



AUGUST NEWSLETTER

By far, the number one question we are asked is concerning 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 repair or a used vehicle, both to help people get to and from their job is so important and can transform the life of people as it helps them get better jobs, or work overtime, or easily get to school after work etc.

It was a big month of transportation help in July as we provided 10 people with vehicles, 15 car repairs, 23 people received month long bus passes and 30 people with gas gift cards. All to get to work or doctor appointments or job interviews etc.

The key to everything will always come back to transportation. And in this month's Newsletter you can read about some of these great stories of success. Enjoy!

DEANDRE:

We met Deandre a few days after he got out of prison last March. He was already struggling as his housing situation had fallen through and he was forced into a hotel which was cost prohibitive given that he didn't have a job yet and hotels in general are way too expensive compared to renting a home or apartment.

Fast forward a few months and Deandre is working at a very good construction job and we just helped him with his move in costs into a nice apartment complex in Northville.

We also assisted him with furniture and home furnishings, and he has definitely come a long way in a few months. He's a hard worker and we're glad to see him in his own place now given that his housing situation, since he was released, has been very, very difficult.

Deandre still has his sights on getting his Chauffeur's License and earning some extra money in that position and we are confident he will accomplish that soon.



VANDERA:

There are two approaches we see for most returning citizens when they get out of prison. One is to take a little bit of time to adjust to being on the outside and get their bearings with all the changes since they were imprisoned.

The second way is to hit the ground running, with a plan in place and wasting no time.

Vandera exhibits the latter approach as she has been out of prison for a few days, staying in a women's shelter, and already has a job as a salad preparer at Planted Detroit. She's also pursuing her Cosmetology degree and getting things in place to start that schooling.

But without having received a paycheck yet, everything is a hurdle including clothing and food and toiletries and even the \$25.00 needed to take Michigan's written Driver's Test.

It was our pleasure to gladly take care of all these needs immediately after meeting Vandera.

She knows what she wants, and she is going after it, and we look forward to continuing to assist her on her path of success!



LATRINA:

It's hard enough returning from prison and navigating all the changes and also finding a job and place to live etc.

But mothers have another challenge and that is resuming care for their children and doing everything again for them as they desperately wish to do.

We began working with Latrina a year ago and have helped her and her three children in various ways. She has been working at Delta Technology in Auburn Hills for a while now and doing very well supporting her family.

Until a costly car repair arrived. Latrina said: "I am trying my best to manage my money for emergencies like this but every time I save a bit it, another thing always comes up. That's no excuse but I'm trusting the process. I'm doing everything for my family and trying to get us all back on our feet. I'm trying my best but it's hard. I'm not giving up and appreciate any help you can provide."

We took care of her car repair expense and removed that hurdle. She can now pick up extra hours at work and some side jobs will help her with her overall income and being able to save more moving forward.

All for her family.



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.

We will continue to prove that we are for real, and we and Ivory will travel together on his path of success. He's definitely for real as well with his desire to achieve.



DWAYNE:

Kindness.

That's what we think of when we think of Dwayne as he exhibited this the first time we met. The majority of prison sentences don't stem from crimes of violence but are considered "victimless crimes" such as drug possession etc.

When we first met, Dwayne was waiting his turn as we were meeting, individually, with 16 returning citizens that day.

Suddenly, the rain and wind picked up and he could see that the phone, used to take notes from our conversations with those that we were meeting, was getting very wet.

Dwayne quickly sprang into action and raced back to his vehicle to retrieve a large umbrella that he opened and gracefully stood over with the umbrellas to protect the phone from the elements.

Very nice.

Dwayne is indeed kind, and his goal is to mentor youngsters regarding the impact of drugs, and prison and keep those individuals on the right path.

The path that Dwayne is on now as he is working, and we just got him into his own housing.

He is very, very good at present. And kind.



SEAN:

It's always wonderful to help get a returning citizen not only to the point of self-sufficiency and living on their own and paying all their bills from their employment wages, but then to be able to make their life so much easier by being able to purchase a car to help get him/her to work and back.

We started helping Sean right when we first met him in June of 2022, and he began working shortly thereafter. He changed jobs a few times and ultimately began working for an asbestos removal company through Labors Local Union 1191 and is making a very nice income.

