as with many returning citizens who get a great job opportunity, they can't accept that job until they secure all the tools and equipment needed to perform that job.

Without our help, Antoine would not be able to accept the apprenticeship. We were glad to assist him and immediately after meeting him we ordered everything he will need and were able to deliver all those items to him within 48 hours of our first meeting.

He is good to go and will do great in his apprenticeship moving forward and Antoine has already begun researching the steps to buying his own house. Something else we can assist him with.

We were glad to have been able to help him get around this current roadblock and smooth sailing and success lies ahead!



## **MELVIN:**

Receiving a life prison sentence when you are only 18 years old seems quite unfathomable. But that's the news Melvin heard way back in 1987 and he did enter prison then for the next 37 years until, as a Juvenile Lifer, he was able to secure his release when the laws changed.

Melvin was a Prison Minister during his time there and it was clear from the thoroughness of his application when he first contacted us that he is very intelligent, organized and has his future plans in place.

He is living in transitional housing at present, and when we met in person we helped him with his basic necessities and will assist him with all his work-related clothing when he begins his job shortly. Melvin is in the last stages of the interview process with Hype Athletic as their Community Outreach Director.

It is quite amazing how, after 37 years in prison and entering as a young 18-year-old, Melvin is adjusting pretty well to life on the outside. From all that we have seen so far, we are certain he will make a wonderful post prison success story!



## **TODD:**

Big, big, big past few days for Todd who we first met last September. He had spent the prior 30 years in prison and was 57 years of age. He had secured a job with American Axle in Auburn Hills, and we helped him with basic necessities as well as work clothing etc.

He's been living with his brother and recently he felt ready to live on his own. Todd found a nice building to rent a room at in Pontiac and we helped him with his move in costs as well as supplying brand new furniture and a television and microwave along with pots, pans, dishes, bedding, towels etc.

But then the icing in the cake this week occurred as Todd qualified for our Working Cars for Working People program and we were able to provide him a great used truck that he is incredibly excited about and very proud as show in the photo.

We've very proud of Todd as well as he has come a long way from when we first met. We are glad to have made this a phenomenal past few days for Todd as everything has fallen into place. Way to go Todd!



## **DEANDRE:**

We met Deandre way back in August of 2023 and he'd been out for a few months at that point. He'd begun working at Ground Effects LLC as a yard porter. He'd already leased a vehicle and was on top of his car insurance and car note and living with family members.

We helped him with basic necessities and work clothes, and all was good. Fast forward eight months later to the present. He'd been self-sufficient and didn't need much help from us. Until now. He'd found a place to live and needed our help with move in costs, furniture, and home furnishings etc.

As we do, we sent him questions he needed to answer so his proposed housing situation could be fully evaluated. It's then we ran into an issue as he was currently laid off, his unemployment hadn't kicked in and he was hopeful of returning to work by the end of the month. We do encounter a lot of difficult decisions in doing what we do, and this was one as we didn't want Deandre to lose this housing opportunity, but his lack of current income was an issue.

After gathering more info, talking to his new landlord etc. we leaned towards optimism that all would work out and if he ultimately needed a new job we could get him one in a hurry.

So, we helped him with everything, and he's moved in and in the end all is good! And Deandre was incredibly appreciative!



## **MARIO:**

It is always good to hear from someone who we've spent a lot of time helping, years ago, to get to a place of self-sufficiency and independence. Many people send a nice text every now and then to let us know they're still doing well and/or check in at holidays etc.

It's especially nice when their update establishes that although they were doing well when we last helped them, they are continuing to do great and also pursuing additional opportunities.

As with Mario who we last helped back in 2022 when we got him his very first rental home and we completely furnished it etc. He continued to check in with us and yesterday provided an update: "I would like to thank you once again for all the help you gave me. I am currently in an apprenticeship program with Great Lake Water Authority as an electrical instrumentation controller. I'm also at Henry Ford Community College and I've started a hauling and junk removal business. If you need anything hauled, reach out to me as it would be my pleasure giving back to you!"

