



**HERE TO HELP FOUNDATION**  
**P.O Box 480**  
**Royal Oak, Michigan 48068**  
**[www.heretohelpfoundation.org](http://www.heretohelpfoundation.org)**

## **SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER**

August was incredibly busy as we shattered prior records for a month with the amount of assistance we were able to provide (\$105,636.09) including the number of people we were able to place into their own housing. We also provided help on a whopping and record breaking 295 occasions.

We helped 30 people get into their own residence and the vast majority moving into their first rental place of their own ever. Exciting times for these very self-sufficient hard-working individuals.

And for those qualifying through our Working Cars for Working People program, we were able to provide a total of 10 nice used vehicles during the last week of July through the end of August.

Much success for lots of returning citizens in August, which is very exciting and some of these upbeat and wonderful stories are included herein. We also were awarded the **2023 MVP – MOST VALUABLE PARTNER** award by Detroit at Work, which was exciting for us.

**Layman, Marquez, Tiffany, Bryan, Demond, Jason, Gui and Tihara:**

As August draws to a close, we're excited we were able to assist so many people this month with a used vehicle to help them get to and from employment and stop worrying about how they will get to work.

Transportation is a critical component of the success of a returning citizens and when that obstacle can be removed it is a time for celebration. It also means that individual has shown the ability to be completely self-sufficient as our assistance with a vehicle can only come after they have qualified for our help in getting into their own home. They've demonstrated the ability to pay all their current monthly bills and also able to afford the monthly cost of car insurance as well as saving for car repairs that become necessary at some point.

It's always rewarding for us to see so many people qualify for a used vehicle as it definitely means great success has been obtained by someone we've been helping for a while.

That includes, amongst many others this month, the following people who obtained a used vehicle from us. Big shout out to Layman, Marquez, Tiffany, Bryan, Demond, Jason, Gui and Tihara.

**CONGRATULATIONS!**



## **DARWIN:**

One of the difficulties returning citizens face is returning to the same neighborhood that contributed to their running afoul of the law in the first place.

Sometimes, old friends may not be the best idea to reacquaint with. Similarly, family support is very helpful to success for returning citizens and the opposite is also true that sometimes family members are a large impediment to moving forward for those coming back from prison.

As it is for Darwin who is working very hard at being successful and has a good job at Dana Inc., but he needs to remove himself from situations that are not beneficial to him. Unfortunately, he had nowhere to live but with family members who are actually a roadblock to his success for many reasons and his living situation is a pretty difficult environment.

Our immediate goal is to get him into a different living situation and into his own place where he can control everything in his surroundings. We will take care of that for Darwin shortly and he can place all his attention on moving forward and being successful without any distractions.

Brighter days ahead for Darwin!



## **THOMAS:**

By far, the number one question we are asked is about transportation. Almost every returning citizen asks us about getting a car or getting a car repaired or gas cards or bus passes or paying on a car note that is behind in payment, Uber gift cards etc.

Understandable, as everything starts with having transportation to get to work, or job interviews, or doctor appointments or school etc.

Our providing someone a car to help get to and from their job is so important but comes after we help them get into their own housing. We have to see what their monthly cost is for rent, utilities, food etc. so we can make certain if they'll be able to afford car insurance and save for car repairs.

Thomas though got a car all on his own as he was able to obtain a nice 2010 Chevrolet Cobalt through savings from his job. We're now onto getting him into housing.

Complete self-sufficiency for him is right around the corner, and we'll help him find a place, pay his move in costs, provide new furniture and home furnishings.

And kudos, again, to Thomas for saving on his own to get transportation. Nice going! He's very proud as are we.



## **MARCUS:**

“Your help will definitely not be wasted on me!”

Those were the words Marcus conveyed when we met him a few weeks ago and just a few days after he came back from prison.

