



## NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

One of the joys for us in helping returning citizens is hearing of so many of their wonderful accomplishments, and the touching words they supply us once they have achieved a goal. Such as Clarence who is now working for the City of Detroit and becoming a bus driver. He just sent us the following:

**“Letting you know that I PASSED ALL EXAMS! Thank you sooooo much for believing in me my friend! You are a treasured and cherished person by me and all these other men and women that you are helping, and we all thank God for you! I'm representing you and your program and I'm going to represent you well! I won't let you down!”**

The rest of Clarence's story can be found in this month's Newsletter. Enjoy that and other great stories!

## **LATOYA:**

Perseverance is often the key to success for returning citizens. And LaToya definitely has perseverance.

We first met a year ago and she had just been laid off from her landscaping job with the City of Detroit. She soon thereafter found another job with Payne Landscaping and things were going well once again, but she wanted to work for Amazon which was closer to where she was living and with two young children in school it was important for her to live near where she worked.

Amazon is felony friendly but that sometimes depends on who is reviewing the application and LaToya was turned down not just once, not just twice, but three times before landing the job on the fourth try..

We've been helping her in various ways in the past but now with the new job at Amazon going, we were able to place LaToya and her children into housing near her job and assist by paying her security deposit and providing new furniture for her and home furnishings.

All is good and her perseverance has paid off and she's very excited to be in her own place now. Congrats LaToya!



## **RASHAWN:**

Two of the things we can share with returning citizens when we first meet them is to reassure that we can quickly help get them a job, and thereafter get them into their own rental home.

That info gives them a lot of hope as the uncertainty over their future when they are released from prison is very, very significant.

Many people are already working by the time we meet with them for the first time. Even if that is only days from getting out of prison. One of the fastest ways to get employed is as a delivery driver since those positions are in great demand.

Rashawn had been out a couple weeks before we met, and he already had a delivery position with Fire Pizza in Detroit. He is also interested in getting certified as a Hi-Lo Forklift Driver. We can get him enrolled in that training and he can complete it relatively quickly and get a good job. He was also just hired by his former employer, Luxury Home Furnisher, so he's working two full time jobs at present!

Great things ahead for Rashawn as he hit the ground running and continues forward on his path of success!



## **JAMES:**

One of the great things that occurs when we meet someone for the first time and discuss their future and all we can do for them is the strong desire they express to not let us down.

We constantly hear from returning citizens that they will be one of our success stories; that we can count on them to do what is right, and that they will make us proud etc.

We're most concerned about them achieving and being proud of themselves, but it is always nice to hear those words from those we are helping.

We do engage in providing a lot of advice each day as we are constantly contacted with questions on what to do and it is always nice to get a text like James, who sent us this yesterday:

“Thanks for responding and I appreciate your advice. I will definitely do that. I'm continuing my journey home and doing the best version of me ever. I've been a better person since I've been home, with your help. I love you as a good brother and will always keep in contact. If you by chance need any personal help with any work, I will be there for YOU. I can't and won't let you down! Ever. God bless 🙏. “

Thanks James. And we know you won't let us, or yourself, down!



## **JESSE AND WILLIE:**

Sometimes it's a low-cost emergency situation that threatens to knock someone off the road to success.

As just occurred with Jesse and Willie who are in similar situations as they are pursuing a skilled trade degree but during this time frame of training they have no income. Their biggest hurdle right now? They each have a phone bill that is in shut off status.

Both bills each came in at less than \$100.00 but there was no way for Jesse or Willie to pay that amount right now and keep their phone on. Having a functioning phone is critical for returning citizens as that is their only connection for job applications, doing school assignments, reconnecting with family members etc.

We know that it's critical to keep people afloat during their training period as best we can, and we've helped Jesse and Willie in various ways. From food, transportation, gasoline, toiletries, car repairs, clothing etc. and now a critical phone bill.

