



JULY UPDATE FOR RETURNING HOPE TO RETURNING CITIZENS PROGRAM

The last four weeks have brought many accomplishments for both the returning citizens we work with as well as Here to Help itself.

Stories ahead include **Lynn McNeal** getting a great job with the **Detroit City Council** after an impeccable two-year employment record at the Detroit Water Department where he never missed one single day of work! Weekends included!

We had many people, including **Kvon Delbridge**, graduate from the **Green Door Initiative** program. **Kvon** (and many others) obtained a great well-paying job and with our many landlord contacts we quickly got **Kvon** placed into housing and all moved in along with the furniture and home furnishings we provided.



Also, **Deono Abram** (who we've helped in many ways) was honored for his success at Detroit at Work's ***Pathways to Prosperity Recognition Ceremony*** and the Keynote Speaker was none other than **Demetrius Knuckles**, a returning citizen we've been working with and helping for quite some time. Great accomplishments by both these gentlemen:



Here to Help had a great past month also as we received a very generous grant of \$250,000 from a Michigan family's Donor Advised Funds account. They would prefer anonymity, but they have been amazing in providing continuous support to **Here to Help** and our returning citizens program over the last few years.

What we do has really, really, really resonated with this large family and all of whom greatly enjoy seeing all those we are assisting on their path to success.

A big thanks to them and all our donors!

Here are just some of the wonderful stories from the hundreds of returning citizens we helped during the month of June alone:

PHILLIP:

Sometimes all that is necessary to help keep a returning citizens moving forward is offering encouragement, providing hope, friendship etc.

All of which are often in short supply when one is released from prison with no family or friends in the area. As much as our program does in helping with tangible things like furniture, cars etc., often it's simply talking that is needed and that's why people like Phillip simply come to our daily 4:30pm meeting to touch base, to get advice, to talk etc.

He's been doing great with a good job, saving money, ready to find a home of his home etc. We love when he shows up to just talk about things and we had the joy of seeing him a few times this past month. Always a pleasure on our end:



DERRICK and DARREN:

Finding “stepping-stones” are critical to returning citizens as that involves all those little things that help them progress toward a positive outcome.

Learning skills to enable them to obtain a good job is critical. The nonprofit of Greening of Detroit helps returning citizens with skills in planting trees, providing job training etc. We've helped both Derrick and Darren in a variety of ways and they are about to graduate from the Greening of Detroit program, obtain a job and continue on their respective path of success. Both gentlemen are doing great, and these “stepping-stones” have been very, very helpful to them.



AHMAD:

A phenomenal success story is Ahmad who, after completing his prison sentence of 16 years, was released the end of March and he just

graduated from the Focus: HOPE Construction Apprenticeship Program.

Ahmad got a great job through the Union Carpenters and Millwright skill training center and is doing wonderful. We helped him with basic necessities when he came home and just had the pleasure yesterday of providing him a new tool bag filled with the 14 items he needed for his job and which there was no way he could currently afford. We are excited to see how much he's accomplished in just three months and great things are ahead and we'll be getting him a car very soon!



CHRISTIAN:

For a variety of reasons returning citizens often have to deal with having a suspended driver license when they exit prison. Before they can accomplish what they need to so they can get their license back,

they do need to be able to get to work and where a bus is not an option and nor is paying for rides, a bicycle is the best solution.

We purchase a lot of bikes, which are ridden through sunshine, rain, sleet, and snow as people need to get to work. We just bought Christian a bike and he no longer walks 4 miles to work and he's quite happy riding!



JAMES:

A key to mental health in prison is finding something that provides enjoyment. Such as pursuing a college education, faith, career training, chess, or a sport etc.

For James, who grew up learning boxing with the likes of Thomas Hearns (before Thomas became world champion), his one thing when sentenced to 40 years in prison at age 25, became softball. It kept him going all those years. He was just released from prison, and we got him started with gift cards for basic necessities but given his passion we also helped him get a new softball glove and cleats and #1 employee at Here to Help Zoe Baxter provided help to James finding a local team to play with. James was very emotional with appreciation, and he asked for a photo with Zoe 😊:



MEHELLE:

There's nothing like a loving mother/daughter relationship and when that bond is tested by a mother's prison sentence, it is wonderful to see that relationship flourish again upon discharge.

