



JULY NEWSLETTER

Hello Friends,

We are sending this out on the Fourth of July to so happy holiday to everyone!

In conjunction with our country celebrating the birth of America's independence and freedom, we had a record setting 38 people last month getting off parole!

That is the true definition of freedom for returning citizens. Congrats to all of those individuals.

Also, we a record setting three-day period during June when we received a total of \$340,000 in grants over that 72-hour span.

Our program is incredibly successful but to be as effective as we are there is a tremendous economic cost so it's always great to have the confidence of donors to provide us funding to do what we do.

Lots of great, great stories this month including David, sentenced to 60 years as a 17-year-old and getting out of prison this month; Andre gaining clemency and his freedom from President Biden, Ryan and his mother's story of love, 5 people getting jobs at the Detroit Water Department, Brandon getting a great job with his CDL and our getting him into his rental home and providing a used car.

Many wonderful success stories so please enjoy reading them!

SARAH:

One of the more difficult things we hear from returning citizens, who are working and doing well, is “They cut my hours.”

Just a small decrease in hours can lead to much financial hardship when your monthly budget for survival doesn't have much, if any, discretionary income will all going to bills and nothing left over.

When we get that call or text from someone re: hours being cut we quickly try to get them into another job and help manage any bills that may be difficult to pay that particular month.

Sarah was doing well working at 7-Eleven and very self-sufficient until her hours were cut. She was able to get hired by Pappas (manufactures of food processing equipment) but her last paycheck from 7-Eleven was very light.

We helped her out and also got her more work clothes for the new job and all is good again. Sarah is doing well at her new job, back on a path of success and just sent us the following photo from work.



IVORY:

Most returning citizens haven't had a lot of people in their life offering help and guidance, so we hear, quite often, that they didn't think we were for real or felt we were just a scam.

We quickly establish we are for real, and their success is our success. That is our mutual goal.

Ivory got out about a month ago and we recently met and helped him with basic necessities and work clothing as he just obtained two jobs that will begin shortly. He quickly went from wondering if we were for real to calling us "a true blessing."

Ivory is a real "go-getter" and took advantage of his time in prison and obtained his associate degree from Jackson Community College while also gaining certificates for Custodial Maintenance Technology, Builder's Trade, and Food Technology.

He's doing well as we continue to prove that we are "for real" and we and Ivory will travel together on his path of success.



DIARTENIEN:

One knows they are a valued employee when the company they worked for prior to going to prison is more than willing to hire them, once again, after they are released.

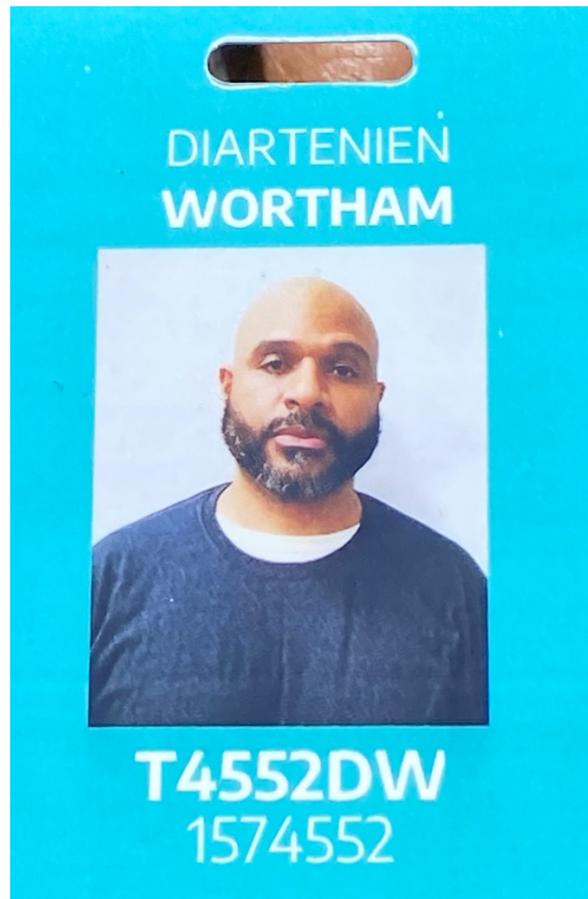
Such is the case with Diartenien who was working for Stellantis Automotive (formerly Chrysler) and doing well prior to going to prison for a little bit less than two years.

