

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

Some wonderful stories of success this month including so many people getting to the point of self-sufficiency and moving into their own rental home and living in their own place for the very first time in their life.

Including Ricardo, who had spent 41 years in prison!

Another great story included herein was our pleasure in assisting someone who was a “Juvenile Lifer” (sentenced to life in prison due to crime committed as a juvenile) and is doing great now since being released after 37 years behind bars.

All news was not great though as one of our more successful returning citizens, Albert, passed away unexpectedly. Also, seven others in our program were victims of a house fire at their transitional housing and they lost everything and are back to square one, once again. We are assisting them as much as possible in getting all their personal possessions replaced and back on their feet again.

Enjoy the many feel-good stories in this month’s Newsletter!

RICARDO, BOISE, HAROLD, CRAIG

It was a very big day when we put four people into their own housing on the same day.

Ricardo, Boise, Harold, and Craig had all reached the point of self-sufficiency as they all had enough monthly income for us to approve them for housing assistance and help them find a place, assist with move in costs and provide brand new furniture and home furnishings so they did not need anything further when they moved in as everything was complete.

They are all great success stories having worked hard to get to this point and including Ricardo having spent 41 years in prison before being recently paroled, Boise being a “Juvenile Lifer” and sentenced to life in prison at 16 years of age (he served 36 years), Harold (15 years in prison) and Craig who’s doing great working full time and we had eliminated his transportation issues with a prior car repair as well.

It's always our pleasure in helping people get into their own housing and very fun in meeting them again and providing all the home furnishings we provide (sheets, blanket, pillows, towels/washcloths, mattress cover, pots and pans, dishes, glasses, silverware) as their excitement for everything we help with is quite clear. So, a big congratulations to Ricardo, Boise, Harold, and Craig on all they have accomplished. Way to go!



KAVIN:

We first met Kavin a month ago and he had gotten out of Federal prison in March and a few weeks later he was already employed full time at Goodwill Green Works (a recycling facility).

He's impressed his employers so much that he's now been promoted to being a Supervisor and that brings with it a very nice raise in his hourly pay.

Kavin is a very hard worker and is now also looking into obtaining his Commercial Driver License, which would involve working 40-48 hours per week at his Supervisor job and going to night school every evening.

We have no doubt that Kavin will be able to handle that rigorous schedule. We've enjoyed making his life easier now by helping him, today, move into his own home. He couldn't be happier. We're very proud of how far he's come in the last nine months. We assisted him with new furniture and home furnishings along with his move in costs.

Kavin was very appreciative, and we were pleased to help as he represents a very uplifting and feel-good success story. Way to go Kavin!



FLOYD:

There are times where someone doesn't discover our ability to assist them until many months after their release from prison. Some people have floundered over that time and some others have done fairly well for themselves but still desperately need help from us.

Floyd was released in late September after being imprisoned in West Virginia and was transferred here. He was able to secure a job with AGS Automotive and has a second job with Nadiaza Estate doing home repairs. He paid for his move in costs and was up to date on his rent but still had no furniture or home furnishings in his home.

We quickly jumped in and helped him with clothing, a new mattress, box spring and frame, a nightstand and lamp, a couch, and a dining room table as well as all the home furnishings he needed (bedding, pots and pans, dishes etc.)

His house definitely feels more like a home now with these additional items.

We look forward to also helping him with transportation to assist him getting to and from both of his jobs. He's a very hard worker and incredibly appreciative of all we have done for him at present and, also, as we move forward together.



ANDREKA:

When we first met Andreka, she had a goal of getting herself into her own housing by January 1. She didn't have a stable housing situation at that time. It is always good to set goals and even better to accomplish them. And Andreka definitely did.

She's got a good job with Warren Screw Products and works a lot of hours and gets time and a half for overtime and she's been saving her money very well.

We have helped her in a variety of ways, and we were glad to share with her our Housing Resource Guide the end of Nov. She let us know very quickly that she'd found a place to move into.

We helped with new furniture and home furnishings and move in costs etc. when she moved in on Monday.

There is such tremendous excitement for returning citizens when they are able to get into their housing situation as it has not only been a long time since they had those comforts since they're just coming back from completing a prison sentence, but it is often their first home ever.

Andreka was incredibly excited to hold those keys in her hand for the first time and that ear to ear, incredibly large and excited smile speaks a thousand words.

Congrats Andreka! A job well done for sure. And what a great way to start the New Year!