They will both soon graduate and obtain a good job and soon gain complete self-sufficiency and we will get them in their own housing. We are glad to have kept them afloat during training and including keeping their respective phones alive, their critical link to everyone and everything.



## **LEANDER:**

The Vocational Village programs at two of Michigan prisons are very good at getting prisoners ready to hit the ground running upon their release, having learned a skilled trade in prison and all prepared to begin a job. Sometimes people have jobs in place before even leaving prison as interviews by companies occurred in prison.

Programs include carpentry, masonry, plumbing, welding, electrical wiring, auto mechanics, operating machine tools and robotic arms, truck driving, and forklift operation. Very soon, a third Vocational Village, at a women's prison, with training in computer coding, 3-D printing, carpentry, graphic design, and cosmetology.

Leander left prison a couple of weeks ago as a certified automotive technician as a result of his training via Vocational Village where he also obtained a CDL permit. He has a few job interviews lined up and things are looking very good for him.

We helped him with basic necessities and look forward to soon helping him obtain all the tools/equipment needed for a job and then getting him into his own housing and providing furniture, home goods etc.

Kudos to Vocational Village for truly providing so many forms of training for people in prison.



## **MIGUEL:**

Returning citizens enjoy working for a multitude of reasons including the obvious reason of earning money but also being proud of obtaining self-sufficiency, becoming friends with co-workers, earning praise from supervisor, and getting a promotion with a raise in pay for doing a great job.

Miguel first contacted us in July but between his work schedule and his tether restrictions and our times/dates to meet, we were just able to meet the other day.

Miguel has come a long way in the past few months as he's been working at Wolverine Packing in Eastern Market and doing great. He started through a staffing agency and now has been able to be hired in as a direct employee with benefits etc. as he's been doing such an excellent job.

The second thing he just earned because of his work ethic etc. is a promotion. And that type of respect and appreciation goes a LONG way for a returning citizen who simply hasn't experienced much of that praise in a while.

So, congratulations to Miguel who we will be helping get into his own housing very shortly as he is moving along incredibly well on his path of success!



## **TERRELL:**

A shout out again to Vocational Village, offering skilled trade training to prisoners who can then come out of prison and hit the ground running. They may already have a job in place from interviews with employers while they were in prison but, if not, they can obtain interviews in a hurry and get working right away.

But only if they can clear that hurdle of having the necessary tools and equipment needed before they can start their job. Most of these types of jobs come with a list of items needed before people can begin working.

As with Terrell who learned welding in prison but to start his new job he needed a welding helmet, welding gloves, steel toed boots, a welding cap inside helmet liner, protective goggles etc.

We took care of those items for Terrell, and he has started working. He will do a great job and self-sufficiency will occur quickly and we will be able to get him into his own housing and then a used vehicle to remove the struggle of getting to and from work.

Congratulations to Terrell!





## **ALBERT:**

It's always exciting to see someone work hard, advance through our program, and achieve a lot of success in a short period of time.

We started working with Albert six months ago, right as he was released, helping with basic necessities as he had absolutely nothing. He then enrolled with Suburban Trucking to get his Commercial Driver License and we helped keep him afloat during training with gas, food, car repairs, Secretary of State fees etc. and got him to the point of graduation.

With his CDL, Albert got a good job and he's been working hard and putting in a lot of hours. We helped him with move in costs to his new home along with lots of new furniture and home furnishings.

And with his self-sufficiency in place, he applied to our car program which he qualified for. We were able to get him into a very nice vehicle which will greatly help Albert in getting to and from work.

It has been an incredibly productive six months for Albert who really deserves all that he has earned since leaving prison and we couldn't be happier and prouder for him. All along the way, he has been very appreciative of everything we were doing for him, and it was definitely our pleasure in helping Albert.



## **THOMAS:**

There is definitely a direct correlation between those who take advantage of educational opportunities while in prison and those who have a plan in place when they are released.

Such as Thomas who we just met after he was released the other day. Thomas definitely took advantage of opportunities while in prison as he completed his associate degree in business as well as in General Studies through Jackson College and he also received his Comp TIA certification (Informational Technology).