Wow. Great stuff. Way to go Mario! Wonderful to see how well you are doing.



## **CARLOS:**

Sometimes you just have to do what you got to do. And if that means taking busses a total of three hours each day to your 10-hour work shift, then right now that is simply what you got to do!

Which is exactly what Carlos is doing as he travels that incredibly long time on busses each day just to get to and from his job at Renaissance Global Logistics. We first met him back in June of last year and we helped him with various basic necessities. He ultimately found a job that is quite the distance from his home, but it pays well and provided consistent hours. The downside is he is catching the bus at 4am to get to work.

So, he's doing what he has to do now, and the good news is has some good opportunities to find housing close to where he works. As a matter of fact, right across the street. Which we will help him in going from a three-hour total commute to about three minutes total!

Quite a dramatic change. And big change as well in moving into his very own place for the first time. Which we will also assist Carlos with and all new furniture and home furnishings! Great things are happening.



## **CURTIS:**

Sometimes with returning citizens, they're working hard and on the cusp of self-sufficiency and then something occurs, though no fault of their own, and life happens, and the person falls back to square one.

It might be because of a job layoff, transportation issues making it difficult to get to work and back, health problems arise, or a family emergency requires all their focus etc.

We first met Curtis way back in November 2022 and we vividly recall his telling us, "I am not going to let you down."

And he hasn't but his road has been very bumpy for a lot of reasons Getting a job that was consistent with providing full time hours wasn't easy for him and transportation was an ongoing issue. He would work as often as he could and usually temporary positions with staffing companies and it was hard to get him into stable housing.

Until now. Curtis was able to get a job with the City of Detroit in Blight Removal and he's been able to get to and from work without any issues, has consistent hours, and is doing great.

We were able to assist with his move in costs on an upper flat he is renting and provided him new furniture and home goods to complete his brand-new residence. He's excited, we're excited and Curtis you never let us down. We knew eventually you would arrive where you are now, and all is good. Congrats!



## **KEIONTA:**

There are a lot of people whose words resonate with us when we meet them for the first time, and it leaves a memorable impression upon us.

As it was when met Keionta when we first met last October, and he said to us: “I honestly can’t believe you are helping me like this as I didn’t think you were for real when I heard about you. Nobody has ever done anything like this for me before.”

He’s come a long way since then! We’ve stayed true to our work and have helped in a lot of different ways including casual clothing, work clothing for his CDL training, phone bills, car repair etc.

We just helped Keionta get into his own housing by paying his security deposit. He’s doing very well now, working hard and he finished a program training him to work for DTE and climbing their poles to fix wires. We also assisted him with furniture and home furnishings and topping off the month for him, we just assisted him with purchasing a truck to help get to and from work with ease.

Keionta is a great success story and we’re pleased to have been able to assist him in all the ways we have in getting him to this point!



## **GEORGE:**

1976! There have been an incredible number of changes since then and can you imagine having been behind prison walls for the last 48 years and suddenly at 72 years of age you are released?

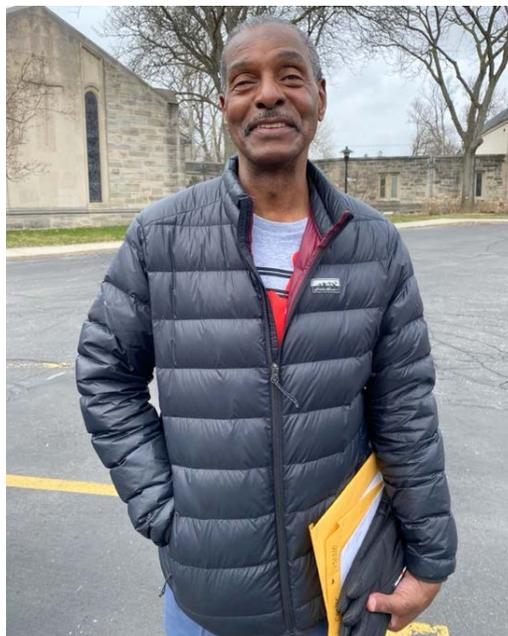
That's the story of George, who was sentenced to prison at 24 years of age, a whopping 48 years ago, and we met for the first time yesterday as he just got out of prison.