Once he got out he had to go through the process of being reinstated at Stellantis, and that day has now come.

He just resumed his job, and all is great as he's making good money and has a nice career there.

We've helped him in many ways and next up will be getting him into his own housing. He's been living with family, and all is good but soon it will be time to be on his own and we will assist him in finding a place and his move in costs and furniture and home furnishings.

When he resumed his job he proudly sent us his employee badge.



MARVIN:

Our Miscellaneous category is often, in our daily accounting, the largest category of our aid.

That includes things like eyeglasses, gas cards, car notes, bus passes, computer for school/work, driving road test cost, emergency food needs, bicycle, car insurance, uniforms, cost for certification in a skilled trade etc.

We just helped Melvin in many ways within our Miscellaneous category as he's in school to obtain his Commercial Driver License but also trying to survive without any current income.

We assisted him with getting new eyeglasses, gasoline assistance to get to and from his training, food, and car insurance along with helping him with the room he is renting.

He will soon be done and get his CDL and have a good paying job to keep him afloat moving forward. Without our help he wasn't going to make it.

So, our pleasure in meeting his various miscellaneous needs at present as Marvin is definitely a good investment!



DAVID:

28 years in prison will give someone a long time to think about what they would first enjoy experiencing once they are released.

David had been sentenced to 60 years in prison as a 17-year-old but was just released the other day.

We helped him with basic necessities and a phone and service plan and will further assist him moving forward.

What brought David initial enjoyment, as noted in the photos of him, were D and D. Donut and Dog!

It's obviously a difficult adjustment for those sentenced as juveniles and then trying to readjust to society after having been in prison all of their adult life.

David was able to gain some training in carpentry while in prison and is pursuing that path as a career.

It will all be a major adjustment for him but he's ready for the challenge and excited for the future.



DARRELL:

The “whole magillah” means the entirety of something. Every aspect of it.

That’s applicable to Darrel who’s been able to accomplish everything with us since we began working together earlier this year.

Starting with gift cards for all his basic needs and then helping him obtain employment and assisting with work clothes and equipment needed for his job. By April he was capable of paying rent etc. and we helped him with move in costs to his own home and provided new furniture and home furnishings.

One big issue remained. To get to work he relied on busses, costly Uber, or friends/co-workers which weren’t always reliable. With his own vehicle he could work overtime hours, and there’d be no problem with his paying for car insurance and any car repairs that arose.

So, it was our pleasure in assisting him getting his own vehicle the other day. He’s now gotten the “whole magillah” with us we couldn’t be prouder of Darrell. 🙌🙌



BRANDON:

It's always great when we can help someone stay afloat while they are training for their Commercial Driver's License, then see them get certified and get a great job and become very self-sufficient.

As it was with Brandon who we have helped in many ways since we began working together in February. He's now working with ASAP Express and Logistics transporting car parts. Problem is he's taking costly Ubers or walking to/from work and often gets off work at 2AM.

Brandon really needed help getting transportation to work and within 24 hours after he applied for our help with a vehicle, he was a proud car owner and his life became tremendously easier.

Brandon was very, very appreciative and texted us: "Thanks so very, very much. Your ongoing generosity is greatly appreciated and I could never have gotten this far without your help. This vehicle is going to help me in so many ways! Thanks again!"

Our pleasure Brandon. You've been a great investment.



CHARLES, EUGENE and ANDRAY

Shout out to fast food chains who are definitely “felon friendly” in hiring individuals returning from prison. Many of those we work with take that initial job and get their feet wet as far as entering the work force again etc.

As it was with Charles (Taco Bell), Eugene (Wendy’s) and Andray (Church’s Chicken). Wages in that industry have recently gone up as well so that’s a bonus as is the willingness of the restaurants to provide a second chance to those coming back from prison.

We just began working with all three of them and getting them many basic necessities (clothing, toiletries, food etc.) as well as work clothes. Next step will be their own housing as they’ll be able to afford rent etc.

Once again, a shout out to employers like Taco Bell, Wendy’s and Church’s Chicken!



KENNETH:

It's never too late.

