

## MARCH NEWSLETTER

We established a bond with Lavelle years before he was released as we communicated with him about once a week in prison. He got out last April and he's been doing great. He went through training to be a City of Detroit Bus Driver and is a very dedicated employee, doing very well at his job. We've helped him in many ways including work clothing, move in costs to his new home, along with furniture and home furnishings and also provided him with a vehicle.

Lavelle is very self-sufficient at present, and we consider him a good friend. The City of Detroit clearly recognizes his work as Lavelle proudly and enthusiastically sent us the accompanying photo as he was just given the **Employee of the Month** award.

We've had many people in our program win that award and it always gives us a great feeling and all the more so with Lavelle, with our ongoing and close relationship.



## **DARRYL AND THOMAS:**

It's always wonderful to get that random text, audio message, email etc. of appreciation from someone we have helped a lot along the way in getting to their current position of self-sufficiency.

The other day we received such a random text and photo from Darryl, along with Thomas. They are two individuals who we helped get to their current situation where they each have their Commercial Driver License and are both working for GFL Environmental Waste Management company and doing great.

Darryl is definitely someone who was struggling while he was in school/training and not generating adequate income to meet his expenses. We helped him in a variety of ways including multiple car repairs, work attire, gasoline, hotel costs etc. We also helped Thomas a lot as well with gift cards for basic necessities, work clothing furniture, home furnishings etc.

It was great to receive the attached photo and text from Darryl: "Good morning, just checking in with you. I'm working at GFL now with Thomas Walker. He told me to tell you he says hey, and we both want to thank you again for all you've done for us! We'll be getting in touch with you soon to show our appreciation. Have a blessed day."

Always great to hear from those we have previously assisted.



## **DAKOTA:**

When you are in prison there are life changing events that occur within your family that you have to deal with while isolated away from your loved ones.

Dakota experienced this when her daughter passed away while Dakota was in prison. She had to get through the grieving process without the support of family members and close friends.

Dakota is currently adjusting to life on the outside of prison walls and is doing well since her release last year as she now has a job with Nation Outside (state advocacy group led by formerly incarcerated individuals).

Dakota is the Native American Chapter Coordinator and working hard. She's also in college at Eastern Michigan pursuing a Political Science degree. We helped her with gift cards so she could get basic necessities and will assist her shortly with getting into her own housing. We also helped her obtain much-needed eyeglasses.

Dakota is smart and determined and hard working. A great combination of things which equals much current and future success!



## **DAVID:**

“I am finally, finally enjoying life. I am loving living my life!”

It took quite some time for David, at 63 years of age, to be able to say these words for the first time. As he did to us the other day when we met to help him with his security deposit (we also had provided him furniture for his new rental home and home furnishings).

We first met David last fall and he had just obtained employment with someone who owned various homes and some of them needed fixing up. David has been working with him ever since as well as working at McDonald's.

He's been doing good with the home repair job and his boss offered him one of the homes to rent and thus his current level of happiness is getting into his first place to live, all of his own.

Good times now and moving forward and it is uplifting to see that after all these years of struggling and after a long history of in and out of prison, he has finally settled in and is doing well and as he stated: “...finally enjoying life.”





## **AUTUMN:**

We've previously mentioned the hard-working nature of returning citizens with some people having two jobs to get ahead but Autumn takes that a step further with three jobs!

Yes indeed, a trifecta of employment as she works in her skilled trade arena as a Dental assistant as well as a hotel night clerk and, additionally, as a Network Security Specialist with Setcom Products.

Pretty impressive and we have helped Autumn in a variety of ways since she came home a few months back and were very pleased that she recently found a great mobile home to rent.

We assisted her with her move in costs, new furniture and home furnishings.

She just moved in and we are very excited for her to get into her own home. Autumn has worked incredibly hard to get to this point and nothing but ongoing success in her future.

Way to go Autumn!