He has a plan in place now as he has already been in touch with Wayne State University to transfer his college credits there and complete his bachelor's degree in business and he is passionate to then obtain an MBA.

He has also registered for Commercial Driver License training and will begin that soon as he knows having a skilled trade will allow him to quickly start working and generate income, which is most necessary at the present time.

We have helped him in various ways and look forward to helping Thomas at all times in the future as we are 100% certain is going to be a wonderful success story!



## **LARRY:**

Lots of credit for Larry's very fast success after being released from prison goes to him for his strong work ethic, intelligence, and perseverance.

We met Larry in July and now, just a couple of months later, he has quickly advanced through our program and he's in his own home and we just assisted him a used vehicle.

He's working full time as well as getting his Commercial Driver License through the Detroit Training Center by going to school in the evenings and weekends.

We have helped in a variety of ways from initial help with basic necessities including clothing, food, toiletries etc. and then work clothes and helping him locate housing and move in costs as well as furniture and home furnishings and now the used vehicle to help him get to work and school.

We're very proud of how much he's achieved in a short period of time, but we are not surprised as from our first face to face meeting we recognized he was ready to make things happen. He's very appreciative and just texted us: "You are putting us returning citizens in the best position to succeed. God bless you as we don't accomplish what we do without your help and guidance."

Congrats to everything Larry. You deserve it.



## **CHARLES:**

Sometimes the best job is not the one that may pay the most or give you the most hours, but the best job is where you are most comfortable, enjoy your co-workers and like what you do.

Which is exactly how it is for Charles who has been working at Taco Bell from the time we first met him back in July. At that time, we discussed other job opportunities and he simply said “I like it there. They like me and it’s all good.”

And it is for Charles as he works consistent hours and has gotten to the point of self-sufficiency where he could move into his own rental home. We assisted him with his move in costs and provided him a bed, couch, dining room table and chairs and a nightstand and lamp as well as all the home goods he needed including sheets, blanket, pillows, washcloths/towels, drinking glasses, silverware, pots and pans and dishes.

We also just took care of a car repair for Charles so he would avoid any issues getting to and from work as he’s never missed a shift and is a valued employee.



## WAYNE:

It's always nice to see a returning citizen progress quickly on the path of success as that means very limited hurdles were encountered and getting to a position of self-sufficiency was relatively smooth.

As it was for Wayne, who we first met months ago after he had been away for 30 years and he was very appreciative of all we could do for him, then and in the future.

We helped at that time with his basic needs and furniture for his room at his sister's and now, he's just completed getting his Commercial Driver License and has a great job.

But the other day a hurdle arose as his car needed new brakes. It was dangerous driving at that point, and he needed a quick repair so he could get to and from his new job.

We took care of that issue for him, and he was very appreciative of our help. The next step was getting him into his own home which we just did and helped with move in costs, furniture, home goods etc.

Wayne has come a long way since we began working together and much continued success lies ahead!



## **DAVID:**

It is said the longest journey begins with but a single step. That may include not only the first step inside a prison to begin one's sentence but on the more positive side it is the first step into the Detroit Training Center to begin the journey for one to obtain their Commercial Driver License.

That is a journey that will include getting the education to pass the written portion of the test and then more education and hands on training until the point one can pass the driving test and get their CDL. Then a great job is waiting for them.

David recently began that journey and he was very excited because of all it means. Including achievement, earning income to be self-sufficient etc. Lots of great things are ahead and we will be there for David to keep him going during his training process and get him quickly into his own housing and help him with a used vehicle once he begins employment etc.

We foresee big things ahead for David! As does he. The journey begins.



