



## **MARCH UPDATE FOR RETURNING HOPE TO RETURNING CITIZENS PROGRAM**

A great last four weeks as we head into Spring and our favorite season as it is the season of rebirth, hope and renewal – all relevant to what we view as the rebirth/second chances we provide to returning citizens.

We were able to assist 171 times during February with the following forms of assistance:

<b>February RHTRC</b>	<b>Number of Grants</b>	<b>Cost of Grants</b>
Walmart Gift Cards	93	\$17,300.00
Furniture	9	\$6,100.00
Cars	3	\$4,000.00
Car repairs	12	\$7,805.05
Rent	4	\$2,650.00
Security Deposit	2	\$1,860.00
Tools/equipment	5	\$1,072.97
Home furnishings	14	\$3,419.52
Clothing for Work	15	\$2,370.00
Miscellaneous	14	\$1,335.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>\$47,912.54</b>

A lot of great success stories this month including that of **Todd Stephens** who we first met last November, and we helped him with basic necessities at that point as he was just one day out of prison.

We quickly assisted him in getting employed and then helped him with a month bus pass to get to/from work along with work clothes, tools/equipment for work and eyeglasses. We recently helped him obtain his own home to rent and assisted him with his move in costs, furniture, home furnishings.

Finally, last week we were able to provide him a great used vehicle to help him get to and from his new (higher paying) job.

He's doing great, we have established a great friendship while Todd has reestablished his relationship with his 14-year-old son. Todd is a wonderful story of success!



**Here are some of the other hard working and determined individuals that we helped this past month:**

**Darius:**

Getting the keys to your first apartment or home, brings with it a lot of excitement. For many people, it represents years of struggle, including long periods of homelessness. Darius was released from prison last October and not long after was living in his car, including during these past months of freezing temperatures. Last month he was able to get the keys to his first apartment. We helped with move in costs, furniture and home furnishings and the joy and relief of obtaining those keys is well shown in this photo he sent us:





## **ALFONZO:**

22 long years away and Alfonzo's big sister remains by his side to welcome him home and provide a roof over his head with a bedroom for Alfonzo. He has already completed a course in welding, is now certified and on to a great career. We have assisted in many ways and just yesterday provided the basic, yet important, necessities of new pillows, sheets, blanket, pillowcases and towels and washcloths. Just how important these simple forms of assistance can be is reflected in Alfonzo's smile below:



## **Tina and Kristina:**

Friends looking out for friends often occurs with returning citizens who will spread the word of what we do to those friends they met in prison and connect them with us. We helped Trina in many ways over the last few months and when her friend Kristina was released last week, Trina connected her with us, and we have begun helping Kristina. They both came to meet us recently and we definitely enjoy seeing these friendships up close and helping those connected with returning citizens we've already helped. A positive pipeline for sure!



**DAVID:**

Facts are facts. The fact is the biggest problem for returning citizens maintaining employment is transportation. Uber/Lyft are too expensive on a daily basis, busses are late and time consuming with multiple busses often required, family and co-workers are not always reliable etc. So, it's wonderful when we can help someone with a used vehicle. David has a great job at Ford and is doing fantastic except for



the ongoing transportation issue which made every day an adventure on how he would get to work. No more though as we provided him a great Buick Rendezvous and that problem has been removed!



**JEREL:**

Move in day is filled with a lot of emotion. Not only is it a measuring mark of success for returning citizens but it provides, finally, a place to call home. Jerel was released last August, and we began working together and he was then sleeping in his sister's basement. Fast forward until now, and he's got a good job, saved some money and we have helped him along the way and just now with his

security deposit, furniture, and home furnishings as he got keys to his new home. He couldn't be happier, and he was full of positive emotion upon walking through the front door of his own place. Way to go Jerel!