He received “ServeSafe” food manager certification in prison, giving him skills in the food management industry and he also is an exceptional chef which helped him get a great job in that field. He’s now the full-time chef at Betty Janes Bar and Grill in Warren. A great restaurant and kudos to them for giving Marcus a chance and he’s doing great so far.

We just met up with him again and hope to come by Betty Janes in the near future. We’ve helped him in various ways and look forward to getting Marcus in his own housing very, very soon.

And so far the initial words of Marcus are ringing true. Our help has definitely not been wasted at all and we don’t see that ever happening!



**ONKEESE:**

“I was making 35 cents an hour in prison so I will gladly take \$16.50 an hour as a dishwasher now.”

Those were the words of Onkeese when we met the other day and just a few days after he was released from prison.

He was discussing his taking a job as a dishwasher to help keep him afloat while he is also in school now to get certification in the skilled trade of drywalling.

He is determined, smart and moving quickly as all this was accomplished in less than a week of being released.

Best of all he is enthusiastic of not only all the help we can provide him but, most importantly, all that the future can provide him. He will soon have learned a skilled trade and will get a good job doing what he enjoys, and we will help get him in his own housing etc.

All good on his path of success and we look forward to being with Onkeese and moving him forward at all times.



## **VINCENT:**

There's obviously a lot of things that come very, very fast at a returning citizen including all the advancements which occurred since they went to prison, along with certain events occurring in their personal life.

Vincent got out of prison a few months ago and obtained full custody of his 12-year-old daughter, whose mother recently passed away.

Vincent definitely had a lot of adjustments in coming back to his community after years away but also becoming a full-time parent. He's making good income at \$27.00 per hour and we've been able to assist him with furniture and home furnishings for his apartment and other basic necessities.

We were able to provide his daughter new bedroom furniture as well. She's obviously experiencing a lot having lost her mother and we're trying to ease that situation a bit in helping her as well.

Vincent will be able to provide for her and we will be there to make sure there are not bumps along the way, and if they arise we will be there to provide our ongoing help.



## **BRANDON:**

There's no question that it is the little things that can make a big difference in the success of someone coming back from prison. A kind word, an offer of help, a bit of hope etc.

So, the little thing that Brandon's new employer, US Foods, did for him was significant.

On his first day of work, they provided the following sign in their lobby and Brandon immediately took a photo and sent it to us as included here:

We replied:

“Wow, that's very cool they did that for you!”

“Yeah, that made me feel really good.”

A little thing that meant so much. For Brandon to be welcomed.

Of course, Brandon has to perform well at the job for all this to be significant and we are very confident he will fulfill his position nicely.

So, shout out to US Foods for that kind gesture!

And we also will keep on doing the little things for Brandon that all add up to become part of his future success.



## **NATHANIEL:**

Sometimes things are going quite well and then in the blink of an eye everything changes.

Nathaniel had been doing great upon his release from prison but when changing a flat tire on his vehicle on the side of the roadway, he was hit by a negligent driver who caused significant damage to Nathaniel with many broken bones and spinal injuries requiring surgery etc.

Doctors felt at the time it would take him a year to be able to walk again.

Yet when we met Nathaniel for the first time, he was walking perfectly fine and though he still has healing left to occur, he is looking to rejoin the workforce and find a job or skilled trade path, suitable for his situation.

Including getting his Commercial Driver License. So, the injury has not stopped his enthusiasm and goals to achieve, and we will be beside him in helping his path be as smooth and safe as possible.



## **JESSE AND CHARLES:**

It's clear that if anyone has another's back, it is returning citizens for each other as they are the epitome of being in the same boat. They're facing similar struggles and any help they can provide each other is appreciated.

As mentioned in prior Newsletters, given that we meet with anywhere from 10-20 returning citizens per day, it's not unusual for two or more people to show up who know each other very well from prison and have lost contact since getting out.

As it was the other day for Jesse and Charles who reunited then and were glad to see each other. They exchanged phone numbers along with offering each other some assistance through job leads etc.