## LONNIE:

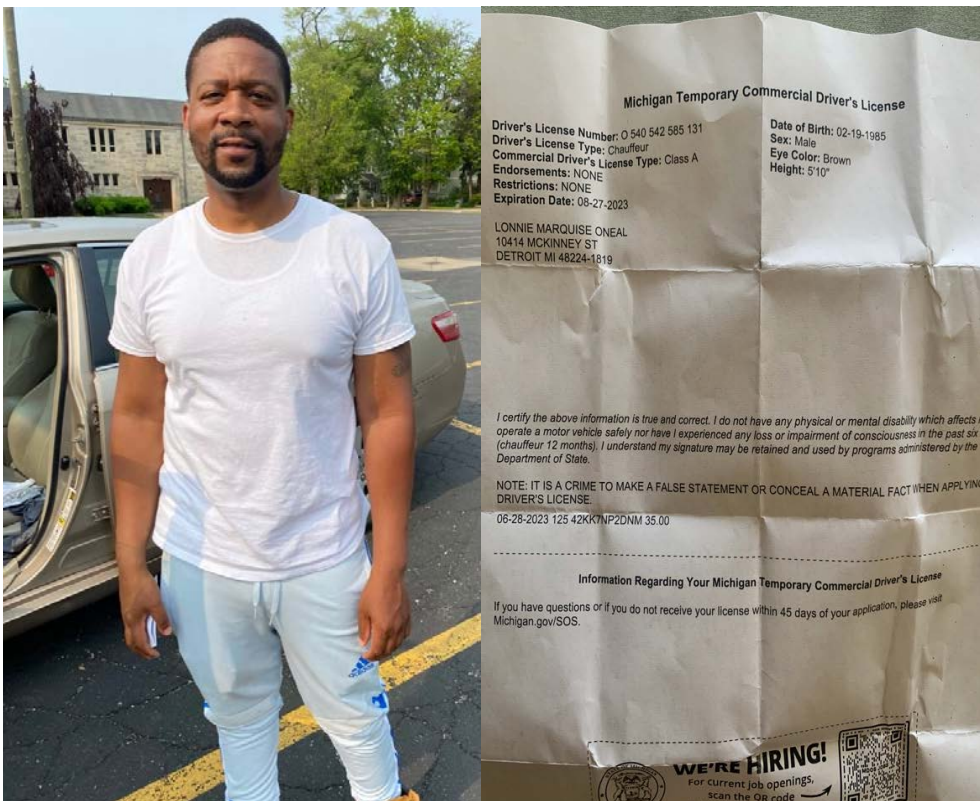
It's that ongoing issue for returning citizens seeking to get ahead and that's how does one survive and meet their basic needs met in training to get a skilled trade degree.

Bad news is there is no help from the State or other organizations. Good news is we can do our best to keep people afloat like Lonnie during the time he obtained his Commercial Driver License.

We helped him a lot of different ways including DTE bill, rent, gas for his car, car insurance, phone bill, food etc. He finally was able to graduate and pass his road test and get that License! Woo hoo!

And now he's got a good job with Bransafway Industries and doing great. He's self-sufficient and no longer needs our help at all in meeting his basic needs and that's been the goal since we first met two months ago.

A bit of a bumpy road to get to this point but we are very happy that Lonnie was a great investment of our time and assistance. And now he's on the open road with his job. Congrats Lonnie!



## **KEVIN:**

We have said it before that returning citizens very often make the best employees as they are hardworking and dedicated. Dr. Genevieve Rimer, a Fair Choice Employment Expert, said it well when she stated: "Businesses that skip over people solely because of their conviction are often missing out on talented people... who are dependable... whose employment becomes part of their identity."

That is very true with Kevin who is not only a valued employee at DTS Drive Train Specialists where he has been working for a month now, but one job was not enough for him to be good at, so he took a second job at Roseville Bowling Alley.

Between both jobs he's obviously earning good money and he just purchased a truck that we helped him with and he's doing great.

Housing will be next for Kevin, and we can assist him with move in costs, furniture etc.

He's determined to leave his past behind and he hit the ground running when he was released from prison just one month ago when we met him a few days after his release.

A big shout out to Kevin for his strong work ethic and his determination as he moves forward!