## **GOWON:**

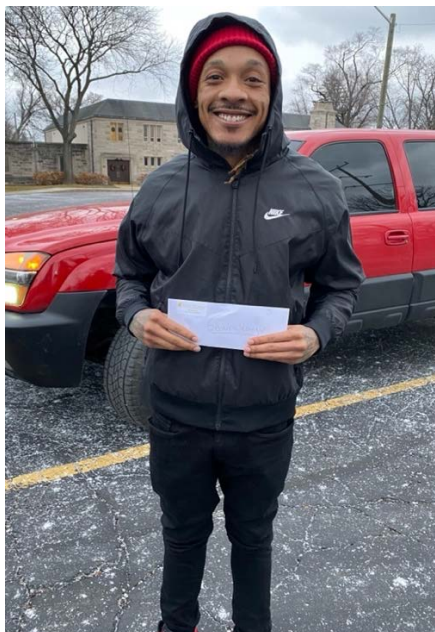
Federal returning citizens have different requirements as they go to a halfway house first which, as the name suggests, is like being halfway between prison and living independently.

We begin working with the Federal individuals when they are released from the halfway house and are on “home confinement” which is living on their own with reporting requirements to their Probation Agent.

We were first contacted by Gowon last October while he was at the halfway house. We communicated a lot since then and definitely felt like we knew him well when we finally met in person the other day after he was released. Gowon’s been working at MS Companies as an inspector and has current aspirations of getting his Commercial Driver License or forklift driving certification.

We helped him with his current needs, including work clothing and a phone bill in shutoff status and are helping him locate housing of his own as well as getting him enrolled in one of the skilled trades he’s interested in.

As always, the goal is to keep moving him forward on his path of success and Gowon’s been anticipating our help for the past three months and now that he’s out of the halfway we are ready to get rolling and he’s very excited. Much success lies ahead!



## **TERRY:**

No better time for us to help with transportation than during the winter months where traveling by bus is more cumbersome with walking to the bus stop, waiting etc. or even just trying to get friends and family to help you get to work by providing a ride.

It was our pleasure to help Terry the other week with a vehicle and make his ability to get to and from his job. He is working 40 or more hours a week plus Saturday overtime at his job at Jeeter, the #1 cannabis brand in the United States.

When we first met Terry in July he'd only been home 10 days but already had two jobs with one working for Aerotek and another at the Dollar Tree store.

He's always been a hard worker so we were glad when he applied to our Working Cars for Working People program, knowing that we would be able to help him as he's been self-sufficient on his income at Jeeter. He also has his own business on the side via putting his barber expertise to use in cutting hair.

He got a nice 2010 Ford Mustang in great shape and ready to last him for years to come. No more trying to arrange rides to work, or relying on the bus in the middle of winter etc.

With wheels of his own, navigating to get to work and anywhere. Everything just got a whole lot easier!



## **CHARLES:**

Talk about hitting the ground running! Charles definitely has the record for that as he obtained his job on the first day he was released from prison back on Jun 3 27<sup>th</sup>.

His skills in welding helped him to get a job immediately with Eastern Michigan Industries, producing high quality fabrications for the tool industry.

Charles makes good money and has been living with family. He's now ready for our help in locating a place to live and then helping him with his move in costs, new furniture and home furnishings.

We met him on a day with winter like low temperatures and at this time of year we keep our vehicle well stocked with winter gear to help people with. He was very excited to receive, along with gift cards for his other current needs, a nice and warm winter coat.

Charles is a hard worker, taking on overtime hours as much as possible. He's already achieved much success, which was made all the easier by his getting his job on the day he came back from prison. A record for our returning citizens program!

Way to go Charles and we look forward to moving you even further forward on your path of success.





## **JAMAL:**

Sometimes there's a level of pride that stops a person from asking for our assistance at a time when we would gladly help.

Everyone can use help at times and it's definitely not a weakness to ask for assistance. Jamal was doing well when we met back in 2022. He had a good job with Tomkins Products, and we helped him out with basic necessities as well as the costs of a road test for his license.

He was very self-sufficient and moved into his own home without seeking our help on anything. But months later, things began to become difficult, and he needed our assistance. Through no fault of his own, his hours were reduced at work, and he was struggling to pay February rent and his DTE bill. He also finally asked for our help in furnishing his apartment and providing home furnishings.

We helped him out in all the ways he needed, and he will remain self-sufficient as his hours will be going back up shortly and he is supplementing his income with DoorDash and Shipt delivering. He texted us: "Thank you! I really appreciate it. 🙏 Your kindness brings tears to my eyes. Thank you, thank you. To be honest I never had someone truly and genuinely help me with anything. I believe everyone has an angel in their corner and you are mine. Thank you."

