



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

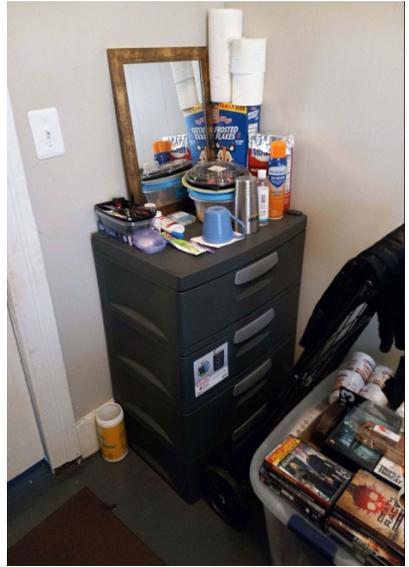
A difficult past four weeks to be sure, as a fatal fire occurred in Pontiac on January 17<sup>th</sup> at a transitional housing location for parolees.

We'd been working with most of these individuals from months to over a year and these hard-working people were significantly damaged physically, mentally, and economically.

All their possessions and in some cases, all their cash savings from their employment were destroyed in the fire. Many incurred surgeries and prolonged hospitalization as they escaped the fire by jumping out of a second-floor window.

Tragic is an understatement as to the damage caused as all these individuals find themselves back at square one without clothing, furniture, money etc. Unbelievable.

We were immediately notified of the fire and began rendering assistance with clothing, food, temporary housing, transportation, replacing furniture etc. For example, Lebron Tyler, lost everything shown in the following photos that were taken of his room shortly before the fire:



We are continuing to replenish things for these individuals, but it has clearly been one step forward and now twenty steps back.

All this said, on the other side of things, there have been wonderful stories of success this past month and we have been able to help returning citizens in a variety of ways including:

January RHTRC	Number of Grants	Cost of Grants
Walmart Gift Cards	68	\$12,600.00
Furniture	11	\$7,955.00
Cars	1	\$3,000.00
Car repairs	8	\$7,473.44
Rent	7	\$3,070.00
Security Deposit	6	\$4,110.00
Tools/equipment	5	\$1,015.14
Home furnishings	11	\$3,948.53
Clothing for Work	23	\$4,092.88
Utilities	4	\$1,457.22
Miscellaneous	26	\$6,119.79
Total	170	\$54,842.00

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

**KENNETH:**

16 years! Any minute being in prison for a crime you didn't commit is a tragedy but spending 16 years in prison is a horrible injustice. Kenneth was sentenced to life in prison at 18 years of age. Last February he walked out of prison into his mother's arms for the first time since 2005, after it was concluded he was wrongfully convicted. We helped Kenneth at that time, and he has been a tremendous success story with a good job etc. He was now ready to move into his own house and we assisted with move in costs, furniture, home furnishings etc. A long road to get here, but the future remains very bright for Kenneth!

**HOMECOMING:**



**NEW HOME:**



**ARON:**

It's been said that “The things you take for granted; other people are praying for.”

This includes having a comfortable bed to lay one’s head each night. Many returning citizens don’t have that basic necessity and sleep on an air mattress or a couch or are homeless on the streets. When we’re able to provide furniture, invariably, we get a text like we did from Aron who we just got into housing, and he has a good job and is doing well. He said, “Thanks so very much for your kindness and generosity. Last night was the greatest night’s sleep I have ever had. So comfortable. Thank you! Words can’t describe my appreciation for you.”

Our pleasure Aron.



**DANIEL:**

The saying goes: “If you give a hungry person a fish, you feed them for a day, but if you teach someone how to fish, you feed them for a lifetime.”

It's great when we provide someone the literal tools to be successful as that's often the only roadblock to success. Daniel recently returned from prison and obtained a job as a roofer/carpenter but needed his own tools/equipment. We helped with items such as a circular saw, cordless drill kit, pneumatic roofing nailer etc. With those tools Daniel could work more jobs, make more money, support himself etc. He's “feeding himself” as the saying goes. All good!