## **JEFFREY:**

It takes a very strong spouse to hold the family together while their loved one is in prison, and financially and emotionally take care of everything.

Jeffrey's wife filled that role for the last four years and did so very well with keeping the paid along with all other bills for the family, including their three children.

Jeffrey has now been released and he received training while in prison to be an Automotive Technician. Though he's only been out six days, he has a great job in place with Bill Brown Ford.

He is ready to resume his contribution to the household bills and the family did need some help with the current DTE bill and this month's mortgage payment. We took care of those bills for them as they'll be very self-sufficient moving forward with their joint incomes.

Everything is back in place with their family unit and Jeffrey is determined to make up for lost time with his children and wife. Having a good job is critical for that and thankfully all systems are go on that employment.

Kudos for Bill Brown Ford accepting Jeffrey into their work family. Brighter days ahead for sure on all levels.



## **JAMES:**

Many times, we wonder how some returning citizens are able to keep the hours they do with working full time while also going to school full time in learning a skilled trade.

We met James the other day and he was released from prison about a month and half ago. James is already completing his training for obtaining his Commercial Driver License and also working full time with LM Manufacturing. He gets off work at 2:30am, after his eight-hour shift, and is back in CDL school by 8am.

He's living with his grandmother at present and as James says, "I need to have an income."

Which is why he's keeping the schedule he is currently keeping. Soon he can get a great job with his CDL and only work one job.

We've helped with basic necessities and work clothes etc. and his primary goal after getting a CLD job is to have his own place to call home. He will have definitely earned that, and we can help him with his move in costs along with furnishing his new home and also providing home furnishings.

Hard work does pay off and James is showing that each day as he achieves more and more success!



## **JOHNNIE:**

All is good. Until it's not.

That's kind of the way it goes for returning citizens at times. They overcome hurdles and are moving forward with a good job, steady income etc. and then the bottom suddenly falls out.

They may become laid off from work or hours are reduced etc. And people turn to us for help at those time and we do all we can to keep them afloat.

Johnnie was doing good and had a nice job until he was laid off. He was able to secure another job eventually and things are looking very good once again.

He did need his own housing though and we worked with him on securing a place to live and helping him with his move in costs and provided lots of new furniture and home furnishings. So, when he moved in he didn't just have a house he had a home!

Johnnie was very appreciative, and we are glad to have the opportunity to assist him now and be there for him if any hurdles arise in the future. The goal being to keep him moving forward at all times.



## **CHAR'ONA:**

We are often contacted by people when they are still in prison who have heard about our returning citizens program, and they let us know when they will be out. We advise how to contact us as soon as they get out and they often text us as they exit the prison doors.

We are often able to meet them within 24 hours of release. We also get lots of texts from family members whose loved one is getting out soon from prison and we provide information regarding applying for our help etc.

Char'ona's mom contacted us five days before her daughter was being released and we met Char'ona a few days after she came home.

We are helping with job opportunities as well as getting her into her chosen path of completing esthetician school. She has ambition and we will be here to assist her on her path of success.

And she has her mom by her side as well doing what she can for her daughter, including having reached out to us right before Char'Ona was released so we could all hit the ground running, together. Much success lies ahead.



## **CLARENCE:**

There's a mutual understanding when we begin working with someone. We have the same goal of achieving the greatest success possible for that person. We won't let them down and returning citizens definitely experience the desire that they not only don't want to let themselves down, but they don't want to let us down.

We've been working with Clarence since last March and he is in a very good place at present. He's working for the City of Detroit and has passed all written and road tests to obtain his Commercial Driver License to be employed as a city bus driver.

There are some returning citizens who are in daily contact with us. We welcome that as we know many people have no one else in their life. Clarence connects daily and is very appreciative of our role in his life and we're glad to have that presence.