ALBERT:

Definitely not the news we wanted to receive to start off 2024. But it is reality that when you are working with over 3000 individuals in our returning citizens program we do get this type of text from time to time:

“Good morning Father Bob. This is David Walker Jr. and you have been helping me and my Uncle Albert Walker.

“Unfortunately, he passed away for some reason on Monday and I just thought you should know. Thank you for helping him so significantly in getting on the right path from helping with the car to his house to the gas for him getting back and forth to his CDL program and to work when he started his job etc.

“And thank you for helping me also it’s a real blessing and I’m happy to say what you helped him accomplish motivated me to do better in life. Once again, thank you!”

Very tragic news to receive as Albert was a great success story and a phenomenal investment of our time and money as he was a hard worker and dedicated to being the best he could be. He accomplished a lot in a short period of time.

Rest in peace Albert. We won’t ever forget you.



MICHAEL:

We were contacted by Michael last April but at that time he was in the Federal Halfway House. It's very difficult to arrange meetings with people who reside there, as well as hard to connect via email and text. We tell everyone to contact us as soon as they are about to be released from the Halfway House. We'll set up an immediate meeting to start helping them.

Michael finally got out the other day and we met up with him right away. He has absolutely no family support or friends in the area. He was able to complete his Commercial Driver Training during the time he was at the Halfway House via US Trucking, and he got a good job right before we met.

So, he's been doing very well and is very much a go-getter given all he's accomplished so far. We helped him with work clothing and casual clothing and are now working on helping him get into his own housing which should be accomplished very quickly. We can then help with his move in costs and outfit his entire home with new furniture and home furnishings.

When we told Michael he'd been doing quite well since leaving prison, he very proudly and triumphantly said it best with his short but accurate response. With a big smile, he said "I'm doing great!"

Indeed you are Michael. Kudos to you for all you've accomplished!



JAMES:

It's often a steep drop from where one was before going to prison, and where they are when they get out. James was definitely one with a significant fall. He had been employed as a radiation therapist but went to prison for almost two years and lost everything.

Making things all the more difficult is that he had no help from family or friends. He was living in transitional housing and needed immediate work and met a guy who did home renovation, who offered James a job.

James sought our assistance with work related clothes and things and when we quickly came through for him he said: "OMG, you have no idea how much that means and that you will help. I'm excited to start moving forward and it's been hard run for me. I lost everything I had, my family, career, house, everything, and then once I got home everyone turned their back on me.

"It's good to know there are still good-hearted people in the world especially when my back is against the wall. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

The only way to move is forward with returning citizens and keep them on the path of success as possible. We will keep moving James forward and we hope he will, eventually, get back to where he was.



CHARLES:

Talk about hitting the ground running! Charles definitely has the record for that as he obtained his job on the first day he was released from prison back on Jun3 27th.

His skills in welding helped him to get a job immediately with Eastern Michigan Industries, producing high quality fabrications for tool industry.

Charles makes good money and has been living with family and is now ready for our help in locating his own place to live and then helping him with his move in costs, new furniture, home furnishings.

We met him on a day with winter like low temperatures and at this time of year we keep our vehicle well stocked with winter gear to help people with. He was very excited to receive, along with gift cards for his other current needs, a nice and warm winter coat.

Charles is a hard worker, taking on overtime hours as much as possible. He's already achieved much success, which was made all the more easier by his getting his job on the day he came back from prison. A record for our returning citizens program!

Way to go Charles and we look forward to moving you even further forward on your path of success.



JOHN:

The bottom line is it's one thing to complete a program providing certification in a particular skilled trade and it is quite another, when you do not yet have an income, to be able to purchase the tools and equipment needed to get a job in the field you're now trained in.

John is certified in all four tiers of welding, and we provided him job leads for employment. He's completed applications and is awaiting further word but knows he will need the basic items for a welding career including a welding helmet, welding jacket and steel toed boots.

We took care of getting those welding items for John and he's good to go. We also helped him with new eyeglasses and a bed.

He's currently living with his sister and looking forward to being able to contribute to the cost of food and helping with rent. But he knows as soon as he's employed and can save a little money that we can help him find his own home to rent as well as assisting him with his move in costs and providing him everything he will need in his new residence to make the house a comfortable home with furniture etc.

It's great when we can remove those impediments to success such as the items John needed to launch his welding career. He's good to go and will quickly move along on his path of success. Woo hoo!



