



MAY UPDATE FOR RETURNING HOPE TO RETURNING CITIZENS PROGRAM

April was a great month, including having our first returning citizen save enough money to purchase their own home.

Mario Brown is now a homeowner, and we couldn't be more excited for him and prouder of his tremendous efforts in saving money for the down payment etc. and obtaining a mortgage. We'd been helping him in various ways from the moment he was released, and he worked tremendously hard and picked up overtime hours at work as much as possible. We were happy to furnish his home and provide home furnishings as well. 🙌🙌🙌🙌



One thing that is constant in working with returning citizens is their feelings of appreciation for what we are able to help with as well as their strong desire to do anything possible for Here to Help so they can help us help others.

This was again shown the other day when we got a very nice email from Fred who we recently began working, with:

***“I just wanted to thank you for the blessings you bestowed upon me. I went to Walmart today and got many essentials, backpacks, shoes, socks, and a number of other things that a guy needs when starting over from scratch. Your program has such a positive effect on the men and women that are returning from prison.*”**

***“There are many challenges facing a parolee along with the stress of trying to readjust to the world. I believe that Here to Help is a critical and much needed service that helps to make that transitions much smoother and gives a welcoming feeling that someone cares; that there is hope that we can make a successful return to a new life.*”**

“I look forward to working with you in the future and proving that you and Here to Help are an integral part to that path. And I want to be able to give back to Here to Help at some point as what you do is wonderful. Thanks again. Fred.”

Very nice.

Here are some of the many uplifting stories we were able to participate in during the month of April.

We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we enjoy being part of them.

GEORGE AND MELVIN:

25 years for a crime you were innocent of? That is what George and Melvin DeJesus endured before finally being exonerated last month and able to walk out of prison as free men. Their family and the Innocent Clinic at U of M were relentless in their pursuit of their exoneration. We are helping them with their transition back to their community and they both will be working shortly and continuing to rebuild their life. George learned to be a braille transcriber in prison and will work in that field. We will be

there to help them with everything they need in easing their path forward in freedom. A long time coming.



JOHNELL:

Tears of joy often flow in our first meeting with a returning citizen as we start our ongoing relationship. Many are simply not used to someone assisting them as they've struggled for many years without guidance, mentorship, or the simple act of helping. We met Johnell the other day and he was overwhelmed with happiness when we provided him Walmart gift cards and advised him we would fully furnish his basement room at his grandmother's home. We look forward to bringing more joy to Johnell on his path of success as he begins a great environmental career training program today.



CAREMA:

It's definitely one step at a time for those returning from prison as there's a lot of adjustment returning to one's community after having been away for a while. There are those who from the get-go are striving to accomplish more each day and that's definitely the case with Carema. She's got a good job, a car, housing etc. and she's going back to school for additional training to gain more skills for her employment. She's definitely one of the most successful of the thousands of returning citizens we've worked with and we're more than happy to have assisted her along the way. Congrats to your success Carema!



DANIEL:

An old proverb says, “Little things can ruin the whole thing” and that’s very appropriate for returning citizens as they may have everything in place to achieve great success, but one little thing can derail everything. Daniel had completed his Commercial Driver License training and had a good job lined up and just needed to take the driving related tests with endorsements and the written questions test. The problem is without having started a job yet, he had no ability to pay the \$300.00 for all the tests. We stepped in with the money as it was a great investment as Russ passed all the tests yesterday and accepted a job offer. Problem averted and great things ahead for Daniel.



MICHAEL:

Life can indeed change in a hurry. One moment you are on top of the world and next moment you’re having to build everything back from square one. Michael was a CRNA and doing great at his job and earning a good living. One transgression sent him to prison briefly and he’s now rebuilding his life and working hard at a manual labor job. Transportation was a major issue for him in getting to work. His sister generously contributed towards the purchase of a car, and we paid the remainder. We’ve helped in other ways as well and Michael is definitely helping himself in moving forward with success.



DESHAUN:

A positive attitude is often the key to success and when you're coming back from prison after six years, like Deshaun, you need to try and stay positive. Deshaun does not yet have a place of his own to call home, was struggling with transportation to and from his Commercial Driver License classes and didn't yet have an income as he was in training. But that didn't stop him from being incredibly positive and excited about his future and very appreciative of all we were able to now help him with His smile is infectious and we know he's going to be tremendously successful, with many positive outcomes as he moves forward.



CHRISTOPHER:

Success stories are always wonderful to see with returning citizens and Christopher definitely falls within that category. We've helped him in various ways since we started working together last Sept., just two days after he was released. His goal, that he put on his application with us, was: "Go to school for a trade and get a good job to better myself and eventually get my own home."

