



## **DECEMBER UPDATE FOR RETURNING HOPE TO RETURNING CITIZENS PROGRAM**

**A record setting past 30 days** as we placed a whopping 18 returning citizens into their own apartment or house. No small task given the inherent difficulties of finding landlords willing to move beyond stereotypes and willing to rent to these determined men and women.

Making things even more gratifying is almost all of these 18 individuals were moving into a residence of their own for the very first time!

So exciting for them, for us, and a wonderful reflection of their continued success.

It can't be stressed enough how important having one's own residence is for building self-esteem as well as creating comfort and peace. We help with move in costs and then provide furniture including a full-sized mattress/frame/box springs, nightstand, lamp, couch, and a dining room table with two chairs. We then provide home furnishings of dishes, glasses, silverware, pots and pans, pillows, sheets, mattress pad, blanket, towels/washcloths, and pillowcases. Everything needed to make a house a home! Exciting times for all involved.

And a big shout out to Al Thibodeau of **Al's Furniture and Appliances** in Detroit and our wonderful 14-year relationship. Al is great in quickly fulfilling and delivering our furniture orders on the wonderful day of move in. Thanks Al!



Also, we thank Aaron Salter and his organization **Innocent Maintained**, which assists exonerees who were wrongfully convicted and who have subsequently been released from prison.

We do a lot of work with exonerees and Innocence Maintained generously provided us with their **Award of Sincerity** at their recent annual awards dinner. Thanks Aaron! Our pleasure.



**Here are some great stories of a few of those that we helped this past month:**

**TODD:**

Restoring relationships with one's children is of critical importance for those returning from prison as bonds with sons and daughters are reestablished. Our involvement in that process is significant as we can help with transportation for family visits and help with housing and furniture

which facilitates ease and comfort for those visits etc. It is very heartwarming as we witness those relationships evolve and strengthen and see the positive impact they have for both parent and child. As it is with Todd and Todd Jr. given we have assisted in their having each other in their lives again and it's wonderful to witness this relationship explode with joy and love!



**ANDRES:**

The definition of culmination, namely the final stage of something you've been working toward for a long time, is right on target in describing our providing a vehicle to a returning citizen. We began working with Andres all the way back in June 2020 when he came out of prison. Over the last 16 months, we've helped in a multitude of ways and have become very close. He currently has a good job and apartment and is about to obtain his Commercial Driver's License leading to more income. Both of us could not been more excited than we were last Friday when we provided Andres a great Pontiac G6! The culmination of all our work together for well over a year!



## **EMORY:**

A lot of the joy of what we do is found in the relationships. The friendships created and maintained. We started working with Emory last year and have become very close and have helped him in many different ways and he's always been positive, appreciative, and dedicated to achieving independence and success. Just the other day we were able to move him into his new residence and assisted on his move in costs and provided him an apartment full of furniture and home furnishings. He also worked hard to obtain his Commercial Driver's License and obtained a good job and has moved along very nicely on his path to success. And always with a smile on his face!



## **BRANDON:**

Many times, we connect with returning citizens even before they leave prison as we have the ability to email with prisoners and have made connections well in advance of their obtaining their freedom. Once they are released, we are usually able to meet in person within hours to a few days and begin working with them and assisting in a variety of ways. As it was

with Brandon, who we had connected with while he was in prison and were able to provide a positive letter to the Parole Board on his behalf. Meeting in person is always enjoyable and we met up with Brandon just a couple of days after he was released and he's already moving forward very nicely and adjusting after 26 years away. We will make that adjustment as fluid as we can as we assist in a variety of ways.



**DONNIE:**

Not much has changed since Martin Luther King Jr. said: "When we as a society release ex-prisoners back into society after their debt has been paid, we offer them no opportunities, no dignity, no hope, no chance. We

need to provide a hand, provide compassion, dignity, provide help.” That’s our goal and why, within days of one leaving prison, we provide new clothing, new shoes, toiletries etc. All part of a rebirth and being a productive member of society. Starting with the simple yet critical act of providing basic necessities. As we just did with Donnie. New clothes, new life, new hope. Donnie is on the right path, and we will be beside him.



### **CHARLES:**

Family support is very important for returning citizens and even when many years have passed since seeing each other, aunts and uncles often step in to be of great help. Charles hadn’t seen his Aunt Joanne or Uncle Dave in over 20 years, but they reunited last weekend and had a great time. They live a few hours away from Detroit where Charles is in a Federal halfway house, but our assistance for Charles in getting a car to get to and from work also allowed him to get a pass to see them. And good times all around as seen in this group selfie! Charles was very appreciative of our help in assisting with this family reunion opportunity and, of course, along with the ongoing support of his aunt and uncle.



**DENNIS:**

There's nothing more satisfying to us than seeing the tremendous success of returning citizens who we began helping from the day they came out of prison. Dennis is one of those individuals we've helped in many ways and just got him a job with the Detroit Water Department. He sent the following text: "Man, you are like the Dad I always wanted. I won't fail you! I just wanted to thank you again and update you. Everyone is amazing at the job and I'm giving it my all and will make you proud! I just want to say thank you again for your patience, your guidance, and your assistance in so many ways! You believed in me and all I ever wanted was for just a chance and I won't let you - or me - down! Thank you again and forever. Love you." Thanks Dennis!





**KHAREEM:**

A blustery, rainy, cold fall day didn't deter the enthusiasm we shared with Khareem Braxton who we began working with last February when he returned from prison. He's been achieving success ever since with being a great employee for K&A Trucking Company and we've helped him along the way with basic necessities, work clothing, move in costs to his new home, furniture, and home furnishings and now a car to make it much easier for him to get to and from work. He's the new proud owner of a great Mercury Grand Marquis and is very excited and appreciative. Great success story!



**ERIC:**

It's always exciting to see a returning citizen obtain the training for a good career and then graduate with those skills and then find a great job. Eric Abner worked hard to obtain his Commercial Driver's License and was then able to find a great position with Green For Life Environmental as a truck driver. He loves the job and we assisted him with work clothes, basic necessities, helped him with costs while he was in school, car repairs on his vehicle to assist him getting to work etc. A great career lies ahead for Eric, and we couldn't be prouder of his achievements!



**RYAN:**

The transition back from prison is much smoother when there is a support system in place. We try to fill that role as best as possible, but it is always easier when friends and family members are there as well. A wonderful example of a friend who never wavered in his support is Brandon Saleh and his help to his childhood friend Ryan Santos. Since Ryan's release, Brandon has welcomed Ryan to live with him and provided employment at his mechanic shop business. He has been an amazing support system for Ryan and along with our help, Ryan is off to a great start on his path to success. Shout out to Brandon for his love and help!



## **DESHANNON:**

There is a common thread running through the returning citizens we help and that's their desire to give back and help others. From providing rides, to lending their skills for home repairs or car repair etc. Often times the help we provide is the first time anyone has helped them and they're grateful and wish to pay it forward. We've assisted DeShannon in many ways since we met last year upon his release, and he's consistently asked what he could do for us. He has now assisted us in implementing a mentoring program to pair those who have been out of prison for a little while with those just coming out. Thank you DeShannon for your generous nature and helping others!



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

Best wishes to everyone and have a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday with family and friends.

All the best,

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