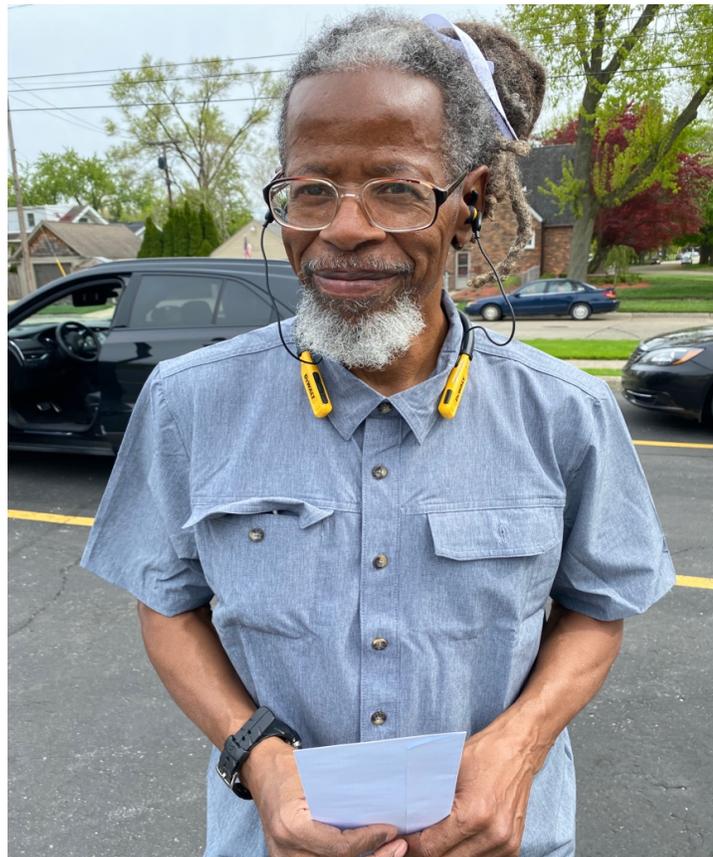
Even after spending 49 years in prison for a crime he committed at 18 years of age, Kenneth is very interested at 67 years of age to gain a degree in agriculture from Michigan State.

He's getting those wheels in motion now and we are assisting him as much as possible with his current needs from furniture to clothing to an iron and ironing board to a vacuum to sheets, towels, pillows, blankets, and a microwave.

Kenneth is very bright and will go very well once he's enrolled in college courses. It is indeed never too late to pursue one's interests and change the trajectory of your past.

As Kenneth said to us: "I am not going to school as a senior citizen purely for my own edification. I have larger goals."

We are looking forward to seeing big accomplishments by Kenneth.



Detroit Water and Sewerage Department

A good job can definitely change the entire trajectory of someone's life. With a consistent income, health benefits, retirement plan, vacation time etc. it gets someone on that path of success after exiting prison.

Years ago, we connected with the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) regarding hiring returning citizens we are assisting, and they were more than happy to assist and guaranteed an interview for anyone who applied.

Since then, DWSD has hired lots and lots of people who we refer, and they just hired Sean, Darnell and Ryan yesterday. All of those who have been hired there are still employed there and doing great!

So, thanks to DWSD for giving second chances and hiring returning citizens and a big thanks to those in our program who are employed there as they represent us very well with their great work ethic etc.!

A win all the way around for all involved!



KEVIN, LARNELL, FRANK AND ANTHONY

A great feeling for us is getting jobs for those just out of prison and allowing them to quickly begin saving money and feel a sense of purpose and pride with the job etc.

We will often experience that sense of pride as people send us photos of them at work.

We recently began working with Kevin, Larnell, Frank, and Anthony and helped them find employment and provided them all the basic necessities they needed along with work clothing and any tools or equipment required for their job.

All to make certain they were in the best possible position to achieve success and they all are doing great at their employment!

Next step, soon to be accomplished, is getting them into their own rental home as they all will be able to pay rent etc. without a problem.

Good times ahead!



ANTON:

Sometimes, when reading an application to our returning citizens program, we know there is a great backstory to an answer provided.

Such as with Anton.

Our application has a question regarding skilled trades or other talents an applicant is interested in learning and for the first time ever, “Sign language” was the answer (as provided by Anton).

When we met with Anton we inquired about that, and he said that for many years he volunteered at a soup kitchen and there was a woman who would come in and she was deaf, so he had a difficult time communicating with her.

They forged a basic type of communication, but he later wanted to learn sign language to communicate with the hearing impaired.