He just sent us the following: "Letting you know that I PASSED ALL EXAMS! Thank you sooooo much for believing in me my friend! You are a treasured and cherished person by me and all these other men and women that you are helping, and we all thank God for you! I'm representing you and your program and I'm going to represent you well! I won't let you down!"

We know that Clarence. You never have and you never will. Congrats on your success!



## **KEIONTAE:**

We see it clearly when we meet with returning citizens for the very first time. As we discuss all that we can do for them now and moving forward, their eyes get bigger and there is a certain sense of disbelief and relief that emerges on their face.

The look of disbelief for these individuals stems from this is the very first time someone has expressed a desire to assist them to get ahead in life and be there to meet their current and future needs. As consistently expressed to us, they honestly can't believe it is true.

The relief they feel obviously stems from such a tremendous concern of how they will survive on the outside of prison with no money, no job prospects, no housing etc.

Keiontae was just released and is in transitional housing at present and looking for a job. He's smart and ready to get going and we provided him lots of job leads and gift cards to meet his current needs etc. Housing and transportation are in his future and when we discussed all we could do he said: "Are you kidding me? This for real man? I haven't gotten help every with anything before."

Until now Keiontae. We are Here to Help!



## **STANLEY:**

Here we go again.

A returning citizen that accomplishing so much, so fast, right after getting out from prison and showing outstanding effort.

Stanley was released from prison just a few weeks ago and is currently living with his grandmother. He has already obtained a great job with GFL Environment as a certified quality control technician, passed the written portion of the State of Michigan CDL B test to be certified as a truck driver and will be taking the road test this week.

We can see Stanley is going places very, very quickly and he will be a wonderfully successful returning citizen. We've already discussed his getting his own housing and our assistance with move in costs, furniture, and home furnishings, along with a used vehicle to help him get to and from employment.

It is always impressive to have a plan in place when getting out of prison and lots of people have those plans but not everyone is as successful in implementing those plans as Stanley has now done. Congrats Stanley. You are an impressive force!



## **TIMOTHY:**

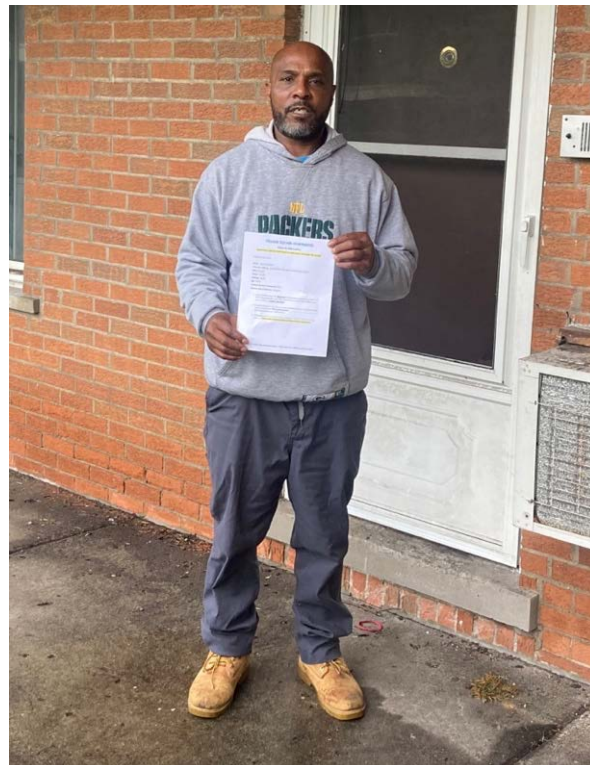
Can you imagine the year suddenly being 2058 and you have been removed from society for the prior 35 years? You now have to adjust to all the changes that have occurred over that time from new technology to different forms of transportation etc.

It is no wonder that many returning citizens who have served very lengthy prison sentences suffer from anxiety and depression after they have been released.

Timothy had served a 35-year prison sentence when we first met him last February and he honestly expressed the mental challenges he was facing with feelings of worry, depression etc.