We recently helped him get into housing and also provided him with all that items necessary to make his new home fully complete. He was previously carpooling to work and with a car of his own he would be able to pick up overtime and extra shifts.

Sean was able to find a very nice vehicle and we purchased it for him. He's now enjoying newfound mobility and not relying on others to get to work and having greater opportunity for more hours, which he's already begun taking advantage of.

A great success story for Sean (and us).



DENNIS:

In prison, the opportunity to make many choices is not available as most everything is controlled for prisoners.

So, it is quite an uplifting feeling as a returning citizen to get back that ability to make personal choices.

For Dennis, that is occurring full force right now as he's been a high achiever since returning home to live with his wife and completed his Commercial Driver's License training in a very quick six-week period.

He just passed his driver's test and scored very, very well and now has **HIS** choice of job opportunities. He will choose one that he feels comfortable with and definitely one that will provide him a very nice income.

We will then be able to provide him a vehicle through our Working Cars for Working People program and he will definitely be one of our greatest success stories.

Dennis is smart and determined and has a great work ethic. And now he has choices which is always a good thing!



DARRYL:

There are go-getters and there are really go-go-getters.

Darryl falls in the latter category as not many returning citizens have accomplished as much as he has in a few short weeks of being released from prison.

He's living with his grandmother and already has a job driving box trucks for Amazon and, having had a Commercial Driver License before going to prison, he needed to complete a refresher course before taking his skills test again.

Rather than waiting around for the assistance of his Parole Agent's direction, he went ahead and found a class to take and is enrolled and ready to start his training again.

We will get him into his own housing in the near future and will be able to provide him a vehicle to assist him getting to work once that CDL job is obtained soon.

Darryl has definitely hit the ground running and has a very strong work ethic as he works full time and will be attending CDL school very shortly. Great things are ahead for him!



DAVID:

Returning citizens are no different than any of us who evaluate our situation and sometimes we pivot. We go in a different direction and make a change for what we see as a better opportunity.

As it was with David who did begin pursuing a Commercial Driver's License path and realized after having not driven in the prior 21 years that perhaps a career on the road driving an 18-wheeler was not the best idea for his success.

So, he talked with us about what may be more suitable, and we agreed that his interest in welding would be a nice career choice.

So, he pivoted and just completed his welding degree and certification, and he got a good job.

We have helped him in a variety of ways, including work clothes and equipment, and we are looking forward to now getting him into housing.

Good career choice David and much success lies ahead!



JOE:

There's no question that the more family members there are helping a relative who is a returning citizen, then all the better.

So, it was refreshing to see Joe's family step to the plate to assist him when he got home. They have helped in the following ways:

Mother – Brought him back into her home and provided housing for him and food etc.

Younger Brother – Referred him to us for our aid.

Uncle – Provided a used vehicle for Joe to get to work and school for his Commercial Driver's License.

Older Brother – Owns a trucking company and has a job waiting for Joe as soon as he obtains his CDL.

A big shout out to those family members for assisting Joe. We also joined as we've assisted Joe with all his basic necessities and work/school clothes and car insurance etc. and look forward to getting him into his own housing soon.

With our assistance and his family's generous support and Joe's work ethic, his path to success will be quick and fruitful!



YUSEF:

When you are sentenced to life without parole for a crime committed at 16 years of age, things obviously appear hopeless and the issue of furthering your education seems fruitless.

Yusef had indeed received that sentence but did elect to further his education as best as possible while in prison.

He was released last month after getting a re-hearing after such a sentence was declared unconstitutional. We met him right after he got out and helped with all his necessities, including work clothing as landed employment at Detroit Cabinet Manufacturing.

He's going to pursue a skilled trade (HVAC or electrician) in the near future, but Yusef was struggling with transportation to get to work and, eventually, to his schooling.

We got him in a nice used vehicle the other day and he texted us: "I cannot tell you how elated I am. Saying thank you seems extremely insufficient, but it is what I have for now. Thank you so much. You're a game changer. I can't express the extent of my gratitude."



JAMES:

There's nothing like a job that makes a returning citizen feel good about themselves and that they have a purpose and also are able to contribute to their living situation if they are currently staying through the generosity of a family member or friend.

That is exactly what James told us when we met again the other day after he started a new job at Lawrence Plastics company. He's been living with his mother since getting out of prison and at 50 years of age he really felt a bit inadequate in living at home once again and not having the ability to help his mother economically.