To say he his overwhelmed is an understatement. It's incredibly challenging to try and adjust to everything that is different than the last time he was outside of prison, almost a half century ago.

It's not surprising, just like Brooks Hatlen from the movie Shawshank Redemption who committed suicide once he was released from prison after 45 years, George also wonders whether he would be more at ease back in prison. Like Brooks, he is having trouble sleeping, still considers the prison his real home where his friends are etc.

We worked for a while to help put George at ease and make him fully aware that every day it will become a little easier as he adjusts, and we will be there for him every step of the way. We will help him in so many different ways to make life on the outside more bearable.

He was very appreciative and profusely thanked us with tears in his eyes. Getting him his Social Security benefits and into his own housing is first on our agenda! And we got him to smile by the end of our time together as shown in the photo!



## **ANDREKA:**

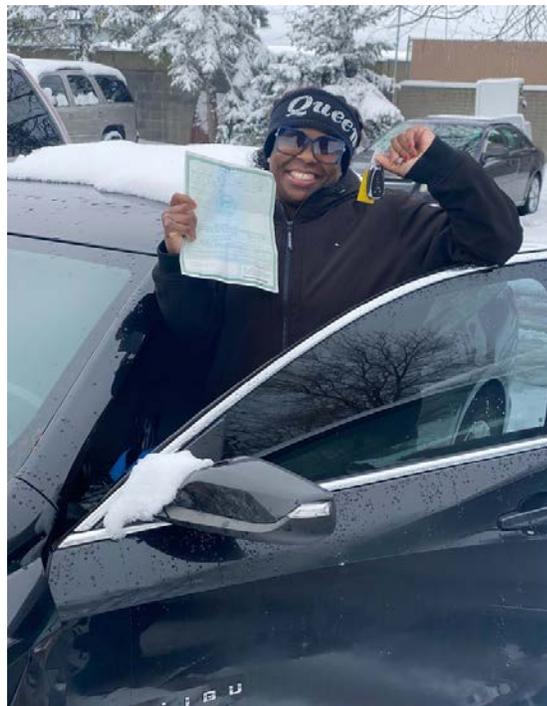
We met Andreka last October and she already had a good job at Warren Screw Products and was working over 60 hours per week! We helped her with various things, and she continued to be doing very well. We've recently had the pleasure of helping her get into her own housing at and she was incredibly excited and appreciative.

Andreka was ready to apply to our used vehicles program so she could get to/from work without paying Uber as she's been doing.

There was just one problem. She didn't have a Driver License. She soon passed the written test but needed to pass the driver road test. She ultimately passed and was so excited she sent us the following text: "I passed my road test today! 😊😊😊😊😊😊"

We were quite pleased for her and sent her the application to our Working Cars for Working People program. We were able to approve her for our help in getting a vehicle. She surprised us as she'd saved \$4500 on her own (very impressive) to go along with our \$3000.00 contribution. She soon selected the car she wanted and was able to find a great 2016 Chevy Malibu yesterday and she said: "Oh my God. Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

We say, "Thank you" Andrea for being such a wonderful success story!



## **MARCUS:**

Marcus definitely took advantage of skilled trade training opportunities while he was in prison as he trained for and passed the written portion of the test for his Commercial Driver License, got certified in Computer Numerical Coding, got a forklift driver permit and had training in carpentry.

We first met Marcus last month, shortly after he was released, and he'd already taken advantage of assistance provided by Michigan WORKS! and resources from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

He just started training at Suburban Trucking to complete the on-road driving training so he can soon pass his test, get his CDL, and we'll provide him many job leads.