He has come a long way since then and we've helped in a variety of ways including meeting all his needs for basic necessities. We just assisted with move in costs, new furniture and lots of home goods.

Timothy has a good job at Dana Container and is doing well. He struck out on a few prior homes to rent as deals fell through for a variety of reasons, but he got a good one now and that is all he needs. The photo shows him proudly holding a page designating his approval to move in and the paid move in costs. We couldn't be happier for him!





## **DECHARLES:**

If there is one thing for certain for someone in prison, it is they have a lot of time to sit and think.

For most, it is not just regret over what landed them in prison, but it is an examination of their future and how they will change once they are released from prison.

Often, returning citizens, have a strong desire to do good and make up for lost time and will look for employment where in that job they have the opportunity to help others.

As with DeCharles, who has been out of prison less than a month and who we met one week after he began working for Charles Street Residence which is an assisted living facility providing daily care to senior citizens in need.

He very much likes his job which is going to be critical in his success and things are looking very good for DeCharles. We provided him assistance with his basic necessities and including required work clothing.

As DeCharles assists and cares for others, we will do the same for him. Next stop will be getting him into his own housing. All good!



## **DEVONTE:**

Another amazing example of the hard-working nature of returning citizens who face a fair number of uphill battles but work incredibly hard to achieve success.

We met Devonte the other day and he has been out of prison for a few months. He's working full time at Pioneer Steel in Detroit from 5:00 AM until 1:00 PM and then attends Detroit Training Center from 4:30 PM to 9:30 PM for training in MIG Welding. A rigorous schedule if there ever was one and as explained by Devonte to us, "I have to do what I have to do."

To get that degree in welding and still pay his present bills (including a car note) he had to be working also. So, his days are quite long but graduation is on the horizon in December, and he can then get a good job and not pull double duty.

We helped him out with his current basic necessities including clothing, gas money, work clothes etc. and we'll assist him moving forward to stay afloat until graduation.

We look forward to helping Devonte as much as possible as he deserves it as he's working incredibly hard at present. We will soon help him get into housing of his own and look forward to providing that aid. Way to go Devonte!



**BENJAMIN:**

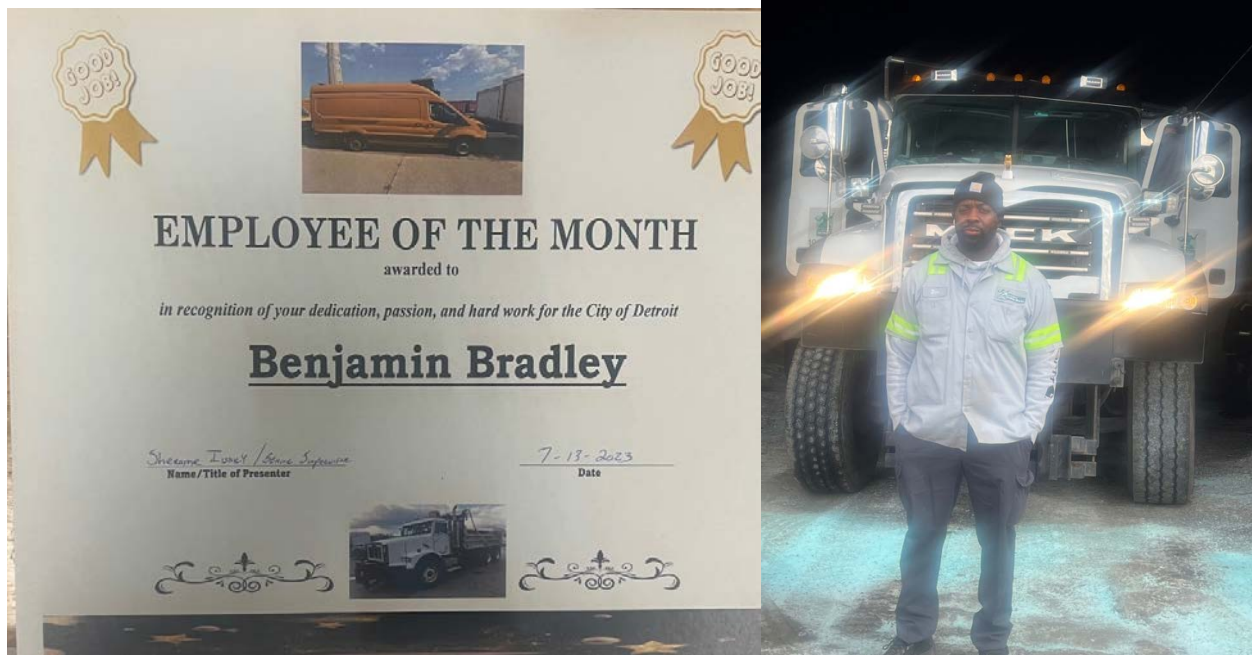
It's always great to hear of the wonderful success that returning citizens are able to achieve.