Jesse is currently in training for certification as a Heavy Equipment Operator and Charles recently began employment at Autokinton Manufacturing.

They're both off to a good start on the outside and we will be looking out for them moving forward and they will be looking out for each other!



## **DARRIUS:**

Many returning citizens would greatly prefer working for themselves and pursuing their own business interests.

It's difficult for us to invest in all the ideas we receive but do so where we definitely feel that based on someone's business plan there is a strong likelihood of success.

In those situations, we often invest in the tools and equipment necessary to get the business off the ground as we just did for Darrius who had graduated from the Greening of Detroit and had been working for the City of Detroit and doing well. But he felt he with his skills as a tree artisan etc., that he could do better if he only had the equipment to pursue that dream.

We were impressed by Darrius and invested in his future by providing him a new gas chainsaw, a brush weed cutter, and a lawn mower. Equipment needed for his business ventures as well as items he can use to be more effective in his current job with the City.

We helped in other ways as well and look forward to seeing the progress he makes with his business plan as we remain confident much success lies ahead. Go Darrius!



**LAYMAN, ALBERT, DAVID, JAMAL, JASON, DEMARIO, JOHNNIE, CHRIS**

We always like to set records and boy did we just set one for a 48-hour period last week.

In that short amount of time, we placed a whopping eight returning citizens into their own housing. This means a tremendous amount beyond the fact that they now have their own home.

It's also a measure of the success that they have achieved during the time they have been out of prison, and we began working with them. In gaining employment, saving money, finding housing with our assistance etc.

It becomes our pleasure to help these hard-working individuals with not only move in costs to secure their housing but brand-new furniture and lots of home goods etc. Everything to make their house a comfortable and inviting home.

So, a big congrats to: Layman, Albert, David, Jamal, Jason, Demario, Johnnie and Chris!!!





## **THELONIOUS:**

In 2005 the nightmare for Thelonious began when he was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison. A long 17 years later those charges would be dismissed for a variety of reasons, and he was finally released from prison.

At the time of his conviction he was married, was a father and he had a good job. All of that was suddenly taken away from him.

But he is now free and trying to rebuild his life. Thelonious is back with his wife and his daughters are now 25 and 26 years of age. He's doing great at his job and is working hard to make up for all the lost time.

He said, "I can't get back the 17 years I lost but I just want to get back to a sense of normalcy."

We're helping with that and have begun assisting him in a variety of ways including with the repair of his vehicle that had been in an accident recently. He's had to spend a lot of money on Lyft rides to get to and from work.

It's definitely been a long and difficult road for Thelonious, but we will do all we can to make certain his current path remains smooth and full of success for him.



## **CHRISTOPHER:**

There's no question that there is a great amount of pride a returning citizen feels upon completing a skilled training program and obtaining certification or a license.

It's not surprising when that occurs we will get a text like the following that we just got from Christopher after he got his CDL:

“I just wanted you to know that although it's been a long, hard road, things are finally starting to come together, and I greatly appreciate all your help with everything. Getting my CDL helps provide stability in my life so that I can continue working and staying on track. Thanks for helping put me on my path to success!”

We have been helping Christopher for a while now and helped him stay afloat during that time he was in training without an income. An unanticipated car repair suddenly put everything in jeopardy though as he'd definitely need a working car to get to and from his job.

We came through for him in getting his brakes fixed and all is good and indeed the future is very bright.



## **HOME FURNISHINGS:**

It's always a good day when we have all the boxes as contained in the photo, lined up on the ground awaiting the arrival of many people we are helping with home goods (pots/pans, dishes, drinking glasses, silverware, towels/wash cloths, sheets, pillowcases, pillows, mattress pad and a blanket).

This also means lots of people have just gotten into their own housing, and some for the very first time.

It's great to place people into housing and to address all their needs upon their moving in so they have everything they could possibly want and don't need to do anything but just move in and enjoy.

As it was with Johnnie the other day with others lined up behind him to gather all their items. Woo hoo!