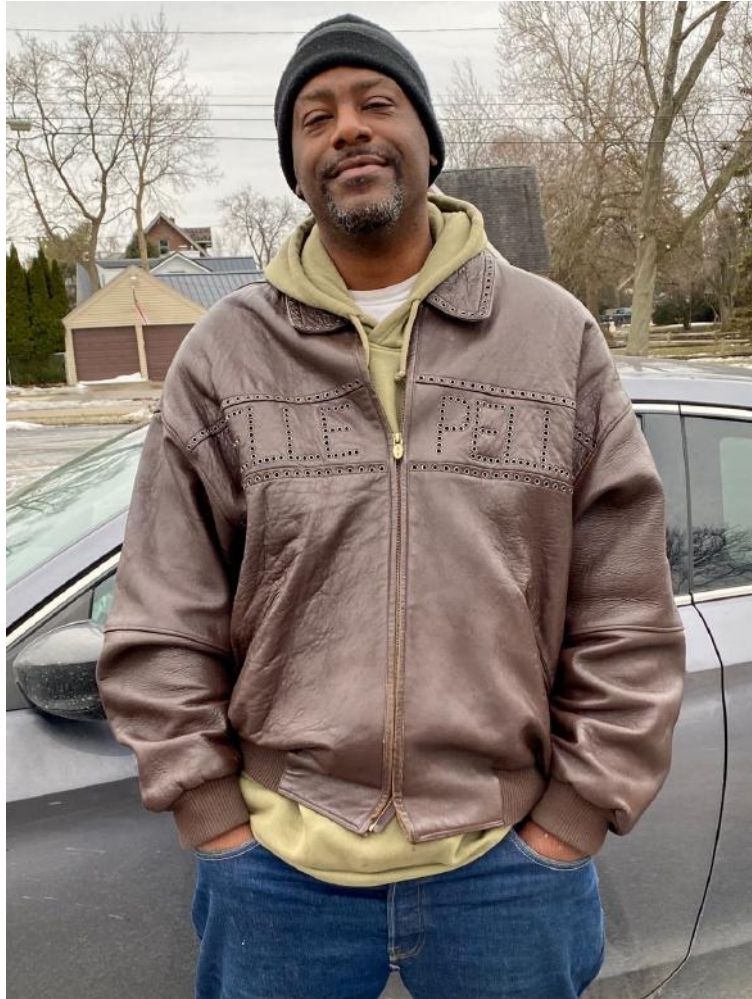


**RONALD:**

We knew that! That's what we thought that when reading a just released research study, stating ex-prisoners stay at their jobs longer, are less likely to be fired due to misconduct and are successful employees. Unfortunately, most employers simply refuse to hire anyone with a criminal record. Ronald was released two months ago and quickly hired by Mr. Wright's Plumbing and is doing fantastic.



Great reviews by his employer, gladly working overtime etc. We have helped him with various things and will be soon getting him into his own home. Great employee, great work ethic and continuing to be a great success story!



**ANTONIO:**

The song lyrics go:

“I'm gonna hit the ground running

“Hit the ground running

“Only waiting for the marching drums

“I'll be ready when the moment comes”

As it is with Antonio, who spent 14 years in prison and was ready to roll when we met right after he was released. He obtained a business management degree in prison and studied for a Commercial Driver career. He already had the knowledge to pass the written tests and he's now doing the roadwork etc. and will graduate soon and obtain a great