Now, out of prison, he is doing great and has a nice job with a construction company and we are helping him in a lot of different ways.

Including finding him a place to learn sign language! Good for Anton!



TERRANCE:

A certain level of trauma occurs while in prison but compounding that is when someone has already suffered significant trauma before being convicted of a crime.

That was the case with Terrance who experienced the death of his fiancée (and mother of their three-year-old daughter) while they were driving together and were struck by a drunk driver. She passed away at the scene of the accident last year.

Subsequently, Terrance has been recovering from his injuries while also serving 10 months in prison for a minor transgression.

He's back on his feet now and we're doing all we can to help him by providing all his current necessities, helping him gain employment as well as assisting him with applying to skilled trade programs and soon to obtain a residence of his own.

Terrance is still emotionally devastated from that fatal auto accident, and the death of his fiancé, but doing all he can to move forward with his life.

We are, and will be moving forward, doing all we can to assist with that process.



BREEANA:

Very often, after serving a prison sentence, there is a strong desire to choose a career path where one is giving back and creating good as best as they can.

Breana served her time and was released a few months back and we just met her for the first time.

She is very kind and generous as demonstrated by the job she recently obtained where she's giving back as best she can by serving as a Behavioral Technician for autistic children via her employer Open Door Living Association.

Breana is doing great, loves her job and is very appreciative of the help we are able to provide her. Her current living situation is not very good, and she needs to get her own place, along with her 12-year-old daughter, as soon as possible and we will take care of that for her.

We all make mistakes in life, and we are better evaluated not for our worst moment but what we do thereafter, and Breana is making a difference now with her second chance at things. Way to go Breana!



RYAN AND MOM:

A mother's love for her child is not really impacted by mistakes made by their child, which may even involve a prison term.

We have met so many mothers who do all they can to assist their child after they return home from prison.

As it is with Ryan's mom as Ryan just got out of prison a week ago and already has a job in place with his former employer, Growing Greener Lawns. His mom is doing all she can to assist him.

We are doing all we can as well including helping him with all his current needs including work clothes to resume his employment.

We will continue to help him move forward into his own housing and then a used vehicle.

Parents often express their appreciation for what we are doing for their children. As you can see in the photo of both of them, Ryan's mom was very pleased with all the information we were providing to her son, regarding the many ways we can help him moving forward.

Her smile says it all!



STEVEN:

#5 on the Rules of Life by Bill Gates is as follows:
“Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your Grandparents had a different word for burger flipping: they called it opportunity.”

Returning citizens recognize they are starting over again from the bottom and need to work their way forward. No opportunity is beneath them and they are very hard workers, no matter the job, and as everyone does, they enjoy the opportunity for advancement.

Steven is 67 years old and just got out of prison and is living in a halfway house. He jumped at the opportunity to begin employment at the halfway house as a building maintenance worker and proudly sent photos of himself while he was working.

Everyone starts somewhere and this is where Steven is beginning. He has other employment aspirations including renewing his Commercial Driver’s License.

We have begun helping him in various ways and look forward to seeing him take advantage of every opportunity.



FRANK:

The path of success for returning citizens is, at times, not a smooth course as there are ups and downs and hurdles to get over and our role is to help remove as many of those hurdles as possible.

We met Frank over a year ago and helped get him on a great path with a good job given his skills in home repairs/construction.

But his success was quickly derailed when he was in a car accident as a driver ran through a red light and hit his vehicle.

After a long period of recovery, he is now working again and we are assisting him with tools/equipment for his new position with a home repair company and Frank has never lost his positive attitude, despite the accident etc.

He's making good money and we can get him going on the process of finding a home. We'll help him with move in costs, provide him lots of furniture and home furnishings as his path of success resumes its forward progress!



DWAYNE:

There are exceptions to every rule and one of our requirements to be part of our program is to have been released from prison over the last 12 months. We have such a large volume of people we are helping (over 2500 at present) that we try to keep to that requirement as best as possible. However, there are extenuating circumstances at times and we bend that rule as we did for Dwayne.

When we first met, he was living in a hotel and working hard but high hotel costs made it near impossible to save money. He's been at his job for near two years now and is a stellar employee at Fuyao Automotive (produces automotive glass).