AUTUMN:

One of the difficulties facing returning citizens who have a particular area of expertise and an accompanying licensure or certification, is that their conviction prohibits them from restarting that career path when they are released from prison.

It was pleasing to learn that Autumn would not be falling into abyss as she is by training a Dental Assistant and thankfully her conviction will not impact the ability to resume working in that field.

The even better news is that being out less than a month now, she has already obtained a job as a Dental Assistant and starts today.

She's happy, we're happy and her employer will be happy as well. We've helped her with not only her casual clothing she needed but with her work clothing needs as a Dental Assistant.

She's making a nice income and very shortly we will get her into her own housing and the accompanying new furniture and all the necessary home furnishings.

It is nice to see that getting a job in her field of expertise is one thing she won't have to worry about as a returning citizen!



ISAIAH:

It was a great week for Isaiah as he not only got into new housing with our help on the move in costs and new furniture and home furnishings, but he also qualified for our Working Cars for Working People program and got himself a great van for him and his family.

We started working with Isaiah last August, right after he got out of prison and moved back home with his wife and children. He began doing Door Dash to generate income and then got a very good job with Crystal Clear Images (commercial printing business where he works as a Print Technician and also provides customer support). He's been there six months now and doing great.

Isaiah is also taking classes at Wayne State in pursuing his bachelor's degree in business.

He has come a long way in a short period of time and has always been a hard-working individual and very appreciative of our ability to assist him. Way to go Isaiah!



FELICIA:

You may recall our assistance to Felicia last month in getting her into her own housing, with her husband and daughter, and helping them with furniture and home furnishings.

Again, as we move forward in our help to her, here is another version of....“The rest of the story.”:

Between Felicia and her husband, they work five jobs to make ends meet and have the ability to maintain and add to savings. It took almost 18 months to get to this point.

In addition to the joy of having their own home, we were able to help Felicia get into a great Chevrolet Impala this week which will make her life so much easier without having to scramble for rides to her various jobs each day.

Felicia and her husband are very hardworking individuals who can now experience the joy of having their own place and the convenience of having one’s own vehicle. Congratulations!



JOHN:

As it is said, “Here’s the rest of the story!”:

We posted on Facebook about our providing John the tools and equipment he needed to be able to accept a job utilizing his welding expertise.

We discussed removing the impediments to success by making sure he had all the tools and equipment he needed to begin a great job in welding and lo and behold, just a few days later, John was hired by a company needing his welding skills.

John was able to accept that job and begins today as he is all equipped with the required boots, welding jacket and welding helmet. He was ready to roll once we had provided him what he needed.

It's always a great feeling when we can take care of those needs and know that someone is now on a great path of success utilizing their skilled trade expertise and ready to begin a career.

John was excited, we were excited, and we are ready to watch all the great things that will be coming his way including getting him into his own housing very soon.

That is the rest of the story and what a great one it is!



TIM:

We meet people, in person and outside, every single day of the week and no matter the weather since if people choose to re-schedule because of snow, heat or rain then we can accommodate them.

Yesterday was one of those days when we expected to get a lot of cancellations as the snow was coming down hard and fast and the winds were very strong.

But surprisingly eight out of 12 people scheduled yesterday did make it to the meeting spot on time. Including Tim, who drove from Pontiac and was determined to meet us after being out of prison for about a week and struggling with pain of needing a knee replacement ASAP.

Tim was also very kind as during the time we met and talked about all we could do to assist him now and moving forward, he kept brushing off our car from the snow accumulation. Thankfully we had a nice winter coat to provide Tim as well.

The determination for all those that made it to meet us yesterday was remarkable and for all of them we anticipate that determination will get them moving along quickly on their path of success.



JEMEAL:

