



## OCTOBER UPDATE FOR RETURNING HOPE TO RETURNING CITIZENS PROGRAM

### CATCH-22

The popular novel Catch-22 coined the term referring to a situation where one is trapped by two contradictory conditions. In essence it is a problematic situation for which the only solution is denied by a circumstance inherent in the problem.

The concept of Catch-22 is very applicable to returning citizens where they constantly face these contradictory situations. The most common one being that they need a good paying job to be able to pay their fees, secure housing, transportation, clothing etc. Yet one can't get a good paying job without learning certain skills, but how do you go to school or obtain training for those skills if you have no income to pay tuition or survive without an income while in school?

And that's where our program comes in to keep these determined individuals moving forward while they are diligently obtaining the skills necessary to be successful. We help find the appropriate resources to assist, along with us, the payment of tuition. We then assist with everything to keep them afloat while

they have no income because we know this is a solid investment for a life changing career. We've seen it time and time again play out very great and especially with the popular training for a Commercial Driver's License. All of which leads to good paying job, self-sufficiency, success, contributing back to their community etc.

So, we are a solution to those Catch-22 situations that are a constant roadblock and we are glad to be of assistance.

## **Here as some great stories of a few of those that we helped this past month:**

### **Lynn:**

“I was incarcerated for 33 years 5 months 25 days 8 hours 15 minutes.”

That's how Lynn McNeal told us how long he'd been in prison. One month after turning 17 years of age, he'd been sentenced up to 60 years. He said: “While in prison I took every opportunity that I could to better myself. I understand that every day I'm free it's a total blessing and I will take advantage of this gift I've been given for a second chance. I'm a very hard worker and eager to be a productive member of the community.”

Since his release this summer, he quickly got a job, began teaching a sociology class at University of Michigan and just began a new job with the City of Detroit. We helped him obtain that job as well as assisted him with basic necessities, furniture, work clothes, a car repair etc. He's a tremendous success story for sure! And there's much more accomplishments ahead for Lynn.



## **Jajuan:**

"The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention." —Oscar Wilde.

This quote is applicable to the initial form of assistance we provide to our returning citizens which is designed as a form of rebirth with the simple act of providing gift cards so they can get new clothes, toiletries, shoes etc.

A “small” act in the big picture but one that is so appreciated, and which also is the beginning of our providing ongoing hope for the future. We provided our initial gift cards to Jajuan, right after he got out of prison, and he was very excited and very grateful for this “smallest act of kindness.”



## **Bobby:**

Kal Williams spent 26 long years waiting for his younger brother Bobby to finally return home from prison. After all that time he was very much ready to continue his role as big brother and give Bobby a job in his landscaping business (Kal's Lawn Care). We were there to provide our assistance to Bobby with work clothes and equipment, boots and shoes and casual clothing as well as other basic necessities. Bobby is very appreciative of our

help as well as his brother's and we will continue to assist and guide Bobby as he is off to a great start on his path to success! 😊



**Darryl:**

It's amazing how much positive change can occur while in prison, as shown by Darryl Woods; sentenced to life without parole at a 18 years of age. His sentence was eventually commuted

after 29 years in prison. While behind bars he worked for the NAACP and helped create a youth deterrent program known as "Scared Straight," which is now in six prisons. After release, he launched "Fighting the Good Fight" to help and mentor former inmates, drug addicts or troubled teens. He's now the Regional Coordinator for Nation Outside, working on more effective criminal justice policies. We have helped him in a variety of ways, including getting him into an apartment and providing furniture/home furnishings etc. A great success story.



## **Clifford:**

Imagine if you were isolated from society for the next 20 years and then set free in the year 2041 and told to fend for yourself without any required documents (Social Security card/Birth Certificate/State ID etc.), no money, no appropriate housing, and no guidance for getting employment. That's exactly the unbelievable task facing returning citizens. All the more remarkable are the amazing stories of success of those we are helping. Such as Clifford who we began working with the day after his release and who is now working, living in his own apartment, and giving back to his community by mentoring others. A great accomplishment and kudos to Clifford for overcoming so many obstacles. 🙌



## **Raymond:**

It's always nice to meet those who have learned a marketable skill during the years they spent in prison. We met Raymond right when he was released after he'd spent 25 years in prison and while incarcerated he became certified in braille translation. Upon his release, he became a full-time employee with the Michigan Braille Transcribing Fund. He is doing great as, in his words, "I become acclimated to being back in the free world."