**MATTHEW:**

“Hit the ground running” is seizing an opportunity and that is what Matthew has done since he came back from prison on October 21st. He's working from 6:30pm-1:30am Tues.-Sat. and going to truck driving school from 7am-5pm Mon.-Fri. He's working hard at being successful and will graduate soon with his Commercial Driver License and already has two great job offers. The only problem is his car died and he had no transportation to his training or his job. 36 hours after

contacting us we had provided him a great vehicle and he can continue to move forward with enthusiasm and success!



### **EDDIE AND CHASE:**

Determination. The one word that comes to mind in describing those returning from prison who want nothing more than to work, save money, get a place of their own, reconnect with their family and be productive members of their community. We meet people as soon as they are released from prison, so we see that determination right away. No more evident than this month. when a snowstorm struck the Detroit area and travel was incredibly difficult. Yet all 12 people we were meeting at 4:30 that afternoon, timely made it to that appointment. Including Eddie and Chase, glad to be home, already working, and on a great path to success!



**ANGELO:**

Living in a cramped small prison cell for many, many years does take its mental toll. It's not surprising that many returning citizens seek to obtain their Commercial Driver License so that they can experience a much different feeling and the wide-open nature of driving cross country. After five weeks of intensive training, Angelo obtained his CDL and is doing great as he just sent this photo of himself in Oklahoma. We've helped him in a variety of ways so he could get in this position of success and nothing, but good things are on his horizon. Nice going Angelo!



**TISHEAM:**

There's the old proverb stating: "Pride goeth before a fall."

There are those who don't want to ask for help, believing they'll be able to accomplish everything on their own. But that's incredibly difficult for returning citizens given all the obstacles they face. Tisheam was doing well working for the City of Detroit and getting his Commercial Driver's License. But emergencies arose, and he needed our help. We jumped in and took care of his current issues (car note, furniture, home furnishings etc.) and got him back onto his path to success and the future remains bright.



**GAGE:**

Sometimes life seems like a giant obstacle course, as you keep getting around things and then you encounter one giant hurdle standing in the way of success. Gage had gotten around numerous obstacles since returning to his community after spending many years in prison. He has a good job; we'd helped move him into his own apartment, but out of nowhere his car broke down and that threatened to unravel all he'd accomplished. He was struggling to get to work when he asked for some help. We removed the obstacle, took care of the repair and all was great again.



### **JEFFREY:**

How does one obtain training for another career and still work so rent etc. can be paid? It's very difficult, especially for returning citizens who have no savings etc. Jeffrey works for Amazon while going to school to obtain his Commercial Driver's License, which is great, but his car needed repairs that he couldn't afford as work hours were decreased while he also attended school. Without his car, he can't get to work/school, so we took care of the repairs. He'll soon be working full time as an Amazon truck driver with a large increase in salary etc. Hard work will pay off very nicely.



**DARIUS:**

Answer: Floor, couch, concrete, reclining chair, air mattress.

Question: What are things homeless people sleep on?

Many people we assist have gone months to years without a place to call home and without an actual bed to sleep on. Including returning citizens who struggle to find housing. Darius hadn't had a home in a long time. Recently, he was sleeping in his car in the parking lot where he worked. We helped get him a home, with his own bed, dresser, a couch, dining room table/chairs. He can afford his rent etc. and he finally has place to rest his head. He was beyond ecstatic. A long road to get here, but he's incredibly thankful and happy now



### **DAZRONS:**

Relationships are obviously tested when a spouse/significant other goes to prison. Love can, at times, withstand the time apart. We began working with Dazrons in 2020 when he was first released and have provided many gift cards for basic needs, a car to get to and from his job, move in costs at his new residence etc. He's been a wonderful success story and his prison sentence did not dissolve his relationship with his significant other and he's now a proud father of a daughter. He's a great dad, a great provider and a great future lies ahead for his entire family.



Those are just some of the wonderful stories of this past month. We are glad to share them with you and have a great remainder to your February.

All the best,

*Bob Schwartz*

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