We met Benjamin shortly after he was out of prison, in August of 2022. He has come a long way since then as he obtained his Class A Commercial Driver License and on March 27, 2023, he was hired by the city of Detroit as a full-time vehicle operator in the solid waste department.

We have helped him in a variety of ways including work clothing, tools/equipment for work, regular clothing, car insurance payment etc. He's been a great investment for us and more, as he just completed his six-month probationary period with the City of Detroit in September and was also recently honored as Employee of the Month! Not an easy achievement when there are over 8,000 individuals employed with the City of Detroit.

Benjamin is doing great and we are proud of him and all that he has been able to accomplish, and his ongoing success will continue.

Way to go Benjamin!



## **LUTHER:**

Certainly, there is an adjustment period when one exits prison and begins to re-acclimate to society and begin their quest towards self-sufficiency. Everyone has to go at their own pace.

Some hit the ground running and some are simply not ready to do so right away as they need to get things in place such as medical appointments etc.

Luther fell somewhere in the middle. When we meet someone for the first time, as we did with Luther in July, we present their options for employment and supply leads for jobs. We also provide info to pursue a skilled trade training path.

Luther took a few months to adjust after being away for 12 years but has now enrolled in Suburban Trucking's Commercial Driver License program. We met up with him again yesterday to provide some further help and keep him afloat turning the training period. In discussing his truck driving program, Luther stated, "Getting this license will be life changing."

That's not exaggeration, as it will be. A great job will be available for him, job security with benefits and a good income, self-sufficiency etc. Much success lies ahead, and Luther is excited. As are we, to keep helping him as much as possible!



**ROBBIN:**

When one goes to prison it's not always about leaving a spouse and children behind to manage without that individual, but often it's the help provided to parents that's no longer able to be provided.

As it was with Robbin while he was in prison for about 1.5 years and away from his senior citizen parents who still operate their appliance business in Redford Township, Better Way Appliances, for many years now.

Robbin moved back in with his parents and is now employed with the family business which really needs his skills and talents right now in getting things to operate even more efficiently at their store.

We helped Robbin with meeting his current basic necessities needs and we are assisting him with the tools and equipment that he needs to be successful at his job with his parents.

Very nice that he is back home now and ready to help out the business with 110% effort.



## **CEDRIC:**

Winston Churchill once said that “Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.”

And that is very true with returning citizens as a good attitude is critical in achieving success.

We just met Cedric and he has a terrific attitude after being home for two weeks now and having spent 30 years in prison. Everything is positive to him. He has great perspective given where he came from.

He’s currently living with a friend and looking for a job and with a very good possibility coming up from an interview tomorrow. The job would be working at a plant near his current home, and he is very excited about that prospect and earning money and getting to the point of self-sufficiency.

He is a religious man and extoled that “God is good.”

We helped with gift cards to meet his current needs and look forward to helping him with work clothes once he is hired for a job and then getting him into his own home. He’s very appreciative of everything we can do now and in the future and we remain very optimistic that his great attitude will continue to help him successfully move forward.