He will make a good living as a braille translator, and we have helped him with basic necessities and will soon help him get into his own home as he continues on his path to success. He was very, very emotional in knowing we are here to assist him at all times. A wonderful story of achievement so far for Raymond. 🙌👍





## **Dalshan:**

"Tipping point" is the critical point beyond which an unstoppable effect/change takes place. Our applicants are always at that tipping point. If their emergency is not resolved, their whole world can quickly unravel. Such as with Dalshan, who we've been working with for many months since his return from prison and he was doing well with his job, in his own residence etc. But he was having a tough time getting to work as his car needed a repair. No repair = loss of job, no income, can't pay rent, eviction, become homeless etc. We took care of his tipping point, and the car was repaired. His expression of joy and relief says it all:



## **Stephanie:**

A well-known saying states: “You can't understand someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes.”

That's very true with returning citizens who face many obstacles due to stereotypes of who they are, what they've done etc. It's about second chances but some haven't had a first chance, being born into poverty and all the associated issues. When we provide our initial assistance with gift cards for clothing, toiletries, food etc. it's often the first time someone has assisted and shown concern about their future success. It usually brings powerful tears of appreciation as it did with Stephanie who cried for quite a while. We're happy to help and will continue to help move Stephanie forward.



## **Timothy:**

There's the old proverb: "Where there's a will, there's a way."

Very true in referencing Timothy W., a returning citizen we met yesterday at the location we meet people at seven days a week. The spot is designed to be convenient for those coming from Detroit and those from Pontiac and very easy for those taking the bus etc. Timothy took a little different path to our first meeting as he rode his bike 24 miles there and the same distance back home.

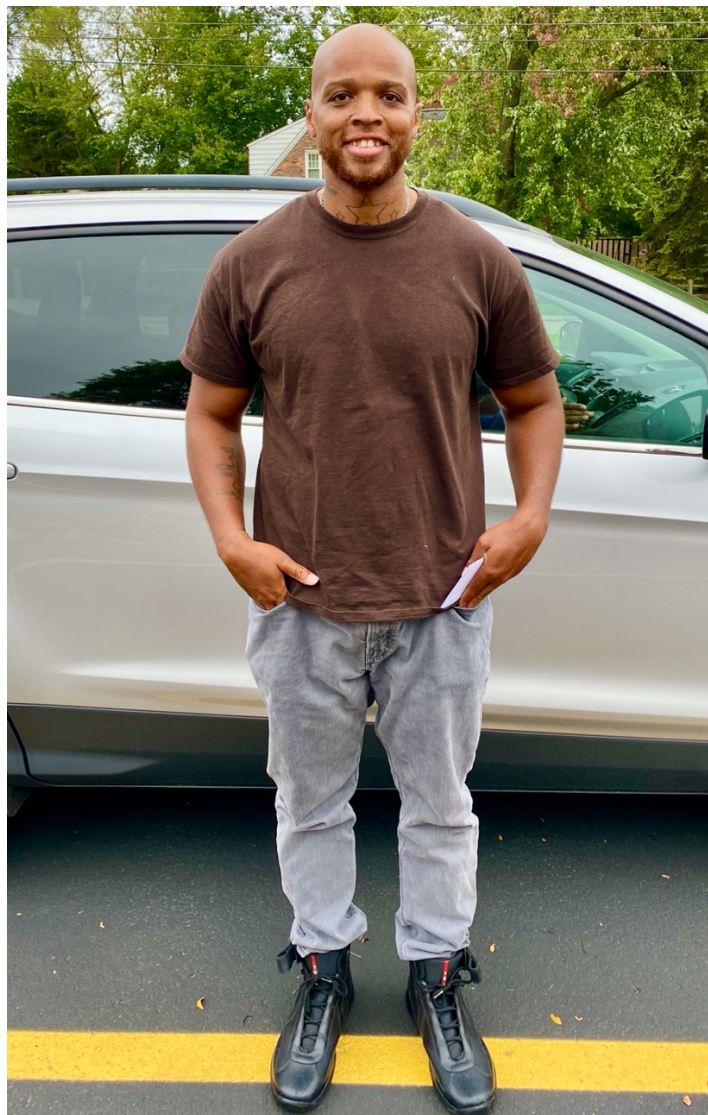
He had zero complaints and was in great spirits on a beautiful fall sunny day. And bright days ahead for Timothy as we begin all the means of assistance we can provide him as he moves forward.



## **Ortez:**

Boxing legend Muhammad Ali said: ““If my mind can conceive it, and my heart can believe it - then I can achieve it.”

When we met Ortez Thompson the other day, he'd only been out of prison for 10 days (after serving 8.5 years) but he had big dreams. He was getting his Commercial Driver's License in place as he obtained CDL training while in prison. He had a job lined up but, most importantly, he was going to pursue a business degree because he didn't want to just work for someone else's trucking company. He wants his own company and fleet of trucks, and we have all the confidence Ortez will get there and achieve that dream! 🙌



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

Best wishes to everyone as the beauty of autumn rolls in. Enjoy and stay well!

All the best,

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