But now he can, and he feels great about that ability! He said, "I finally feel whole."

We have helped him in numerous ways, including with work clothes for his new job and are assisting with a car repair so he could get to and from his new employment.

He's very excited with his new job and just sent us a photo from work. Congrats on the job James!!



JAMES:

An addiction is obviously a very, very powerful thing and we see a lot of the repercussions which occur from an addiction. We've seen how the strength of an addiction compels people to commit crimes to pay for their addictive needs.

As it was for James who had everything going for him at one time and had his own business in boat dock building and installation as well as a landscaping business and he had a family with a wife and children.

But an addiction to crystal meth and oxytocin led him to commit a robbery that landed him in prison for eight years.

He's starting at ground zero now and living in transitional housing and working hard for GFL waste management company and just worked a whopping 72 hours last week. He's saving money quickly and we will help him get into his own housing soon and we've helped him thus far with a lot of his basic needs.

James is going to climb that ladder once again. With his sobriety and work ethic we are certain he will rise to the top once again!



CLARENCE:

There's often a great deal of knowledge that some returning citizens have on a particular topic such as Clarence who knows exactly what it is to have an addiction and how to best get the help to overcome that difficult dependency.

He's been through it and knows how to "walk the talk" though it is helpful to get formal training to be in a position to best help others coming from a similar place.

So, after now being out of prison just a week, Clarence is enrolled in training through Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries to become a certified Recovery Coach.

He wants to give back as best he can at this point in his life and that's great to see as we begin assisting him with all his needs as well. We are there for him just as he will be there for others.

Very positive things happening now for Clarence on his path of success and a bright future of giving back to his community.



LAVELLE:

You may recall that we had a very active two-year long email relationship with LaVelle while he was in prison. We really enjoyed finally meeting him in person on April 6th, the day after he was released.

We've helped him in various ways over the last three months and he's been doing great. He got a job with the City of Detroit as a bus driver and completed training and is now driving his own route.

He found an apartment and will move in on September 1, and we'll help him with those move in costs and provide new furniture and home furnishings as LaVelle has nothing at present.

We couldn't be more proud and happier for him, and he's been one of our greatest success stories. Kudos to Lavelle as he is very self-motivated, organized, and smart. He'd asked all the questions of us while in prison so when he came out he would be rolling. And he has been rolling and also now literally rolling with driving a bus.

Congratulations to LaVelle! A wonderful story of success.



JASON:

We've seen many records from those we work with, such as fastest time to have met us after getting released from prison (2 hours), fastest completion of a CDL program (five weeks), fastest amount of time to have met us to obtain initial help with basic necessities, get a job, get into housing of one's own and then qualify to get a car from us (26 days) etc.

Yesterday a record was set for the fastest amount of time to have obtained a job and then started working after leaving prison.

In an amazing timeframe, Jason was released on Tuesday and started working 20 hours later! WOW!

Prior to going to prison ten years ago, Jason was a salesperson with Drip Dry Waterproofing, and he'd been in contact with his former boss while in prison and resumed his job the day after getting out.

We helped him with all his basic needs of clothes, food, work attire and are now getting him work items such as a briefcase, writing utensils, some small tools etc.

Jason is also planning to pursue a Finance degree from Wayne State University as he obtained his associate degree from Jackson College while in prison. He's definitely on a quick path of success and we look forward to continuing our assistance as he moves forward!



ERON:

We first met Eron when he contacted us from prison last December. In late March he was released after serving 30 years of his life sentence, which he received as a 20-year-old in 1993.

His conviction had been vacated for lack of evidence.

A few days after his release, we met Eron in person. He quickly obtained a job with a staffing company that placed him at Condat Corporation in Saline.

He did such a great job while there through the staffing company that Condat wound up hiring him in as a direct employee. Not an easy accomplishment coming back from 30 years away and all for a crime he didn't commit.

We've enjoyed helping him in many ways and are now able to get him into his first apartment ever. A great feeling for Eron and a tremendous accomplishment over just a few months' time.

A wonderful success story for a well deserving and high achieving individual. We helped him further with a lot of new furniture and a lot of home furnishings.

Way to go Eron! You should be very proud! We are proud of you. 🙌🙌



TORRENCE:

Working with so many people it is inevitable that at some point someone we are helping falls victim to a house fire and suddenly all of their possessions are gone. They are back to starting at square one all over again as that is where they were coming back from prison.