**SADO:**

Another shout out to the State Appellate Defender Office (SADO) and their relentless work to help those sentenced to life in prison as juveniles.

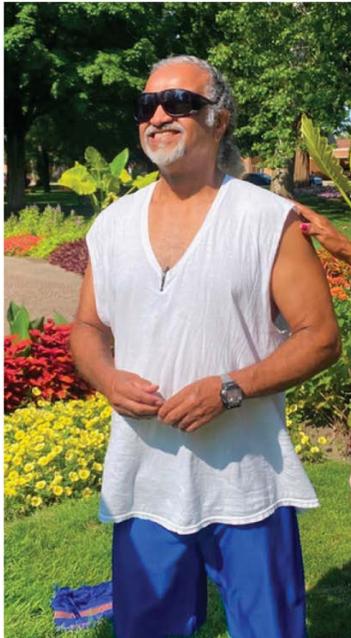
Their relentless efforts in getting the sentences of these individuals reduced and then released from prison is admirable and humane.

We work with SADO in providing letters to the Parole Board, detailing all we can do for these individuals once they are out and ensuring that they will be successful.

Three juvenile lifers who were recently released from prison, and with whom we are working, includes Ernest (home after 50 years) and Gill (home after 34 years) and David (home after 28 years).

It has been our pleasure to meet them and assist with their large adjustment to life on the outside. Obviously a difficult path at first after going away as 17-year-olds and coming out as a Senior Citizen or a middle-aged man but we are here to make that path as smooth as it can be.

*Welcome HOME*



## **JERVONIE:**

It is often very astounding to see not just what returning citizens can accomplish in a short period of time, but it's even more impressive given they've been in the confines of prison for a long period of time while the world went on without them.

They are definitely playing catch up.

But Jervonie definitely caught up, as in a few short months he's been working full time at Premier Panels and also going to school full time at Detroit Training Center to get his Commercial Driver License.

It is amazing how hard he is working to get ahead, and he is now self-sufficient and living with his longtime girlfriend who works for a great non-profit in Detroit.

They plan to move into a house in the near future and everything is going very, very well and we are very happy his hard work is paying off and we're glad we can provide a lot of help to make things easier. Way to go Jervonie!



## **DWAYNE, MARCUS and ALMON:**

We do a lot of work with Detroit at Work and were just awarded the **2023 MVP – MOST VALUABLE PARTNER** award. Woo hoo!

When provided the award it was stated by Malia Salam, Reentry Career Center Manager, that:

**“It was a unanimous vote from our reentry staff, because you have touched nearly every participant in our program, have been consistent over the years, and are a great communicator regarding participants’ progress.”**

Of course, we are proud of that achievement but prouder of all those we work with who graduated from their Pathways to Prosperity program, including Dwayne, Marcus and Almon and all looking very sharp in the attached photo.

The program helps with job readiness, skilled job training and job placement. All three of these gentlemen are doing great and we’ve been able to help each of them in many, many ways including getting them into their own housing, providing furniture and home goods.

You can see they are very proud of all their achievement as well given their smiles!



## **JASON:**

Big, big, big week for Jason who we began working with last February. He's got a great job with Transportation Carriers Incorporated and doing very well there hauling steel.

Jason qualified for our helping with move in costs to his new house rental as well as for furniture and home furnishings. He moved in this week and at that point qualified for our assistance with a vehicle through our Working Cars for Working People program.

The same day we provided him with boxes of home furnishings, he completed the application to the car program. The next day we approved his request and within hours we'd helped him purchase a 2014 Chevy Malibu. A car that he had his eye on for a little while.

Jason was incredibly appreciative of all our assistance and how everything came together for him this past week with all that we were able to help him with. His happiness is ours as well. He texted us, after getting the car: "Done deal – WOW! I'm so happy, thank you very, very much for everything you have helped me with. This is great!"

Very happy to witness your success Jason!



## **DEMOND**

A record setting week already for providing used vehicles through our Working Cars for Working People program!