He's obviously doing well, except for the difficulty in staying on top of his bills while he is in training without any income coming in. It's always a great investment for us in these situations to pay the bills so no one has to drop out of their skilled trades training and as soon as they are done with schooling, they will get a good job and be self-sufficient moving forward.

So we have helped Marcus with a car repair and paying his phone bill, credit card bill and car insurance. He will take his road test soon, pass that and get a great job and be successful. A no brainer for us to help him out at present!



## **CHARLES:**

We first met Charles on January 3<sup>rd</sup> and he was the go-getter that obtained a job on the first day he was back from prison. Impressive! Having skills in welding helped him land that job and we said on the day we met him that he was definitely going to be one of our most successful returning citizens as he was determined, organized, and smart.

Fast forward and we were proven correct as we just helped him get into his brand-new apartment. It is a rather rare occurrence that someone is able to find an apartment that will rent to him/her as almost all apartment buildings have a policy in place that they won't rent to those coming back from prison.

But Charles found one and recently moved in and we helped him with his first month rent and security deposit. We furnished his apartment completely, so he need not worry about accumulating anything further to make his house a home and he is all set!

The next step is our assisting him with a used vehicle as he clearly qualifies for our Working Cars for Working People program, and we look forward to making his daily commute a heck of a lot easier with his own vehicle. Way to go Charles!



## **DAMON:**

It can't be stressed enough that when people come home from prison before being referred to our program, they find themselves discouraged, overwhelmed, rudderless and depressed.

It is amazing how providing a little bit of hope can buoy one's spirits in a hurry and in a powerful way.

When we met Darnell he was very discouraged and felt getting out of prison wouldn't be as difficult as he'd been experiencing. He was in transitional housing he said was a worse situation than when he was in prison, he had been turned down from jobs due to background check, he was having trouble getting anywhere without any income for even a bus ride, friends and family had scattered and he was all alone.

We told him all that we could do for him, and you could literally feel the weight being lifted from his shoulders and he was smiling by the end of our meeting. Fast forward and he's now working full time after getting a job from the employment leads we provided him; we just helped him get into housing and are assisting him in getting into a CDL program that he will go to at night and on the weekends.

He's come a long, long way since our first meeting and it's incredibly exciting for Darnell and for us to see the success he has achieved, propelled with just a simple feeling of hope we provided him at our first meeting.



## **JASON:**

The success we're trying to obtain for the returning citizens in our program is a lot more than just getting to the point of self-sufficiency with enough income to pay monthly bills as, more importantly, we want them to be happy and enjoying life.

We do get that confirmation a lot as just recently David had said to us how "I am finally getting the opportunity to enjoy my life and I never had that before."

In the picture paints a thousand words category, we got these two photos the other day from Jason who is obviously living life to the fullest as he vacations in Hawaii. We recently received similar info from Lynn (one of our most successful people in our program with a job now as Community Liaison with the Detroit City Council) who was vacationing in Jamaica.

Certainly, these two gentleman are enjoying their life and not everyone gets to take a warm weather vacation but so many do get to that point of not only self-sufficiency but the more elusive goal of happiness.

It is so wonderful when we do get that text message or email from people who are expressing their contentment and happiness now. A great feeling for all!



## **MUTAR:**

Life comes at you fast at times as a returning citizen. Such is the case for Mutar who we just had the pleasure of meeting the other day. Mutar is in the halfway house as someone who is coming back from the Federal system and from there will go to home confinement.

He's been working very hard as he is employed as a dishwasher at Applebee's while he also is bettering his future opportunities by going to school full time for EVSE Operations and Maintenance Technician Training (for electric vehicles). A great future career but days are very, very long for him with school and working full time.

His current issue is he has to find a place to live as his time is up at transitional housing, so time is of the essence in finding a place to rent. We helped him with his basic necessities including work clothing and are now working with him on housing and providing him the landlord contacts we work with, and he will find a place soon. We can then assist with his move in costs and new furniture and home furnishings.

He was incredibly appreciative as we helped lift the weight on his shoulders. Mutar's a great investment of our time and money as his future is very bright as an electrical vehicle/charging station tech!