We began working with Torrence back in February of 2022 and soon thereafter helped him move into his new residence. He was working, doing great and we helped him with furniture and home furnishings, and he was completely self-sufficient for well over a year.

Until he wasn't. Through no fault of his own, a house fire swept through his residence, and he lost everything he owned.

He contacted us immediately as he had no other help or guidance. We helped him get new clothing and now we're helping build him back up again with first month rent, furniture, and home furnishings.

It's overwhelming to be starting over once again but we've eased that burden for him. Torrence is a very hard-working, motivated, and deserving individual and good times are coming once again.



RODNEY:

Another great story yesterday of a returning citizen getting their Commercial Driver License degree!

As occurred with Rodney on Tuesday when he sent us this great photo of him and his adorable daughter after he completed the program. It always brings a celebratory fist pump to us as it's definitely a game changer for the individual.

We had helped keep Rodney afloat during the months of his training when he was not receiving any income. We knew he was a great investment. In one of early meetings Rodney asked us why we help returning citizens, and a lot of it is seeing the great results like we did with him.

Yesterday, he texted: "I just want to say thank you for everything you've done for me. I did it! You really, really helped a lot. Thanks so much for everything."

Rodney is very bright, enthusiastic, and determined and great things are expected of him for sure from his new career taking off now.

Woo hoo! Congrats Rodney!



WILLIE:

Fact is the vast majority of those returning citizens who we assist don't have a lot of experience with someone helping them.

Many are very skeptical that we are for real. We did have to get by this initial barrier when we met Willie yesterday.

When we explained what we could do for him he said: "I don't believe this sh#* man. This morning I was thinking just forget it and not come today as no one has ever helped me! So glad I decided to get my butt over here."

We began helping Willie with his basic necessity needs along with great job leads. His biggest issue was getting his car road ready and paying for the car's registration, license tabs and insurance. He'd gathered some money and needed help with the remainder. Within a minute we'd provide him those funds and, honestly, Willie was stunned that we not only helped him, but most importantly that we believed enough in him to invest in his future.

He was incredibly appreciative. Later in the day he texted: "Just want to say thanks again. I was not expecting this at all. I need all the help I can get. Thanks for being there."

We'll quickly get him working, earning money and on his way! And we'll be there right with him the entire time.



LEWIS:

One of our greatest joys is that photo when someone obtains the keys to their first ever rental home or apartment.

That means so much for a variety of reasons including that they finally have the control of their environment and living in their own place, and the fact that they have worked hard and been successful to get to the point where they are now. Self-sufficient and able to pay their bills etc.

It's a joy for them and a joy for us. To see someone come back home from prison to nothing and sleeping on someone's living room couch, without clothing, adequate footwear etc. to getting the keys to their own place, is quite remarkable. A tremendous achievement.

As it was for Lewis who we first met in March. After 16 years in prison, he needed much guidance, and he was struggling a bit and walking 40 minutes to and from work. He's come a long way since then and we were excited to help him get his first place of his own this week, provide him lots of furniture and home furnishing and just be there when he got his keys and to share that excitement.

Way to go Lewis! You should be incredibly proud of all you've accomplished.



VICTORIA:

Sometimes life throws difficulties at us that some people are so unprepared for that emotional trauma, they don't necessarily turn to the best approach to deal with things.

Such as seeking relief from overuse of alcohol or drugs. Unfortunately, that happened to Victoria who had never had an issue with the law at any point in her life. She was a licensed home health aide and married and helping support her four children.

Then the bottom fell out with a series of deaths of close family members and other upheavals in her life, and she went down a path for relief that eventually got her into legal problems and a two-year prison sentence.

Now she's suddenly starting out with nothing. She has good plans in place to get working right away at any job available and will soon begin training to obtain her license as a phlebotomist.

We will be there every step of the way to help her and have begun with meeting all her current basic needs and providing great job leads, furniture for the room she's renting etc.

Victoria's very proud of maintaining her sobriety for years now, and she's back on the path of success!



MARTEIZ:

Marteiz has been one of our greatest success stories, as he pursued a skilled trade of welding and graduated in June and immediately got a great job through the Sheet Metal Welders Union.