So far this week we have provided six vehicles to hard working returning citizens who have established tremendous success and are self-sufficient, in their own rental home and doing great at their job.

We started working with Demond over a year ago and have enjoyed assisting him in various ways on his path of success and he's been doing great with his job at Autokiniton etc.

But his vehicle was stolen earlier this year and remains unrecovered. He's been utilizing a variety of ways to get to work including carpooling with a co-worker. But that individual was fired a month ago and Uber/Lyft rides are expensive, and no one is available to take him at 4am when he leaves for work.

He's been working 6-7 days a week and 10-12-hour days but continuing to struggle on getting to and from work. We were able to assist him with a nice vehicle and problem solved.

Demond no longer needs to worry about his transportation issue and makes good money such that he can easily save for future car repairs etc. A great investment for us!



## UPS:

One of the people we see the most each week is Alan, our UPS delivery driver as he delivers to us on a constant basis.

This includes a variety of items we help people with including all the home furnishings when someone moves into their own place, tools/equipment necessary for their job requirements, supplies needed for school or skilled trade training, as well as specific work clothing needed for a new job, we are constantly ordering things to be delivered to our office. We then meet up with the person we are helping and provide the necessary items.

Such as Jeremy who just obtained his Commercial Driver License and obtained a new job with CB Asphalt Paving, but needed a Bluetooth headset, a Garmin GPS Truck Navigator and steel toed boots before he could begin his job. We took care of those issues, and he will start work today and the future is bright.

And the boxes in the photo represent a typical day of delivery (and no worries, we recycle all boxes 😊).



## **ISADORE:**

We've said it before and keep getting proven to be correct: Returning citizens are some of the hardest working people and having just met Isadore for the first time, he quickly put himself in that category given his current situation of working full time and going to school full time.

Isadore works at the Hamtramck Recycling Station from 5AM until 2pm. Right after that day of work, he goes to school for his Commercial Driver License from 4pm-8pm and then on Saturday from 8am-4pm.

WOW!

But Isadore has goals and knows he has to work hard to achieve them. On top of all that he asked us about getting certified within the DTE tree trimming program as well!

We are gladly helping him in various ways and getting him into his own housing is the next big goal.

He's obviously invested all this time and energy into his future, and we can enthusiastically invest in Isadore as quite clearly he is already successful and will be even more so moving forward!



## **TIHARA:**

We began working with Tihara about a year ago now and right after she exited prison.

She was always a hard worker and sometimes working two jobs at a time. We definitely enjoyed assisting her in various ways, including getting her into her own housing a few months back.

Tihara works for the City of Detroit as an environmental technician and often works as much as 55 hours per week. On top of that she works in a janitorial capacity for Romaco Building Service, up to 25 hours a week.

With all that travel time to and from work and without a vehicle of her own, it was always a chore to rely on others for transportation. She applied to our Working Cars for Working People program and she definitely met the requirements, and we were able to assist her in the purchase of her vehicle!

Tihara is very well deserving for this assistance, and she was very, very happy (see smile lol) and appreciative. And we were very happy being here to help.



## **GENEVA, BARUCH, JOSEPH:**

Every day we combat the enormous hurdle for returning citizens and that is transportation. From car repairs to providing used vehicles to gas vouchers to bus passes to Uber/Lyft gift cards etc. it is a constant and critical issue for so many people trying as hard as possible to achieve.

We just had a great day as we helped with car repairs for three deserving individuals.

Geneva works hard at Holiday Inn but had not yet been able to contribute much to her savings when an unanticipated car repair arose. We took care of that for her, and she was very appreciative.

Baruch works at Magna Seating and works a lot of overtime but incurred a car repair need that was very, very expensive at over \$4000.00. The repairs were worth it as the value of the car is much more and though Baruch has savings for repairs, he didn't anticipate such a high bill. We assisted him in paying the entire bill.