Our pleasure Jamal. We all need help at some point. Never hesitate to ask.



## **KEVIN:**

It's quite clear that some returning citizens are incredibly resourceful. From getting a job, to making transportation happen, to finding food resources etc.

Kevin is one of those resourceful people as he is currently working two jobs to make ends meet (at Meijer and at DTS Drivetrain Specialists) and he's juggling both schedules very well.

He found an apartment building to move into (a hard thing to do for anyone with a felony background and he did indeed need a relative to co-sign) and his resourcefulness was evident as he took care of all his furniture/home furnishing needs via Facebook Marketplace.

And it didn't cost him a penny as he got some great items that people just wanted someone to pick up and take away.

The only thing he needed from us were a couple of pillows, which we gladly supplied. And shout out to Amazon and same day delivery as within hours of placing the order, the pillows were at Kevin's front door (see photo).

There definitely is a strong correlation between a returning citizen's resourcefulness and their long-term success. And Kevin has been, and will continue to be, quite successful!



## **KAVIN:**

Certainly, obtaining a job gives a returning citizen a psychological boost. When they do a great job at their employment and are promoted that gives them a phenomenal feeling of accomplishment and success. Rightfully so.

Kavin fits that description as he obtained a job at Goodwill Green Works recycling facility and quickly moved up the ladder and is now a supervisor with much responsibility and a much higher rate of pay.

It's that latter situation that allowed Kavin to become self-sufficient enough to obtain our help to get into his own housing and then he applied to our Working Cars for Working People program for a used vehicle.

Thankfully we were able to assist him with a great car (Kavin on the right in the photo with the seller) and having that transportation means not having to rely on family and friends and co-workers to get to work and the freedom one's own car brings is significant.

So, a nice shot out to Kavin for a great few weeks here where everything is flowing together with his first rental home and first car. Well-deserved Kavin! Way to go!



## **SHANNON:**

Many returning citizens that we've helped over the years have picked up the skill of being a barber while in prison and served in that capacity in cutting fellow inmates' hair.

As skilled as their talents may be when they are released from prison, they can't become certified as a barber without either completing an 1800-hour course of study at a barber college or completing 1800 hours in an apprenticeship program. That latter approach is obviously more appealing as during an apprenticeship they can earn money to survive. Being in school for about 45 weeks is difficult without ongoing income to meet their needs.

We met Shannon the other day after he was released from prison, and he is a skilled in hair cutting but lacked that 1800 hours of apprenticeship training. Thankfully, he did find someone to mentor him in that capacity, but Shannon needed all the many required barber tools/equipment to make that happen.

We helped him get what he needs for his new career in cutting hair. Shannon was very appreciative and with his dedication and desire it is clear he will be an exceptional and certified barber!





## **GEORGE:**

Sometimes it's a substance abuse issue that lands someone in prison. Unfortunately, punishment and not treatment is the approach and when a returning citizen is released from prison they're often still struggling with that abuse.

Thankfully there are those who recognize they have an issue and do get enrolled in one of the many good treatment programs in the Detroit area.

We first met George back in 2022 and helped him with basic necessities and with work related clothing and a car repair and he was enrolled in an HVAC training program.

He was on a good path, but he did need concentrated help with a substance abuse issue. George took care of that with the help of Mariners Inn and he's doing very, very well now. He's working as a cook at a popular restaurant, earning good money, and also still doing HVAC training. Most importantly, he is 18 months sober!

He found an apartment and took care of the move in costs and just needed help from us with his furniture needs and his home furnishing items. We provided all that for him and his apartment is now complete with absolutely everything he needs.

George had an extra hurdle to get over once he was released from prison but what a tremendous success story! Truly, way to go George!



## **TEMIKO:**

Sometimes fathers deserve a shout out for the help they provide to their child who is a returning citizen, as without their support things would be much more difficult.

It may be their welcoming the person back into their home, or gifting a vehicle or giving them rides to and from work or helping them get a place of their own and paying the rent until their child is able to pay rent etc.