We were able to assist getting him into his own home and we've also helped him many times along his path including providing further funds for his new place and a bed, dresser, and couch along with home furnishings (pots/pans, dishes, silverware, drinking glasses, sheets, towels/wash clothes, blanket, pillows, and mattress pad). We also took care of his car repair needs yesterday.

Dwayne has always been very appreciative, and he is now a great story of success. We're darn glad we bent the rules for him and made him part of our program.



DALE:

It's interesting how life works sometimes, and opportunities arise when one least expects them.

We've been working with Dale since last September and had helped him in various ways. He'd been doing well and taking classes at Wayne State University after completing his degree at Jackson Community College while in prison.

He'd also been working at an art gallery and doing great when one of the owners, out of the blue, took exception to the fact he was a returning citizen. All of a sudden he was without a job.

Soon thereafter he was attending a seminar for returning citizens when he asked if he could speak about all his experiences since being released from prison. He spoke eloquently and from his heart and was so impressive that an employee there, from Neighborhood Legal Services, felt he would be a great asset to their organization.

Within days Dale was hired and things are going well. We just helped him with furniture for the room he is renting and will get him into his own rental home shortly.

A great story of success for bright and personable Dale!



TWAYNE:

We always encourage people to get as much training as possible to enhance the type of job they will be hired for or to obtain a promotion at their current job.

Twayne has taken that advice to a brand-new level as he obtained, from the Detroit Training Center, not just one certificate, not just two certificates, not just three certificates, not just four certificates, not just five certificates, but a whopping six certificates! Including Heavy Equipment Operator and Forklift Operator.

All those certificates enhance his marketability and he's obtaining a new job shortly with greater pay and benefits etc. Which will lead him, for the first time, to be able to save some money and we can assist him getting into his own housing where he will be able to pay rent moving forward.

Hard work pays off, literally and figuratively for Twayne. He's proud and we are proud!



SEAN:

Definitely a great few days this week for Sean as we assisted him on getting into his first home by paying his security deposit as well as providing him new furniture and home furnishings.

That wasn't all though as Sean has been a wonderful success story as he's been doing well with his job at Ford Motor Company, and we have been assisting him for over a year now in various ways.

And he is now in a position to qualify for our Working Cars for Working People program and just two short days after moving into his new place, we helped him become the proud owner of a nice Pontiac Montana. His first car as well!

A great and exciting few days for Sean and we couldn't be happier for him as it was a long time coming for these first-time events, but they are here now and exciting times for sure!



ANDRE:

Sometimes, even when the odds seem insurmountable, things do come through!

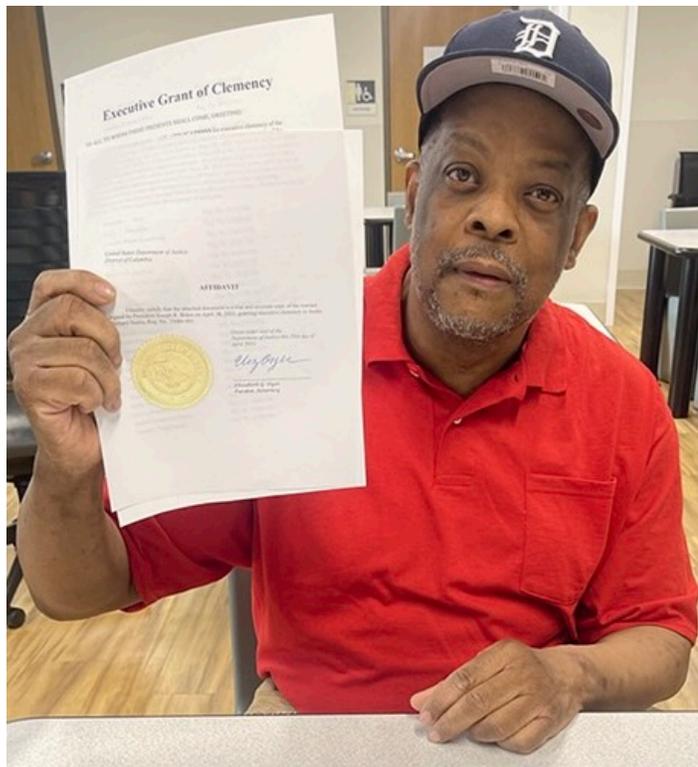
Andre was one of just 31 incarcerated people out of thousands and thousands and thousands of applicants to be recently granted clemency by President Biden! His last day as a Federal inmate is now June 30 and he's able to serve the remaining 10 days at his sister's home.