We helped him in many ways including keeping him afloat during training when he had no income and we provided work clothes, tools, and gas cards when he began employment last month.

He works long hours Monday through Saturday and Sunday is devoted to Church so we met his mother on many occasions who would pick up tools for him that we had purchased etc. She was always very appreciative of our helping her only child, Marteiz.

He recently requested a few more tools that would enhance his abilities at work and this time around his father wished to also meet us. So on Sunday we had the pleasure of meeting his parents together.

The odds of success for a returning citizen are definitely increased by having the support of a parent, and even more enhanced when both parents are involved as they are with Marteiz. It was our pleasure meeting both mother and father and enjoying the success of our mutual effort to keep their son moving forward.



ROBERT:

It is always a pleasure for us to help returning citizens whose job involves helping others as well.

Such as Robert who works at Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries (DRMM) and their Oasis residence in Highland Park that houses the homeless and those coming back from prison.

What better person to assist returning citizens than another returning citizen who has already navigated the path the recently released individuals are going through right now.

We first began assisting Robert almost two years ago now and have assisted him in many different ways. He has progressed nicely to the current point of working full time and he could really use a vehicle of his own to assist him getting to and from his job at Oasis.

We just helped him get a vehicle of his own yesterday and he couldn't be happier or more appreciative of our assistance.

Always glad to help those helping others, Robert. Well deserved!



DEONTAE:

Deontae heard about us in prison before he was released last October. But we just met yesterday for the first time as he was skeptical that we could do anything for him as no one had been of help to him in the past.

His disbelief changed though when he got a new job and met other returning citizens who we have worked with and who praised what we could do for him.

So, Deontae cast his skepticism aside, contacted us on Tuesday and we met Thursday afternoon, and he quickly began “kicking himself” for not contacting us as soon as he got out.

Better late than never though, and we immediately began helping him in various ways including assisting him with his own tools and equipment so he could take on additional construction work along with his current job with Gillman Services.

He’s making good money and soon we will be able to get him into his own housing.

Glad we could cast his skepticism aside and he’s very glad and very appreciative as well. He said: “Thank you, thank you. I truly appreciate everything you are doing for me. I’m striving for better and for success, thank you for helping me!”



VINCENT:

A Federal Halfway House is just as it sounds. Halfway between leaving prison and halfway to experiencing freedom.

We assist many individuals who were sentenced for Federal crimes, and they first reach out to us when they leave prison and enter the halfway house in Detroit.

Just as we did with Vincent and started working with him last September. He's now finally able to leave the halfway house and we connected him with a landlord, he's working at a good job, and was just approved to move in on August 1.

We are helping him with move in costs, new furniture and lots of home furnishings. It's a great time for Vincent as it's been a long road to freedom with eight years in prison and then another year within the many restrictions of the halfway house.

It's very exciting for him, and for us, that he will be moving into his own home on Tuesday. Halfway house no more.

He's got a full house of everything he needs and a full amount of joy.



UNIQUE:

Unique is unique for sure.

Not many people come out of prison and take on not only a job but also going to school at the same time to obtain their Commercial Driver License.

That is what Unique is doing at present and being incredibly busy, but she clearly has a great work ethic and some very clear goals to allow her to be successful and move forward.

What's even more amazing as Unique became employed and enrolled in a CDL program all within one week of being released from prison.

We are helping in many ways including meeting all her basic necessities at present and helping with transportation and eventually assisting her getting into her own housing.

A lot has been accomplished by Unique in a short period of time and nothing, but ongoing success is anticipated as she is smart and a very hard worker. Way to go Unique!



JAMES:

Perhaps the greatest source of referrals to our returning citizen program is from those we have begun working with and who then tell others now leaving prison.

Which is very nice to see.

Many times, we have helped the original person with getting a job and he or she is now “paying it forward” and assisting the current applicant to get a job at the same place.

We began helping Demond last year and he’s been doing great. We assisted him in many ways including getting him into his current home and helping with furniture and home furnishings and are now about to get him a used vehicle to assist getting to work at Autokinton in Detroit.

Demond referred James, someone he met in prison, to us and we met yesterday and have begun assisting him.

Demond also helped James get a job at Autokinton, which he starts at today. Just a few days from being released from prison. A lot of good things finally happening for James and much more ahead.



Have a great month of August!

All the best,

Bob