As is the case with Temiko as he was released from prison last September and was in his own place by October. When he applied with us a few weeks ago, he was in a welding program full time, so it was very unclear how he was paying rent etc. with no income.

That mystery was solved when we met Temiko and learned that his father was assisting him with rent until Temiko could complete the welding program and land a good job and handle his expenses on his own. Thanks Dad! We helped Temiko with furniture and home furnishings etc. and will be there for him when he gets a welding job and needs tools/equipment.

He should complete his welding program shortly and give a big thanks to his father and be fully self-sufficient moving forward. Again, a big shout out to dad for all the help!



## **DARIUS:**

The only requirement we have for someone to become part of our returning citizens program is at the time they initially apply for our help; they must be coming back from prison in the last 12 months.

We can continue to help them for as long as they need help, but since there are over 3500 people in our program at present, we have to have that 12-month rule in place.

That said, since we make the rules we can always bend those rules as we just did for Darius. He's been out awhile longer than those 12 months, but he definitely seems like a great investment of our time and money as he's currently on a solid path to go to medical school.

He just began a good job as Clinical Information Specialist at Oak Street Health and he will be applying for medical school in the near future. He's self-sufficient and living on his own at present though he needed our help with furniture and home furnishings as he had nothing in his apartment.

We gladly bent our rules for Darius and glad to get him all set in his home with everything he needs and help him with some work-related clothing. Nothing but good things ahead for Darius!



## **THOMAS:**

We've said it before that there are times that those in our returning citizens program have a great amount of pride and want to accomplish as much on their own as possible.

That would definitely be Thomas who we started working with last April and helped him with work clothes, bus passes and other basic necessities.

And from that point onward, Thomas kept in touch but really didn't ask for much by way of assistance. He is working at Cloverleaf Bar and Restaurant as a prep cook and dishwasher. He saved up enough to purchase his own vehicle and recently moved into his own apartment and sent us photos of all that he was able to purchase to have everything he needed in his new home.

We kept asking was there anything we could assist with and all he asked for was a little help with groceries at present as most of his savings had gone to moving into his new home.

We gladly assisted Thomas with that and are very proud of all he was able to accomplish. On his own. Way to go Thomas!





## **CHRISTOPHER:**

Staying in transitional housing is often a great incentive to quickly get things in order as far as job training and/or employment so one can be financially secure enough to move.

The key to this happening sooner than later is organization and many returning citizens have their plan in place as they exit prison.

Christopher definitely falls in that category as when we met him, shortly after he walked out of prison, he had already applied for apprenticeship programs in the fields of carpentry, plumbing and electrical. He's also enrolled in college for this summer to attend in the evenings after work.

It is pretty clear that Christopher has things together quite nicely and is on a determined path to be successful and we have no doubt he will achieve those goals. We've helped him with gift cards for all his clothing and other basic necessities and we will be there to help him with all his required tools and equipment when he begins an apprenticeship program in the near future.

We can then address getting him out of transitional housing and into his own place to call home. Clearly he is going to be a wonderful success story as things move forward!



## **MARQUELLE:**

The 1960's phrase of "Keep on truckin'" is definitely appropriate in the advice for returning citizens as it means "Don't give up. Keep on going."

Indeed, that is key for those coming back from prison as at times it can be discouraging and giving up becomes a thought that enters one's mind.

We do our best to keep providing encouragement and hope even in the darkness and the light does eventually shine through. As it was for Marquelle who we began working with way back in September of 2021! Unfortunately, he went back to prison in 2022 and we resumed our assisting him last December when he was released.

He finally got enrolled at the Suburban Truck Driver Training school and we did all we could to keep him afloat while he was in training with food help and transportation assistance etc.

Just the other day he did complete training and passed the road test and is a licensed commercial driver. A good job will be his shortly and we can then get him into his own housing etc. He proudly sent us this photo.

Thankfully, Marquelle did "Keep on truckin'" and got back on track to obtain his CDL. Great going Marquelle and nothing but brightness shines ahead for you!



## **LATOYA:**

One of the difficulties returning citizens face is the lack of full-time hours from a job that they have great expertise for.

That obviously creates difficulties in achieving self-sufficiency unless they get another part time job whose hours mesh with their current one (not very easy) or they do “side hustles.” Some type of work to fill in the missing pieces and supplement income etc.