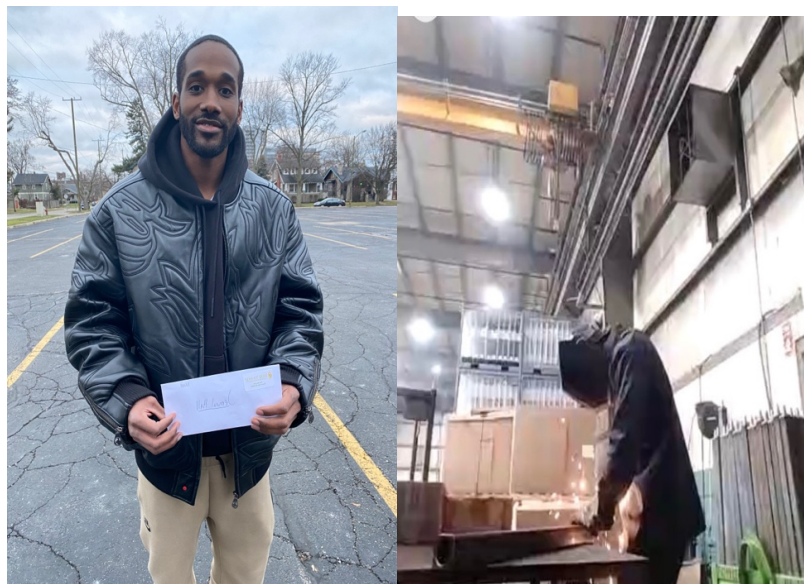
Having expertise in a particular field is always helpful for those coming back from prison. Jemeal, who was just released, has a background in welding and he quickly got an interview with Precision Laser and Manufacturing.

The interview was the day after we first met Jemeal, and he was concerned that if he was able to get the job that he would not have the required equipment and clothing to start. We provided him gift cards for basic necessities as well as general work clothes and we assured him that if he got the job that we would make certain he had everything required to begin.

He came through with the job offer and we came through with the items he needed including a welding helmet, jacket, boots, and tools. We went one step further and provided him a welding machine that will allow him to take on side jobs and increase his income.

He was beyond appreciative and texted us: “Thanks so much and thanks for believing in me! I'm going to get the job done. What you have built for us is life changing. All my dreams I had for nine years, about being back in society, are coming true and I appreciate your help so much. I'm focused and determined and thanks for supporting me every step. Again, what you are doing is life changing.”

You are very welcome Jemeal! You're doing great, and we are pleased to be part of your success. He sent us the attached photo from his first day at work.



MI'TRIS:

To some degree, what Mi'Tris texted us after we assisted her with a used vehicle to get to and from work (via her qualifying for our Working Cars for Working people program), is exactly what we are all about.

Mi'Tris texted us the other day after she received our help in getting a nice Dodge Avenger car: "Thank you so much for everything you have done, including this car, as all you've helped me with has made life so much easier. I'm so grateful for you and your help. God bless you!"

Our goal is to make things easier in the life of a returning citizen as they come back from prison. They face hurdle after hurdle from finding a felony friendly employer and a job with a decent wage, transportation issues, technology learning curve, having shelter etc.

So, if we can make things easier by connecting them with a job, helping with transportation, getting them into their own housing etc. then they definitely will become self-sufficient, and those hurdles will have been removed. As they have been for Mi'Tris and she's a very wonderful success story!



JOHN:

There is no limitation on the types of help we provide to returning citizens as their needs are vast and critical and range from everything like a dollar for bus fare to the cost of a used vehicle and all in between.

We actively encourage everyone to not hesitate in reaching out to us when a need arises as they should feel very comfortable in asking us for help as that is what we are here for.

But that is not as easy as it sounds for some people who simply have never needed help before and are hesitant to be a burden or feel they can take care of their needs by themselves.

There are some that fall in the middle who ask for help but not all the help we can provide. Such as John who just moved into his own residence and he took care of paying first month rent and his security deposit. But his home was completely EMPTY of anything. No bed, no couch, no dishes, no blankets, not pots, no sheets, no drinking glasses etc.

So, we took care of that for John just as we previously took care of all the tools and equipment that he needed for his good job working for Smart Links security systems.

Between what John did for himself and what we did to help him, he is now fully sufficient. A great accomplishment!



RAS-ISHMEL

Sometimes it's "the luck of the draw" with a returning citizen getting a great job opportunity. Such as a forgiving person may have reviewed their application, or the returning citizen happened to stumble upon a good job fit on Indeed.com etc. and applied.

We first met Ras-Ishmel at the end of December, and he'd just been out of prison for a couple of weeks. He'd heard of an employment opportunity with Armada Investment Group, a small property investment company just getting started. His job position would be as a "property scout" and give him full time hours with a very good rate of pay.

He applied and got an interview and lo and behold he impressed the company enough that his prison background was a non-issue, and he was hired the other day.

We had initially helped him with his basic necessities coming out of prison and we met up again the other day to provide him with gift cards for job clothing and we also provided him a nice warm winter coat as he didn't have anything resembling that necessity.