Lastly, Joseph needed some help above his car warranty. He used the car in his capacity as an ordained minister and helping church members. We took care of his bill, and all is good again.

Three for three in one day.



## **LAVELLE:**

It's always exciting for us to help someone get into their own housing as it follows years and years and years of having no control over their living situation. From prison to often then going into transitional housing with lots of other people and sharing a room with someone else, getting one's home is simply a fantastic feeling.

We've put thousands and thousands of people into their own housing yet none more joyous to us than LaVelle getting keys to his apartment. For those who recall, we have known LaVelle for many years now having established an ongoing communication with him in prison.

Since finally meeting him in April, we've had the joy of seeing him to do amazingly well including getting a job with the City of Detroit as a bus driver and progressing through that program to having his own bus route to finding his own apartment and moving in with such pure excitement.

We've helped him in many ways along his path of success and it definitely brought tears of happiness to finally see him in his own place and we couldn't be more excited for him. Just a great feeling for him and us given our close relationship.

So happy for you LaVelle! Congratulations and job well done! 🙌



## **DARYL:**

Great to see someone get that Commercial Driver License and get employed and all that hard work paying off with a good job and benefits etc.

As was the situation with Daryl who we began working with last May and he now completed his CDL training, passed his written test and his road test and is now employed with the Wayne County Road Commission.

He's very pleased with how far he's come in a short period of time on the outside. We have assisted Daryl in various ways and the next step will be to get him into his own housing as he is currently living with his mother.

We just met up to provide additional gift cards for basic necessities as it is hard to stay afloat during the weeks of training for one's CDL without having an income, and now, waiting for that first paycheck to be received.

Congratulations to Daryl for maintaining a great path of success over the last few months and great things lie ahead! Woo hoo! 🎉🥳👏



## **DARNELL:**

Sometimes the difference between success and failure for returning citizens is such a very small line.

Things such as being able to afford food while having no income during a training program for a skilled trade.

Or one's bicycle, that they used to get to and from training, broke down and a new bike was needed.

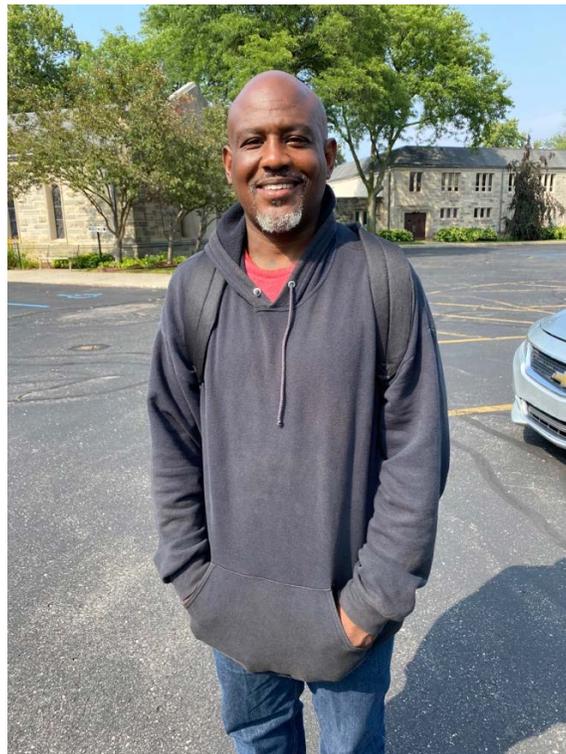
Money to get basic things like toiletries.

These are all some of the challenges that Darnell faces while in the midst of his schooling to obtain his Commercial Driver License. He's incredibly focused and a hard worker but these types of ongoing challenges were presenting some major problems for him.

We took care of all these needs for him and allow Darnell to continue to get to school in a timely fashion and not worry about the basic necessities of life with which he was having difficulties.

He was very, very appreciative and exclaimed many times, "I don't know what I would do without you."