LaToya is very skilled at cutting hair and has a job at Supercuts but is struggling as she’s only receiving 18-20 hours per week and her hourly wage is low at \$10.30 per hour.

So, she’s beginning to side hustle and gather clients for hair cutting and doing fingernails etc. She’s working hard and we have assisted her with her basic necessities including work clothing and are purchasing her more tools and equipment to allow her to have all she needs to be the most successful. Not only at Supercuts but also with her side hustles.

With all her efforts at making money, we hope to get her into her own housing in the near future and she’ll be able to move from her brother’s home. We will continue to do all we can to make her path easier on the road to success! She’s working hard to make that happen.



## **WILLIE:**

We can't emphasize enough how exciting it is for a returning citizen (and for us) to finally get to that point of self-sufficiency that we can assist them in getting into their very first home of their own.

Not only does it often come after many, many years in prison but it comes after a lifetime of living with others and never being at that point in life to afford one's own place.

We first met Willie, who spent over 28 years in prison, about a year ago. We helped him in various ways at that time as he was getting adjusted to life on the outside of the prison walls.

He eventually got a job with the City of Detroit as an Environmental Technician which involved a lot of clean-up work. He was recently able to switch to the Water Department which provides much greater opportunity for growth and greater income.

He's been doing great, and we just assisted him with his move in costs, brand-new furniture, and home furnishings as he moved into an apartment. His very first place to ever call a home of his own.

Incredibly exciting! Willie was very grateful for our assistance, and he constantly expressed his desire to help us in any way possible to show that appreciation. We do get that a lot and it is always very much welcome. Way to go Willie!





## **JAYLEN:**

Talk about hitting the ground running, Jaylen set a record for our program as he was released from prison on January 27<sup>th</sup>, met with Michigan Works on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and started a Commercial Driver License training program on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Wow!

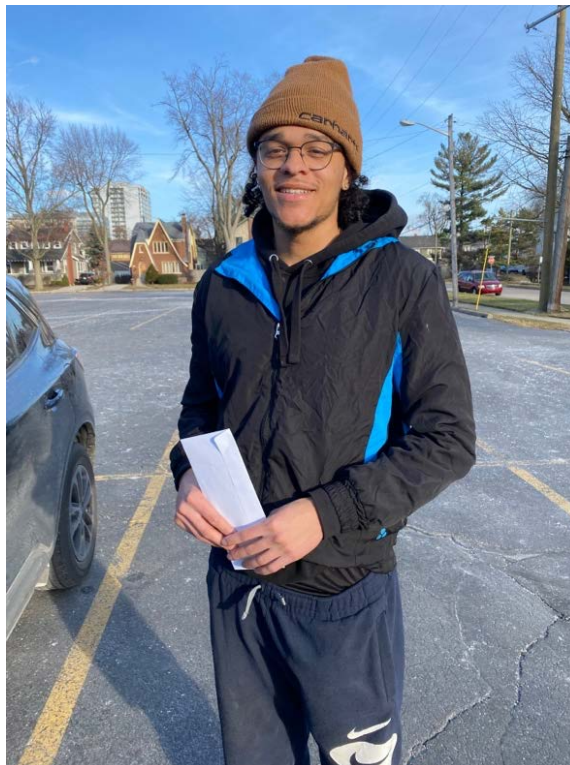
That's crazy fast but he's doing great in the program and will be taking his driver's test shortly and will complete the program in less than a month, which has never happened that fast before.

When you know what you want and you are ready to make things happen, you go for it as Jaylen has. We've helped him with basic necessities including clothing for his training and will help him get a job when he graduates soon.

His next goal, which we will gladly assist him with, is to get into his own housing as he's living with family at present.

At this pace, he'll be in housing in a few weeks and within six weeks from being released from prison and that is incredibly fast.

Jaylen's work ethic, organization and determination will definitely make him a wonderful success story within our program. Way to go Jaylen!



## **RAYMOND:**

When you've been sitting in a prison cell for the last few years, you usually don't mind being active and working hard at a job opportunity that comes your way when you get released from prison. Raymond had to reschedule our first face to face meeting as his application to work at Magna was approved and he was beginning work the day we were to meet.