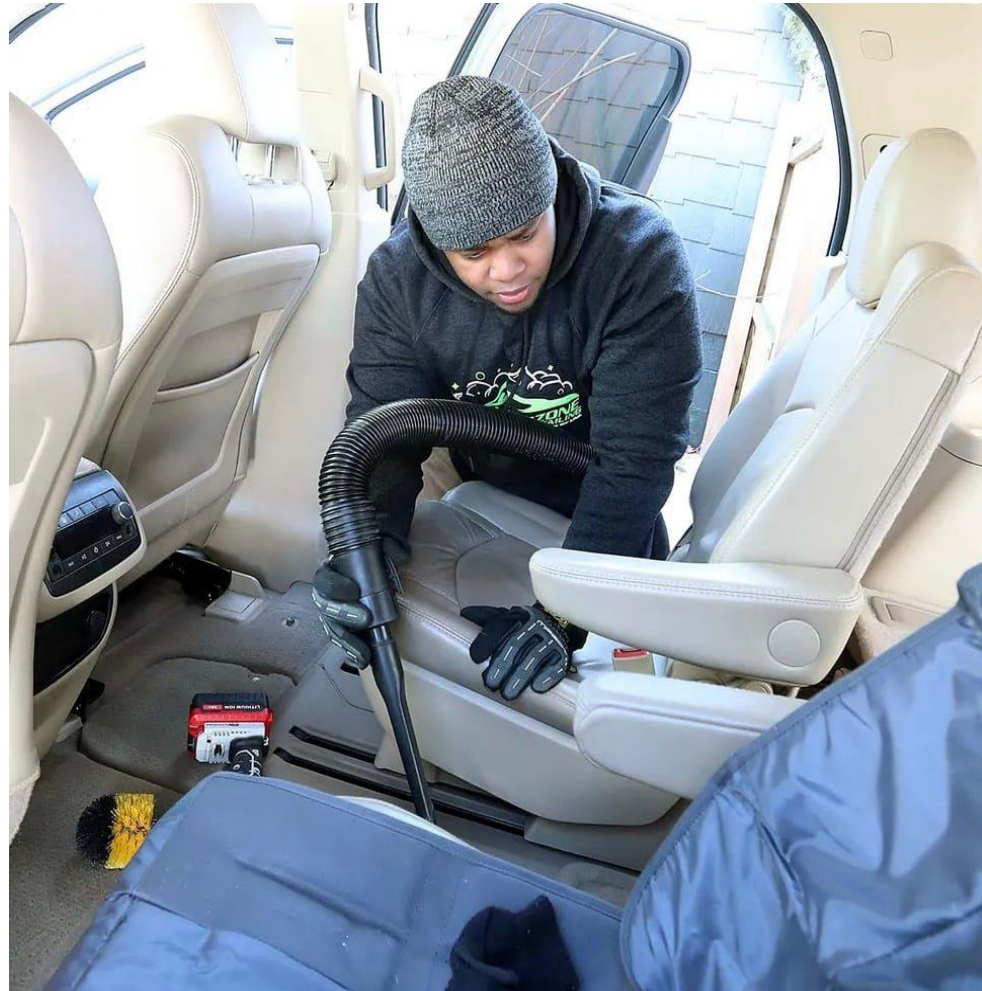
driving job. We have begun helping him and he definitely “hit the ground running” and is on his way to continued success. Very determined, humble, and smart. A great trifecta.



**ANDRE:**

Interestingly enough, many returning citizens have great experience as entrepreneurs although not necessarily operating a legal business. They now have to operate in the mainstream world of work and apply those skills to another business and they are often quite

successful in doing so. Andre started his own car detailing business and is doing fantastic. We had helped him get off the ground with equipment and tools as we were convinced it would be a good investment. He has proven us to be correct and all is going great for him. Wonderful to see!



### **JOHN:**

Ambition and optimism are two things that definitely help the success of those coming back from prison. John was away for 10 years and at 58 years of age, many would not share his enthusiasm for living in crowded transitional housing with people half his age and now working 10-hour days, six days a week. But nothing deters his positive attitude, and he was so excited when he got his job and when we provided him assistance with getting basic necessities, he shared photos with us of his accomplishments. With his desire to be successful and his incredibly positive attitude, bright days lie ahead for John!





**GREGORY:**

It says a lot when your employer (Providence Hospital Novi) likes you so much that when you have transportation problems they offer you Uber rides until your car problem is resolved. Gregory experienced that as he's been a tremendous success as a returning citizen and one of our favorite people to have had the joy of helping him since the moment he came out of prison. We have helped with gift cards, housing, furniture, car insurance etc. His transmission went out on his car, and he desperately needed a solution to getting to work. It was our pleasure to provide him a vehicle. He was incredibly appreciative, and we were very, very happy to help.



**DEONO:**

In 18 years of prison, one can sit idly or accomplish a lot. Deano chose to accomplish 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 as he secured help from a career coach. We met him yesterday and 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.  
Many accomplishments for him on the near horizon!

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

We are glad to share them with you and have a great remainder to  
your March.

All the best,

*Bob Schwartz*

P.O. Box 480

Royal Oak, MI 48070

[Here to Help Foundation Website](#)

heretohelpfoundation@icloud.com

Phone: 248-330-7271