



## JANUARY UPDATE FOR RETURNING HOPE TO RETURNING CITIZENS PROGRAM

Another great year of helping returning citizens on their path of success.

A big announcement for 2023 for us, but first a few numbers regarding Here to Help:

- 15.5 years of helping people facing an emergency
- Over 20,000 people assisted
- Over 11 million dollars provided in helping those in need

We've always been the one resource that is flexible to move towards the area of greatest need.

Such as focusing on flooding victims with the 100-year type flood in August of 2014, the COVID related financial emergencies impacting individuals from 2020 onward, launching our returning citizens program in August of 2020 when so many people were being released from prison.

The greatest need right now is indeed through our Returning Hope to Returning Citizens program.

So, we are currently changing course to working only with those who are coming back from prison.

We look forward to this challenge and in making a tremendous impact during 2023 by helping returning citizens - a tremendously hard-working group, who are in desperate need, and who've usually never had anyone helping them.

As Elijah said to us yesterday:

“Can I tell you something? This is really weird. Your helping me. No one ever seems to help anyone without wanting something in return.”

As with everyone, all we want is your success Elijah.

And we are going to go after that, for everyone like you, with 100% of our focus.

2023 is going to be epic!

Here are some uplifting and inspiring stories of some of those we were able to help in December of 2022:

**Emmanule, Lonnie, Tryone, Alfonzo, Dalieo, Omari, Leceto, Quartrice, Angelo, Tariq, Eugene and Joseph:**

The end of every month is a very exciting time as we've helped A LOT of returning citizens get into their own housing these last few weeks (with leases beginning January 1).

All of these individuals are just moving into their new apartment or home. For many of them it is their first place ever of their own!

So, a big shout out to: Emmanule, Lonnie, Tryone, Alfonzo, Dalieo, Omari, Leceto, Quartrice, Angelo, Tariq, Eugene and Joseph.

They all have great jobs and are doing wonderful and continued success lies ahead. Very exciting for all of them, and for us, and a great way to end the year!



## **ULYSSES:**

Santa delivers on Christmas no matter the weather, and so did we as we assisted many people in need on Christmas Day who met us despite the below zero wind chill and blowing snow.

Including Ulysses, dressed in festive red, who has been doing great since his release from prison. He's been working with Black Bowtie Catering Services and going to school during the day to get his Commercial Driver License.

We helped him with gas money to get to school and back and gift cards for basic necessities, and furniture (bed, dresser, mini fridge) while he currently stays with his mom.

We will get him into his own housing soon as a great job with his CDL degree is coming shortly.



## **Kori:**

After he became paralyzed in an accident, actor Christopher Reeves said: “Once you choose hope, anything is possible.”

That’s why the word “hope” became part of the name of our Returning Hope to Returning Citizens program.

Just last week we were reminded of the importance of hope as Kori said to us, after we met in person for the first time and began providing all the help we can:

“I have to tell you that when guys come back from meeting you, they have an air of confidence about them. You provide such hope they can achieve great things, and that hope is so critical. They know you are behind them, which means everything.”

That was very sweet to hear and to know that the simple act of providing hope can go so very, very far!



**NATE:**

Badge of Honor.

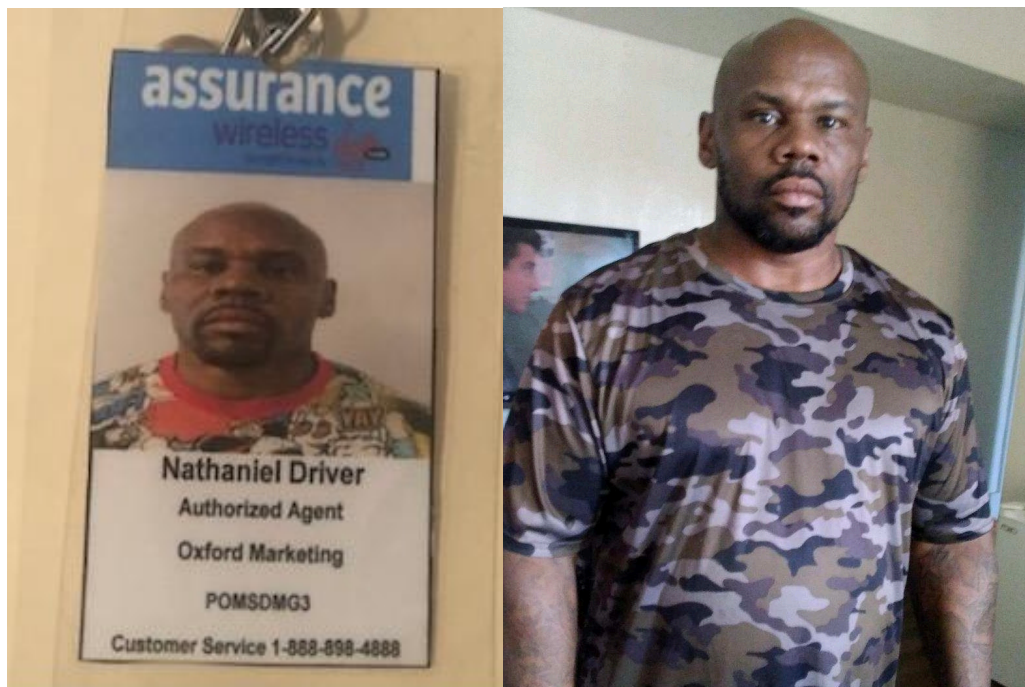
That's how returning citizens often view the employee badge they receive when they begin working at their new job that we just helped them obtain.