Very nice to see good things happen so quickly with the ease in which Ras-Ishmel secured a good job but not surprising since he is smart and articulate and will make a great employee. We look forward to helping him a lot more as he continues to move forward!



KOREY AND RUDOLPH:

You may recall a little while back when we helped high achieving returning citizen Robert Mitchell with his closing costs on the purchase of his very own home.

Robert wanted to also help those returning citizens who needed a place to live and just this week we helped to of his new tenants, Korey and Rudolph with their move in costs and new furniture and home furnishings.

Korey is working full time at Goodwill Green Works and their recycling facility in Detroit and Rudolph is a U.S. Army Disabled Vietnam combat veteran, who receives Social Security disability assistance. He and Robert (also a military veteran) became friends when they found themselves at the same transitional housing location after prison.

It is very refreshing for us to not only see Robert gain the ability to have purchased his own home but even more positive with his willingness to rent his large home out to two of those who share the common background with him of prison.

Three very nice success stories, all under one common roof now.



ASHTON:

When there is a will there is a way. Ashton definitely has a will, and he definitely had an idea for the “way” part but needed our help.

We met Ashton the other day and he was staying in transitional housing in Pontiac and had recently secured a good job with Guernsey Farm Dairy in Northville, as a milk manufacturer, and he can work up to 55 hours per week.

The problem is Northville is about 20 miles away from Pontiac and he had to be there by 5am and no bus was available that early. Ashton secured temporary transportation to get him to work but time was running out on that situation, and he asked us for assistance with a bicycle.

The idea of riding a bike that distance to work at that time of day (he could take the bus home) and in the middle of a harsh winter, concerned us greatly. But Ashton assured us he had previously used a bicycle at this hour and during winter without a problem. He also revealed his past work perseverance as he previously had walked up to 16 miles a day to get to a prior job.

We agreed to purchase him a new bike and the necessary helmet and reflective clothing. We also provided him a winter coat when we met him, and he was incredibly appreciative. He is determined and success is in his future!



BENJAMIN:

Working with so many returning citizens we received hundreds and hundreds of texts every day. We welcome all of those texts which will range from emergency situations, to new needs for assistance, to just a random text of thanks.

Those latter texts of appreciation for what we've done in the past for someone do feel very good on our end. We always want to hear from those who are doing great now and just wanted to reach out with a note of thanks.

As Benjamin just did. We last helped him with a car insurance payment about seven months ago. He's been doing well as he obtained his CDL, got a good job with the City of Detroit and has been a wonderful employee (achieving Employee of the Month last Sept.)

He sent us a random text the other day as follows: God bless you! Just checking in as I just thought about how much of a blessing you have been to me and my family. And I am not reaching out for once because I needed something. 😂 Just letting you know things are good. Happy new year and thank you for everything!"

So sweet. So nice. So uplifting on our end. You are very welcome Benjamin. Our pleasure to assist you!



KENNETH:

37 years is a long time to be in prison and all the more so when you were sentenced back in 1986 as an 18-year-old.

Kenneth received a life sentence without the possibility of parole but that did not stop his desire to learn (he achieved his associate degree in business while in prison and also worked as a facilitator and mentor).

Thankfully, due to a change in the law he was able to be released from prison last month after 37 years. Kenneth is bright, organized and determined and all three traits bode well for his future success.

He had a plan in place when exiting prison, including obtaining training in drywall finishing. He's all set to be enrolled in that program via the Detroit Training Center. We provided him some job leads for immediate employment as his goal is to work while going to school.

We helped Kenneth with gift cards to assist him with his basic necessities, and items he needs for school and for work. We'll soon help assist him with housing and furniture and home furnishings. We also helped him with a winter coat as he lacked that basic need.

Over half his life, Kenneth was behind bars. Nothing but success in his future given his determination and his intelligence, bright days are ahead. We look forward to being beside him at all times.



TIMOTHY:

Let's be real and recognize that some of the jobs that returning citizens initially grab aren't glamorous and can be physically demanding and often not the easiest places to get to without a long bus ride.

We've given a shout out before to JAX Car Wash for being ready, willing, and able to hire those coming back from prison and plenty of those we work with have taken a job there. It is a good place to work, and the pay is good as well but washing cars in the middle of brutal winter temperatures is not the easiest of jobs.

Then add on a two-hour bus ride to get to work, like Timothy now does for his employment at JAX, and it makes for a demanding day. We first met Timothy last week and he was determined to get a job and help support his 11-year-old daughter. His goal is getting his own home and out of the transitional housing building (especially when their heat shut off last week during single digit temperatures).