We are here to remove roadblocks that will impede one's path of success. Those roadblocks are now all gone for Darnell. 😊



## **TONYA, NATHANIEL, ALI AND VERLON**

When we meet someone for the first time they are able to receive gift cards as long as they have been recently released from prison. That is the only requirement to allow them to get the basic necessities that they lack upon leaving prison, because at that point they have nothing.

So, the gift cards allow them to obtain new clothing, footwear, toiletries, food etc.

To get a second set of gift cards, one has to have obtained employment or enroll in skilled trade training and we help them achieve that goal by providing job leads, helping with applications, providing transportation to interviews etc.

It's always uplifting when we can assist someone obtain a job or get into a training program and meet up again to provide more gift cards which they need for work attire or schooling. We can also help with any tools or equipment needed for the job.

There is definitely a level of excitement when we meet up the second time, with newly employed individuals or those starting training, to provide the next go round of gift cards. As we just did with LaToya (Amazon employee), Verlon (Detroit Training Center school for home repair) and Ali (Belle Tire employee)!



# JOHNNIE:

Wow, wow, wow!

The numbers are in for all the help we supplied in August and a huge record setting month as we helped a record shattering 30 people with furniture and home furnishings last month!

Which means that huge number of people are all self-sufficient now having moved into their own residence with their name on a lease!

Pretty darn exciting stuff for us as we spent a whopping \$21,750.00 on furniture alone in August. Which is wonderful knowing that large number means some incredible achievements of so many successful returning citizens.

You can see all of those people in the attached invoice from Al's Furniture (where we have purchased our furniture for the past 17 years). Including Johnnie who just got into his own house rental for the first time in his life!

13015

SERVICE • REPAIR • PARTS  
ALL MAKES • ALL MODELS  
Serving this Community Since 1980

**AL'S**  
FURNITURE & APPLIANCES LLC  
Refrigerators - Stoves - Washers - Dryers - Mattresses  
We Sell & Install New Hot Water Tanks  
Non-Profit Agency Welcome

Phone (313) 526-2400 • Fax (313) 526-8660

QUAN	DESCRIPTION	UNIT PRICE
	DREW'S SCOTT	760
	MARQUE WILLIAMS	300
	JAMAL McDONALD	1095
	JESSE LUGY	300
	TIFFANY WALKER	330
	KENNY KIM	450
	JASON GWATK	1090
	VINCENT JOHN MOW	1090
	DEWARO MACKAY	1060
	BRADIE KEY	225
	DVIG GROSS	205
	CHRIS HARRIS	1095
	ISADORE HALL	525
	STARR FORD	375
	STARR FORD	705
	LARRY DAVIDS	750

Service Man *AL* Warranty Date 8-23

Make Checks Payable to: Al's Furniture & Appliances LLC  
15200 Houston-Whittier, Detroit, MI 48205

301715

SERVICE • REPAIR • PARTS  
ALL MAKES • ALL MODELS  
Serving this Community Since 1980

**AL'S**  
FURNITURE & APPLIANCES LLC  
Refrigerators - Stoves - Washers - Dryers - Mattresses  
We Sell & Install New Hot Water Tanks  
Non-Profit Agency Welcome

Phone (313) 526-2400 • Fax (313) 526-8660

QUAN	DESCRIPTION	UNIT PRICE
	LAUNIE SPARCY	1095
	JEROME MARTIN	450
	TIFFANY WALKER	350
	OLIVER LEWIS	695
	KENYA BOYD	1095
	ALBERT WALKER	1090
	HAROLD THOMAS	225
	LEONARD STRAID	1095
	MARQUEZ GOINS	1095
	JASON BLATSKY	1095
	VINCENT WILLIAMS	750
	LATIMAR ARMISTONG	1095
	JEHANNE ROSS	1095
	TOTAL	21715

Service Man *AL* Warranty Date 8-23

Make Checks Payable to: Al's Furniture & Appliances LLC  
15200 Houston-Whittier, Detroit, MI 48205