22 years ago, Andrew was better known as rapper Drunken Master, whose hit "50 Playaz Deep" peaked at No. 11 on the Billboard Hip-Hop singles chart.

Andre's prison sentence in 2016 was for attempting to distribute cocaine and was for 10 years in prison. He said, "I made a bad decision and got caught red-handed."

No excuses, but he was trying to provide a better life for his son who has autism. Andre now has a job with DDOT fixing buses and we're helping him with his basic needs and housing etc.

Holding on to hope does come through at times as it has for Andre!



WAYNE:

It's always exciting to see how things progress after we meet someone for the first time and learn of their goals and what they hope to accomplish.

We met Wayne for the first time in March and he candidly admitted then that being just out of prison for a few days he was just trying to adjust to everything coming at him very fast.

We try to slow things down for people and help them adjust to those first few weeks out of prison and eventually Wayne adjusted to the pace and pursued his goal of enrolling in school to get his Commercial Driver's license.

We helped Wayne in many ways, but he also got help from a family member who gifted him a vehicle. The car needs a bit of repair that we will take care of for him and ease his burden of getting to and from his training.

He's passed the written portion and will be taking the driving test very soon. Thereafter, he will be fully employed and making good money and we can help get him into housing etc.

Wayne's definitely pursued those goals he first discussed with us months ago and nothing but success lies ahead for him!



DAVID:

It's always great to look back at the results of the prior month to see what was accomplished with returning citizens in our program.

We can see we provided 227 forms of assistance in May in the amount of \$62,299.32. 100 people entered the program as shown by the number receiving initial gift cards for those just getting out of prison. Most importantly we were able to place 60 of those, so far, into jobs.

Eventually, the remaining 40 people will also be employed and are currently addressing other issues to be cleared up before first.

We were able to assist 20 people with furniture and most of those were struggling with sleeping on the floor, couch, or leaky air mattress.

Including David who was able to secure low-income housing for seniors at River Towers Apartments but had been sleeping on the floor before he contacted us for help.

And help we did in providing him with everything he needed at his brand-new apartment.

No more achy body from laying on a hard floor!

Here to Help May-23	Number of Grants	Cost of Grants
Walmart Gift Cards	100	\$15,000.00
Furniture	20	\$9,540.00
Cars	3	\$9,600.00
Car repairs	4	\$1,995.86
Rent	4	\$2,560.00
Security Deposit	1	\$1,000.00
Tools/equipment	9	\$2,150.20
Home furnishings	14	\$3,783.57
Clothing for Work	60	\$9,090.00
Utilities	1	\$539.41
Miscellaneous	41	\$7,040.28
Total	257	\$62,299.32



SAMMY, JEROME AND LENERO

A common theme we see is that returning citizens have a strong desire to give back to their community as well as “pay it forward” with respect to the assistance we have provided to them.

So, it was no surprise to learn the Sammy, Jerome and Lenero, three people we’ve aided, had all pursued an initial job with the non-profit in Detroit called Better Way.

Better Way provides employment with other community organizations who are engaged in helping others.

Sammy, Jerome and Lenero have been currently placed with assisting the local non-profit Detroit Goodfellows, who provides clothing etc. to children in need.

Jerome is also starting a training program in construction and drywall next month and Lenero is currently enrolled in culinary school as well as they pursue career paths to success.

Big achievements lie ahead for all three of them as they currently take pleasure in giving back to those in need!



KISEAN:

Sometimes, it's remarkable how various people in your life are connected.

Over two years ago, before we pivoted to only assisting those coming back from prison, we helped a woman named Elysia with a used vehicle as she qualified for our Working Cars for Working People program.

She was working hard but her car's transmission went out and she was about to lose her job because of difficulty getting to work when we came through with a car for her.

Fast forward to February of this year when we met Kisean shortly after he came back from prison. We helped him with his needs at that time including work clothes, regular clothing, and furniture. Just last week he also qualified for a vehicle with us as he's got a good job that he's been at for a while now and he's doing well.

When we provided the car we asked him who had initially referred him to us for help.

He said, "My girlfriend Elysia. You helped her before with a car."