He's determined and plans to also go to school to learn a skilled trade. We've helped him and will help him more as he progresses on his path of success. He has all the characteristics of being a very successful returning citizen, including a strong work ethic!



CORTEZ:

Michigan's prison system offers various forms of skilled training, and one of those programs achieved national notoriety with an award-winning documentary about it.

That's the famous culinary program run by Chef Jimmy Lee Hill and the documentary is entitled "Coldwater Kitchen." The film follows the Food Tech program and examines the journeys of four men in the culinary arts program, and navigating the criminal justice system. It also looks at the challenges of transitioning back into society after leaving prison.

It won the famous James Beard Foundation media award for best documentary. Director Mark Kurlyandchik stated, "Most of us are touched by incarceration in some way, but yet we don't get a real view into the system. When you get there and you get to know these people, there's a lot of humanity that we're not seeing. It's very hard to change people for the better in an environment and a system that is designed to oppress and keep them down."

We've helped many of the graduates of the program in many ways, including tools, work clothing etc. needed for their new chef job on the outside. Cortez is one of those individuals. He's so very proud having been part of this award-winning prison culinary program!



CHARLES:

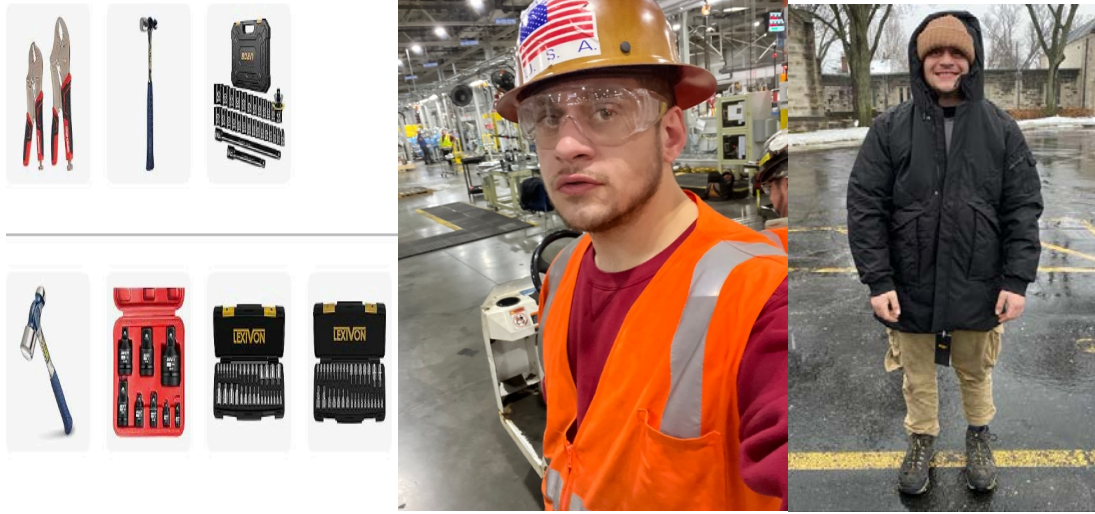
It always gives us great pleasure to help someone who is already on a path of success as they are pursuing a skilled trade which will bring them job security, very good wages etc.

Not many people pursue a career as a millwright, but more should as it is a great employment choice. Charles made that selection and is in the apprenticeship program through the Millwright Institute of Technology. We just met for the first time and helped him with work clothes along with specific tools that he desperately needed to be the most successful that he could be at his job.

Also, his car just went down and needed repairs and we are taking care of that car repair for him, so he has no difficulty getting to and from work and remaining successful.

We look forward to helping him with his own housing in the near future. Charles is happy regarding his career path and very, very appreciative of our efforts in making his pursuit of millwright training go as smoothly as possible and he can concentrate on learning. We also provided him a brand-new winter coat when we met.

Our pleasure to assist!



WILLIAM:

Not going to lie, there are some days where things resemble the old arcade game of “Whack a Mole” as just as you take care of one returning citizens emergency situation, another one arises, and the day just proceeds in that fashion.

It’s all good though as we try to resolve each issue and help each returning citizen get around the problem at hand.