## **BERNARION:**

Sometimes it takes us a little while to gain traction in helping a returning citizen as there's a lot of adjustment for those coming back from many, many years behind bars.

We set up a face-to-face meeting ASAP but there are times that due to rides falling through or the person simply forgetting our meeting amongst many other meetings they have scheduled including with their parole agent, Social Security etc.

We recognize that some things take time. As they did with Bernarion who first contacted us right out of prison, way back in 2022. We had numerous meetings in place that didn't occur and honestly we were losing confidence that we would ever meet but we finally did in March of 2023. We hit it off very nicely and looked forward to helping him and immediately took care of a car repair for Bernarion.

He needed to get in his own housing, and we started down that path as he had a good job in place, but he then hit some bumps along the way including missing time from work due to an injury.

Eventually everything fell into place. He found a place to rent, he had resumed his employment, and all was good as we just helped with his move in costs, new furniture and other home items.

It took a long while to get here but sometimes great things take time, and all is indeed great now for Bernarion!



## MONTEZ:

Always great to get good news from someone we've helped a lot and that's what just happened with Montez.

We've been assisting him for a while now and most importantly keeping him afloat and moving forward during the time he was in training for his Commercial Driver License.

That's always a difficult time as on the one hand you have the positive of accomplishing your goal of getting a great skilled trade and subsequently obtaining a good job etc. The negative being able to afford food, transportation, housing etc. during this time frame when you are in school without any income.

Just what Montez experienced, and we did a lot to keep him afloat. We can pride ourselves on making sure no one has ever quit their training because of a lack of income issue as we do all we can to keep someone in their program. It took Montez a bit longer than most as he was challenged on one portion of his truck driver skills test, but he did eventually pass, and things were really looking up.

But his first job offer fell through and then it was a bit before he was hired by US Express and he's now doing great. He just texted us: "I pray that you will continue to have it in your benevolent heart ❤️ to help others. I appreciate you so much! You played a major factor in my being able to work for US XPRESS. I passed my upgrade test! Thanks 😊."

Wooo hoo! Our pleasure Montez. Glad to witness your success!



## **ANTHONY:**

The work ethic of returning citizens never ceases to amaze us as time and time again individuals are working full time and are then off to skilled trade school for many hours. The days are long, and the days are difficult, but people don't complain and are simply excited for the opportunities.

As with Anthony who we first met last August, and we helped him with all his needs. Soon thereafter he started at Mastonardi's Produce and we helped him with work clothes, a back brace, and insoles All of which helped him be very successful at his job.

He's been promoted and is now driving a Hi-Lo, but that success was not enough for him as he enrolled in school to get his Commercial Driver License.

All of which requires Anthony to work his normal 6pm-6am shift and then go to CDL school thereafter from 8am to 2pm. Wow!!! That's a lot of working and a lot of schooling everyday but he knows that is what it takes to not only earn money right now but also help improve his future with having a CDL license.

We look forward to soon helping Anthony get into his own home and thereafter make his life easier with a vehicle through our car program. Kudos to you Anthony for all your dedicated work.



## **PIERRE:**

One piece of advice that we provide to returning citizens is to go show your face when applying for a job.

With almost all jobs now having an online application it is important for returning citizens to go to the potential place of employment, either before or after they apply online, and express their enthusiasm for the job, discuss their background openly and convey how they will be a strong and reliable employee.

It goes a long way in dispelling preconceived notions about those coming back from prison and has been productive in helping people get jobs with clear gaps in their resume re: while they were in prison.

As it just was for Pierre who when we first met in January he was being treated for cancer and needed to get over that large hurdle first and he has! Now it was time to look for a job and he showed up and made a good impression on MEC Inc., including his experience in working in the automotive industry.

He recently got the job and has been doing great. We've helped him in a lot of different ways, and we will soon get him into housing. Then a used car from us coming thereafter as he will meet all requirements for that program. Great things ahead for Pierre!