When you haven't been employed for anywhere from 10-30 years, obtaining a job is something that you feel very, very proud of.

Most of the returning citizens we work with will send us a photo of their work badge, with pride and enthusiasm.

Like Nate Driver, who sent us the badge below. He's been doing great at his job, and we just helped him move into his rental home and provided him furniture and home furnishings.

A great success story!



## **KAREEM:**

The difference between success and failure isn't always an expensive issue needing to be overcome.

It can be something as basic as needing \$140 so that one can renew their professional license and obtain a good paying job in their field of work.

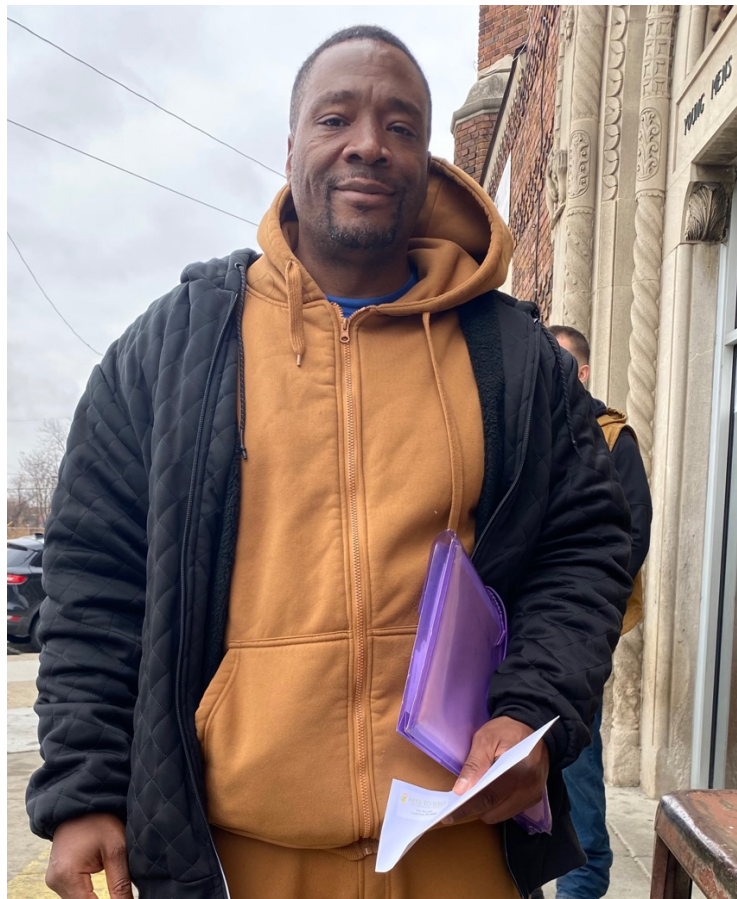
We met Kareem yesterday for the first time as he just got out of prison a few days ago. His professional license as a boiler operator expired years back while he was in prison.

It was \$140 to renew his license and certification. Without any income, that was an insurmountable hurdle.

Immediately, we came to his aid and provided the money and drove him to City Hall to make the payment.

Recertified and ready to roll! Roadblock removed.

All is good!



## **LEBRON:**

A lot can happen in one year.

In January 2022, LeBron was doing great as a returning citizen. He was living in transitional housing and working a great job when the home caught on fire, and he lost EVERYTHING he owned and had to jump from the second floor to escape the fire and sustained knee and hand injuries.