Yes, we did and her car still running strong. As are Kisean and Elysia!



JONATHAN:

When you go to prison for 12 years at just 20 years of age, hopefully you to take advantage of some of the educational opportunities while in prison as you will still be fairly young when you do get out.

So, it was nice to see that Jonathan had earned 84 credits from Jackson College while he was in prison and is just shy about 30 credits to complete his bachelor's degree.

He was also able to complete a yearlong program in Food Technology and received certification through the National Restaurant Association. He has a great background to get any type of job in a restaurant including a managerial role.

Jonathan is a bright individual and definitely took advantage of opportunities while in prison.

We've begun providing our help and guidance with him, including employment leads along with aid with basic necessities and home furnishings while he currently lives with his generous brother.

A bright future ahead for Jonathan!



LAWRENCE:

It's great when someone coming back from prison has definite goals in mind and quickly sets out to achieve them.

Lawrence recently got out of prison, after 37.5 years, and in his application to us he stated: "All I need is a place to call home and where I have the keys to my own doors. This is the last thing I need to truly experience the taste of freedom."

His goal is to get his own house and he has invested a lot of time in studying the Detroit Land Bank program. He has a job with the City of Detroit which offers a discount to him on his purchase price for a Land Bank home. Lawrence knows what he is doing for sure!

We have helped him with his basic needs and his work and casual clothes and will assist him with his closing costs on a Land Bank home in the very near future.

He has a great attitude and a very warm and likable personality. We look forward to helping him get that "last thing" he needs for that "taste of freedom."



RAIN DAY:

We meet new returning citizens seven days a week all year round and in rain, sleet, or snow.

Which, admittedly, does pose certain issues for us as Monday we experienced a torrential downpour.

Thankfully, at our designated daily location, there is an awning area to provide some protection from the elements.

A nice scene on Monday as we first met with Darius and then he asked to borrow our umbrella so he could then escort, one by one, the other returning citizens as they arrived to meet with us and help keep dry all those without umbrellas on the short walk to the awning area.

A very kind and generous gesture as we had 13 other people meeting us Monday.

The photos show Darius in action in helping someone else out. There is definitely a bond between returning citizens given their common background and they assist each other with job leads, transportation etc.

And also keeping people dry from rain!



DARIUS:

A familiar refrain in our first meeting with a returning citizen is their saying, “I don’t want to go back. I want to do right.”

Those words were exactly what Darius said to us when we recently met.

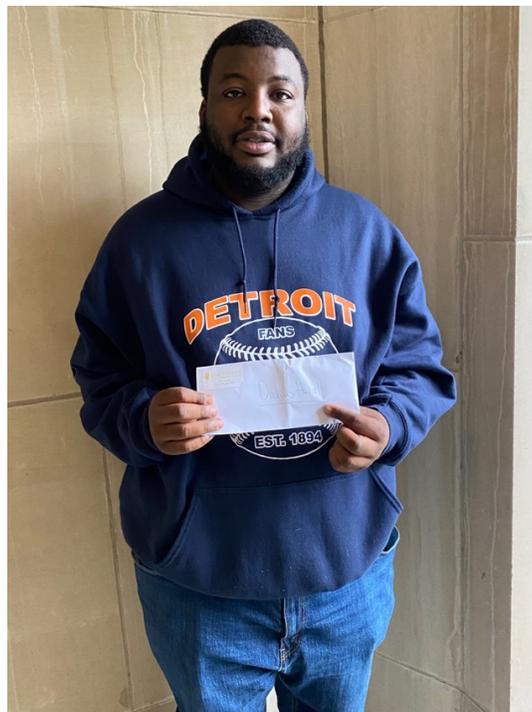
He added a bit more though as he candidly expressed that he was scared. Scared to fail, scared of some minor parole violation that he couldn’t avoid, scared of not being able to survive on his own. Scared.

We did our best to console him and assure that things would be okay. He just got a job with FCA and is living with his mom.

Darius had a car before he went to prison and that was still available to him if it got get fixed up and ready to roll. We took care of that for him and provided help with his work clothes he needed and his casual clothes.

We will soon be able to get him in his own housing and know that his feeling of being scared will lessen with each piece of success he achieves.

This has already begun, and his confidence will continue to grow!



Hopefully a great month of July ahead of sunshine and warmth!

Enjoy.

All the best,

Bob