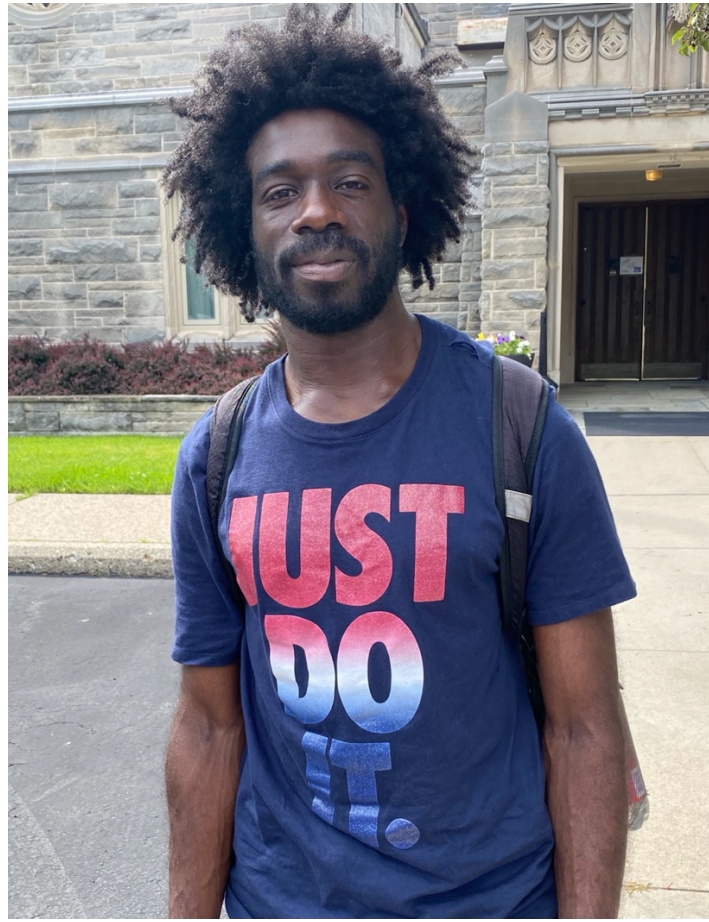
Mechelle was released last year and reconnected with her young daughter. Both are doing great now as Mechelle completed phlebotomy training and has a great job working for the Red Cross. We have helped them with basic necessities and just got them into their own housing by paying the move in costs and providing furniture and their close mother/daughter relationship can continue to flourish.



JOMELL:

Sometimes you can just tell things when meeting someone for the first time. You can tell that the person has that “it” factor where you know they are going to be successful. So, it is with returning citizens we work with, all of whom we meet within a day or so of their first contacting us.

When we met Jomell we knew that success was in his future. He got a job right away after getting out, is working OT and is saving his money to get out of transitional housing and looking into trade schools to learn additional skills for a better job etc. He asked good questions about how we can assist him, and we look forward to working with him going forward and seeing him achieve.



LYNN:

33 years, 5 months, 25 days, 8 hours, 15 minutes. That was Lynn's answer on our Application regarding how long he was in prison after being sentenced as a 17-year-old. He also said: "I am a very hard worker, quick learner and eager to be a productive member of the community."

Lynn was absolutely correct. We've been working with him for almost two years, and he just moved on from 22 months as an amazing employee at the Detroit Water Department to begin his new job working with the Detroit City Council. Needless to say, he's proud, we're proud and the Detroit community is getting an unbelievable asset who leaves a positive imprint everywhere he goes. Great, great going Lynn! You're one of our best success stories!



JAMES:

Many times, people get out of prison and know very well how they were previously on the wrong path and want to do what they can to prevent other young individuals from making the same mistakes. James was in prison for 22 years and has been doing great since released a year ago. He's working a good job at Dana Corporation, got married, and rents a nice townhome with his wife while they save for a house. He has now begun doing motivational speaking and drug counseling to help others. He's doing all he can to make a difference as we've helped him in various ways, and he enjoys paying it forward. A great success story!



DEVON:

There is the old proverb of: “If the mountain will not come to Mohammed, then Mohammed must go to the mountain” and that is a very applicable saying for those returning from prison.

Sometimes jobs aren’t easy to come by given one’s background and at times the solution is to start one’s own business. As it was with Devon who wound up starting his own cleaning business of “Baker Maids” which provides for commercial and residential cleaning. It is going well, and we’ve helped grow that business for him and also helped Devon personally with his needs as well. He’s a very good investment and anyone needing cleaning services should contact him at: 288-797-9501. Great entrepreneurial spirit!



JAMARELL:

Moms are the best. Loyal, protective, compassionate, helpful. You name it. And moms are often the sole source of support for a child returning from prison as it is with Jamarell and his mother Joanne. He just came back after 15 years away, during which mom stood by him. She's now assisting in many ways, as are we. He has a couple of good job potentials, and we are now helping him get into his own home etc. His mother remains the main source of strength and support in his life. As always. Moms. The best.



MICHAEL:

Live it, teach it really hits home with those who are recovering addicts. What better person to talk about recovering from an addiction.

Michael knew very well all of the horrible impact that being an addict can have on one's life, on their family, their job etc. He was recently released from prison after serving a sentence related to his addiction and from that moment he knew his calling was to help others. And he has as he is employed at Live Rite Recovery Resource Center and everyday helps those who need his guidance in combatting their addiction. We've helped him along the way and are very proud of all that he has accomplished. A great, great success story!



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

We are glad to share them with you and hope you are enjoying the summer months!

All the best,

Bob Schwartz

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