Since then, he's battled with homelessness, undergone surgeries and rehabilitation etc. and struggled to replace what he had lost.

We have helped him constantly over the past 11 months to make certain all his basic needs of clothing, food, housing etc. were being met.

We just helped him move into his own apartment and assisted with furniture and home furnishings as well. He will be cleared to work very soon, and things are FINALLY looking up for 2023!





## **DONELL:**

When you have no family members or friends to live with when you are released from prison, you wind up in transitional housing and living with lots and lots of other people.

It's not always the best place to be when you are trying hard to be successful, and our goal is always to get someone into housing of their own.

When it happens it's an exciting time as it was for Donell who had spent six months in transitional housing before we just helped him get into a home of his own with peace and quiet and independence.

He works at the popular Detroit restaurant of Selden Standard and is doing great.

We were also glad to assist him with furniture and home furnishings and his new home is all complete! Donell was ecstatic! A long time coming and much happiness ahead.



## **KENNETH:**

Once again, it's amazing how some returning citizens hit the ground running upon release and accomplish a lot in a very short period of time.

Kenneth was released last Wednesday and quickly applied for numerous jobs and was hired yesterday, just before we met him for the first time.

He also enrolled in a training course to obtain his Commercial Driver's License, allowing him to obtain a very well-paid job and benefits etc.

We've discussed what we can do to assist him with housing, and he's already begun the plans to obtain his own rental home.

Failure is not an option and Kenneth is clearly doing all he can to quickly achieve much success. Very impressive!! 🙌



## **JAMONE:**

Sometimes there's just not a great solution to a problem, and one has to choose a path and hope for the best.

Jamone's problem was he'd been working at a good job since his release from prison but then he got a call from his parole agent that there was one spot open in a training program to obtain his Commercial Driver License. He needed to decide right away.

The problem was he'd have no income over the seven weeks of the training.

He made the best choice for his future and is now two weeks into the program but really needed our help with food, gas and his Dec. car note payment.

We made the investment in his future and helped him with everything. All will be great as soon as he completes the program and gets a good job.

Problem solved.



## **JOHNATHAN:**

Taking advantage of opportunities is often the key to achieving success and at the Thumb Correctional Facility in Lapeer, MI, prisoners have the opportunity, through Mott Community College, to earn associate degrees.

Johnathan took advantage of that opportunity and achieved two associate degrees. After his recent release he is already enrolled at Wayne State University for an Information Systems Management degree.

He just began a job to help with expenses while he pursues his degree, and he is clearly taking advantage of opportunities including all we can provide to him with our help!

Way to go Johnathan.



## **SHEILA:**

There's the old saying that when life throws you lemons, you make lemonade.

In other words, make the best of difficult situations.

That's what Sheila, since coming back from prison, has exhibited time and time again. She's a very hard worker but by situations outside her control (such as layoffs, transportation issues, hours reduced etc.) she's had to leave one job to find another.

We have helped her along through her difficult times, but she always has an incredibly optimistic view and makes the best of what life throws her way.

She recently lost her job due to layoffs but has obtained a new job beginning on January 3rd. She desperately needed some help now with food etc. and we gladly came through for her.

And she was, as always, her optimistic self.



## **WILLIE:**

Working second shift often pays more per hour but there are often transportation issues getting off work at 11pm and busses aren't running, or friends aren't available to pick you up from work.

Willie has a very good job, and has a car, but it needed some repairs. His job was pretty new, and he would have to wait about three weeks before receiving his first paycheck.

His car could be repaired pretty fast, but Willie lacked the money and was fearful of losing his job due to transportation issues.

We met up on Christmas Day and provided him a nice Christmas gift of money to get the car repaired. The car was fixed the next day, in time for Willie to get to work and all is now good for him moving forward.

He was incredibly relieved, appreciative, and happy:



## **LEWIS:**

When you are recently released from prison you look at 2023 as a year of new beginnings and you plan for much success.

Lewis, after 17 years in prison, was released a couple of weeks ago.

Upon his new freedom, he immediately enrolled in a program to obtain his Commercial Driver License.

We recently met in person and helped Lewis with the basic necessities he needed (clothing, work attire, boots, toiletries, food etc.) as well as gas money to help him get to and from his training.

In January of 2023 he will complete his training, get his CDL, and become employed very quickly.

2023 is already shaping up to be an amazing year for Lewis. We look forward to continuing to assist this very hard-working individual who has a very bright future. Go Lewis!



Another year having ended, we look forward to an amazing 2023 for our returning citizens program.

All the best,

Bob