He's right on target now as he's just begun his externship via his HVAC training program at Dorsey College where he's #1 in his class. He will soon get a great job and a successful career path lies ahead. Way to go Christopher!



JOSIAH:

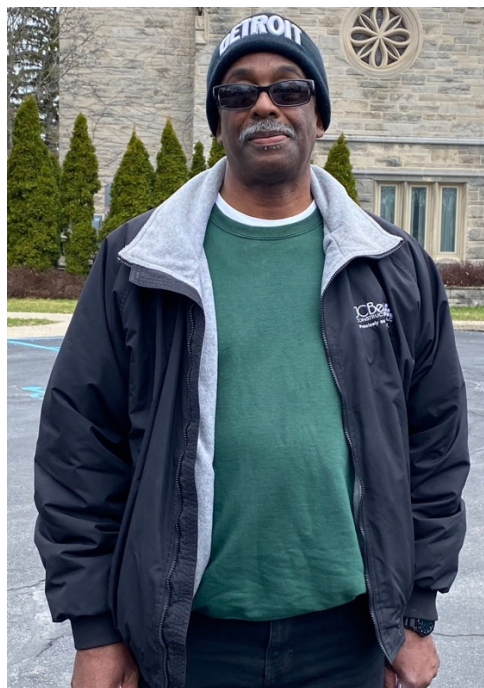
Just one chance. One chance. That's all some returning citizens need to be successful, and that chance is given by an employer who doesn't automatically dismiss them upon doing a background check. Josiah is a great, dedicated worker but couldn't land a decent job until someone took a chance and Josiah proved very worthy. His employer has already given him a raise and is very pleased. Josiah is also going to school to get his CDL. Unfortunately, he'd fallen behind on his DTE bill and his car note, and we

took care of both of those for him as he's financially sound moving forward and doing very, very well.



ISAAC:

Having been sentenced as a 23-year-old and being away for a whopping 43 years, Isaac faced much difficulty in adjusting to the world outside the walls of prison. It takes a unique individual to become successful with everything that has changed over that time. We began helping Isaac last July and his road to success has been remarkable and inspiring. He has been very self-sufficient and obtained his CDL and just began work at the City of Detroit Water Department. We've helped him in a variety of ways and Isaac has been a wonderful investment. We look forward to seeing his continued success.



SHARNINA:

Sometimes it's a very long road before a returning citizen is able to get to the point that they are able to move into their own residence. So, it is always a very exciting day for us when we can help move someone into their own home after we have been working with and assisting them for a long period of time. As it is with Sharnina who we met last August and have helped her in various ways, and she now has a very good job at Yanfeng Automotive and just the other day moved into her own home. We provided her furniture and all home furnishings and she's very excited as are we for her!



BRIANNA:

Sometimes being in the wrong place at the wrong time lands you in prison and, once released, being in the right place at the right time can lead to good things. After serving her 4.5-year sentence, Brianna was in the right place to learn about Detroit's Greendoor Initiative which trains minority workers in areas such as construction and hazardous materials/waste handling. She's on the path to land a good job and also landed a weekend job cleaning out homes to refurbish. She's been in the right place at the right time lately and is taking advantage of all her opportunities, including our help in moving her forward.



ANTHONY:

When a big brother steps to the plate to help a returning citizen it is a very positive thing as it was for Anthony as his brother took him under his wing when Anthony came home from prison. He helped him find a job, gave him a room in his home to live and helped him learn all the new technology that emerged since he'd gone to prison. Tragically though Anthony's brother was killed by gunshots this past week as an innocent victim. Anthony is devastated and we are trying to fill the role of his brother and continue to provide guidance and assistance. Our thoughts are with you and your family Anthony.



DERRICK:

It is said that “Love conquers all” and that is true when it comes to standing by a loved one who is serving a prison sentence. As it was for Derrick who served four years and his wife was there to support him at all times and waiting for him upon his release. Derrick has been a nice success story as he has a good job (as does his wife) and we just helped them both move into a nice home together by assisting with furniture, move in costs and home furnishings. Life is good, love is strong, and success continues to shine upon them.



LEZLYE:

A loooooong time coming is the best way to describe Lezlye’s waiting to be approved for a place to rent. Many apartment landlords refuse to rent to anyone with a conviction in their background as Lezlye found out in racking up hundreds and hundreds of dollars in application fees. He has a great job and earning good money, but it was hard to pay those fees and save for move in costs, all the while paying to live in a motel room. This past week he finally located a landlord to rent him an apartment. Great, great news and we paid his deposit and provided him furniture and home furnishings as he moved in. His perseverance was finally rewarded, and we couldn’t be happier for him!



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

We are glad to share them with you and have a great month of May.

All the best,

Bob Schwartz

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