We set a new date and just met with him, and he is clearly a go-getter. Raymond is currently working seven days a week with 10-hour shifts Monday through Friday and eight-hour shifts on Saturday as well as Sunday! Wow, wow, wow.

That's a lot of hours per week but Raymond wasn't complaining at all. He was excited to be working that much, excited to be earning good money and excited for all that the future held for him.

Which includes our ongoing assistance as we helped Raymond with gift cards for work and casual clothing and will assist very, very soon with his own housing, furniture, and home furnishings.

He's incredibly excited for that as he can't wait to get into a place of his own to call home. For the very first time.

So, working every day of the week is no problem for Raymond as he looks at every day as a new beginning and after being away for two years, he couldn't be happier to be working hard and saving money.



## **CALVIN:**

“I’m trying hard and want to do everything I can to get back on my feet and back into a place of my own. I struggled to try to keep my last place and lost it. I don’t want to be that way the next time around so I want to do all I can to not feel defeated and ashamed. So, thank you for your time and support!”

Those are the words of Calvin as we don’t always start working with someone right when they get out of prison, but we encounter them further down the road and, like with Calvin, things may not have been going well.

He’d struggled initially. After getting his own rental home he couldn’t keep up with rent and was evicted. He’s on a better path now. He’s completing his Commercial I Driver License training and is in our program. We’re keeping him afloat while he’s in school with no income and helping him with rent where he’s currently renting a room.

We will help get him a driving job and then help him get back into housing of his own. We’ll make certain that this time around things will go smoother and Calvin will feel great about himself and his wonderful accomplishments!





## **BRANDON:**

Hope is definitely the key word in the name of our returning citizens program. We see clear evidence of that every time we meet with someone for the first time, fresh out of prison, and their eyes truly light up when we tell them all that we can do for them and explain how they will be successful.

We especially see that when we get to the part about discussing helping them get into their own home or apartment to rent and also all we can do by way of brand-new furniture and home furnishings.

We clearly see the sudden optimism that occurs when we share that everyone finds housing and there is nothing to worry about, as that is a major concern for returning citizens.

Brandon definitely let out a big sigh and had a large smile on his face when we discussed all that we could help with and he said: “Man, that is such a relief. I am beginning to see the clouds parting. Thanks so much!”

Our pleasure Brandon. We will get rid of all those clouds as we move forward with you on your path of success!





## **ANTONIO:**

Sometimes when a returning citizen is released he not only is doing all he can to help himself, but he may find that a family member also needs his assistance.

Such is the case with Antonio who served 11 years and his plan upon release was to have his parole transferred to Arizona where his mother and other family members live. However, his brother, who lives in Michigan, was recently diagnosed with cancer and Antonio felt he had to stay with his brother and take care of him.

That's what he did as he moved into his brother's one bedroom apartment. Antonio does have new plans in place including obtaining his Commercial Driver License (class beginning in March), getting a job, and moving into the apartment above his brother.

Sometimes life presents choices, and you just have to do what is right at the time and if that meant changing your entire parole plan to take care of your brother then that is the path Antonio had to take.

We just met him for the first time, and he is very intelligent and obviously very compassionate. We have begun helping him in a variety of ways (and his brother). Antonio has a great attitude as he moves forward with his life on the outside and serving as his "brother's keeper" as he chose to do.



## **GAVIN:**

We love to hear from returning citizens once they accomplish their employment goal as it is a great feeling for them to have worked hard at something, achieve the goal, and set themselves on a path of definite economic success etc.

And all the more enjoyable for us when we have helped that person a lot to keep them afloat when they were in training, and they had no income coming in.

That was the case with Gavin when he was in school to get his Commercial Driver License. He had ongoing transportation issues (we took care of a major car repair for him and kept him going with help with gasoline to get to and from class) and daily food was a constant source of difficulty. We also helped him with proper clothing to meet the demands of cold winter weather while working in the truck “yard.”

He was quite excited and proud the other day in letting us know he had passed the State’s road test to become certified with his Commercial Driver License! He sent us this photo displaying his receipt of his license from the Secretary of State.

He will have a great job soon and we look forward to getting him into his own housing and he’ll now be completely self-sufficient. Way to go Gavin!