Just as we did for William, who we first met back in August of 2022, and we’ve helped him in a variety of ways over time. All was going well, until a series of events caused him difficulty. He’d been working for One Stop Landscaping and got married last fall but then he got scammed out of a security deposit on housing, his wife picked up COVID and missed time from work and the lack of snow up until recently meant he wasn’t working much by plowing. Suddenly, they were homeless, and we were contacted for help. And we helped. And William was greatly appreciative:

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You are great and if not for you, people like me would never be able to survive. I love you and if you ever need me for anything in life I got you, even if that is not more than speaking regarding the great work you did for me and others. I got you. Thank you, thank you, God bless you your family and please don't never hesitate to call on me.”

Thanks William. Glad to help!



CHRISTOPHER:

Skills, skills, skills. Very important for the success of returning citizens is learning a skilled trade which makes them much more marketable as an employee. Some individuals come out of prison having a skill in place that they acquired long before they went away.

From detailing cars, to plumbing to HVAC training to tree artisan etc. it is always good to match a person with a job needing their particular skill. Many times, if the person hasn't been in prison too long, they can resume their job with a prior employer.

Christopher had lots of skills in housing construction and carpentry and when we first met him he was working in that field but had two needs. The first was he was undergoing carpal tunnel surgery and during his recovery he needed some help staying afloat with his bills. Secondly, when he went back to work, he really needed help with his own tools to not only help with his current job but allow him to make money on side jobs.

We helped him as he is a very good investment and hard worker. Attached are photos of a 7500 square foot home he's currently working on. When we provided the tools, we also provided a new winter coat to keep him warm working in winter conditions.



FIRE

Hard to believe it was just about two years ago to this exact day that many returning citizens living in a transitional housing home in Pontiac were the victims of a house fire, that caused complete devastation to all their personal belongings, resulting in significant physical injuries as well since people were required to leap out of second floor windows to avoid the engulfing flames.

Unfortunately, tragedy just struck again the other day as a similar fire destroyed a transitional housing place in Detroit and destroying all the personal belongings of seven returning citizens. All of whom who now find themselves starting at ground zero once again since they each had been out awhile now and achieved much success.

As with the first fire in Pontiac and this second fire in Detroit, all of those individuals who suffered harm are part of our returning citizens program and we are the ONLY resource for them. So, we have once again jumped right in to started replacing clothing, work attire, furniture etc.

It's so sad to see this happen again and the psychological toll this takes on those involved is significant. The concept of starting over is overwhelming but we're meeting with each victim, one on one, and doing all we can to ease their burden. Thankfully we are getting involved immediately, compassionately, and all-encompassing in the help we're providing. Better days are ahead. We're determined to get everyone back to where they need to be on their path of success!



DEMETRIES:

When we first met Demetries last March, he'd done time in Federal prison as well as in Arizona state prison and was back in Michigan and struggling. He was homeless and lacking his State ID and Social Security cards to get employment.

He was feeling overwhelmed by it all and wanted nothing more than to be a good father to his two sons. When we discussed all that we could do to assist him, he did what many others do and actually cried, overwhelmed with the emotions of hope and relief as he grasped all the ways we could make his path easier.

And we have in various ways. Let's now fast forward ten months to now, and so much good has happened. Demetries is working at a good job for many months now and just became the proud recipient of keys to his new home. We helped with his move in costs, new furniture etc. and he was again overcome with emotion. He texted us:

"I just want to thank you for everything. I mean you are such a tremendous blessing to me and all of us (those everyone else had written off and counted out). Especially for those of us who really, really are trying to get their life together. Thank you. I just had to express that first and foremost."

You're welcome Demetries. Always nice to see a success story!



WILLIE:

We strongly encourage anyone with their own vehicle to set aside a little money each money into their savings to cover future car repairs, which will inevitably arise. A recent survey established that 60% of Americans can't afford an unexpected \$1000.00 car repair bill.

Many times, returning citizens are simply not able to have saved that much for a variety of reasons including they are fresh out of prison and haven't been working that long, or their ongoing monthly payments to the State while on parole limit their ability to save etc.

Many people are like Willie who we've been helping for a while now (including getting him into his first home a few months back). He has skills as a locksmith, has a good job in that field, but his car went down. He could afford some of the cost of repair but definitely not all of it. Obviously his vehicle is critical to his job as he travels to clients, and we took care of his bill as quickly as possible, and all is good again.

Transportation is very critical to returning citizens, as without the ability to get to one's job it can cause all their success to quickly unravel. We were glad to assist Willie and he was very appreciative!

