



DECEMBER UPDATE FOR RETURNING HOPE TO RETURNING CITIZENS PROGRAM

Another great month of helping returning citizens on their path of success.

And another great month with wonderful stories of all those we have been able to help.

Everything from providing vehicles to help many people be able to get to their full-time employment to providing security deposits to get into their own residence for the first time ever to providing asbestos finding equipment so someone can employ the skills they learned in obtaining their certification in this area.

We hope you enjoy these wonderful and uplifting stories of success!

Darryl and Ronnie:

Nearly 70 years of incarceration between them, Ronnie Waters (right in photo) was sentenced to life in prison as a juvenile but was released when he was re-sentenced in the recent past. After 27 years, Darryl had his sentence commuted.

On this past Thanksgiving, they obviously have a lot to be thankful for with their newfound freedom and they both have made the most of it.

They both have done amazingly well after their release and both work with helping returning citizens.

Darryl is the Detroit Regional Coordinator for Nation Outside, and Ronnie is the Community Engagement Specialist for Safe & Just Michigan.

We've helped both of these gentlemen in many ways, and we are thankful for the opportunity to do so.



MICHAEL:

It's not often that we assist a returning citizen getting into a rental property that is \$1800 per month but after evaluating Michael's income and monthly bills etc. with him, it became quite clear that based on his strong work ethic and putting in the hours and overtime that he does, that rent level was easily manageable.

So, it was very exciting to assist Michael get into his very beautiful new home, and he's definitely come a very long way in the short time he has been out of prison.

He's also all about helping others as he is also serves as a peer recovery coach in addition to his full-time job.

Just an overall great success story and a wonderful individual!!



KEVIN:

These aren't the stats anyone wants to define their life:

1. Sentenced to life in prison at 17 years of age
2. Serve 46 years in prison
3. Released upon re-sentencing in 2021,
4. Have complications from back surgery
5. Pass away at 64 years of age in 2022 from those complications.

Those numbers do sum up Kevin Cottingham, but he was so MUCH more than that.

We met and helped him shortly after his release. He was very religious, humble, very close with his family and he was kind along with a great laugh. He was also always concerned about others.

Life isn't fair at times, and some would say that sums up Kevin's passing within just a year of getting out of prison.

But Kevin would want everyone to remember all the positives from his last year. That's who he was.



RONELL:

We had to read it twice as Ronell emailed us: “I work for Syncreon from 3pm-11pm and with Forge from 6am-2:30pm.”

That math is pretty easy. Ronell works a lot!

And it’s not just quantity, it is quality as his employers love him. Pretty great for someone who's only been out of prison less than a year!

He is one of our greatest success stories as he’s saved his hard-earned income very well and we just assisted him getting into his own housing. His own home for the first time in a very long time.

We also provided furniture and home furnishings to make his house fully equipped with everything he needs. Ronell will keep working hard and maintaining his great success!



DARVON:

4 hours! That's the fastest time frame we've ever experienced for meeting someone after they have been released from prison.

We met Darvon pretty immediately after he was released and his speed in meeting with us was pretty consistent with his speed in getting a job.

He had reconnected with his prior employer while in prison and his former job was waiting for him once he got out and he resumed his employment within a day of his release!

Talk about hitting the ground running, Darvon is moving quickly on achieving much success as a returning citizen and we are excited to keep helping him along the way.



DALE:

We love it when returning citizens learn a skilled trade like welding or commercial driving or carpentry etc. One of the highest paying jobs is doing asbestos work.

Dale learned that trade of doing asbestos cleanup but to really earn even greater income, he was ready to start his own company doing asbestos detection.

He just needed our help in getting the equipment needed. Having worked with him and getting to know him well, we knew that purchasing the items he needed would be a great investment.

And they were! He'd doing wonderful. Making good money, quickly saving to get into his own housing etc. All is going great!!



KENNETH:

It's always great to hear that a returning citizen got the opportunity to become part of the kitchen team for a popular Detroit restaurant.

As occurred with Kenneth, who recently joined the popular contemporary northern soul food restaurant Savannah Blue as a cook and is doing great.

We just began working with him yesterday and helped him with basic necessities, work clothing and furniture.

All going very well for Kenneth! And a nice shout out for Savannah Blue for their efforts in giving people second chances.



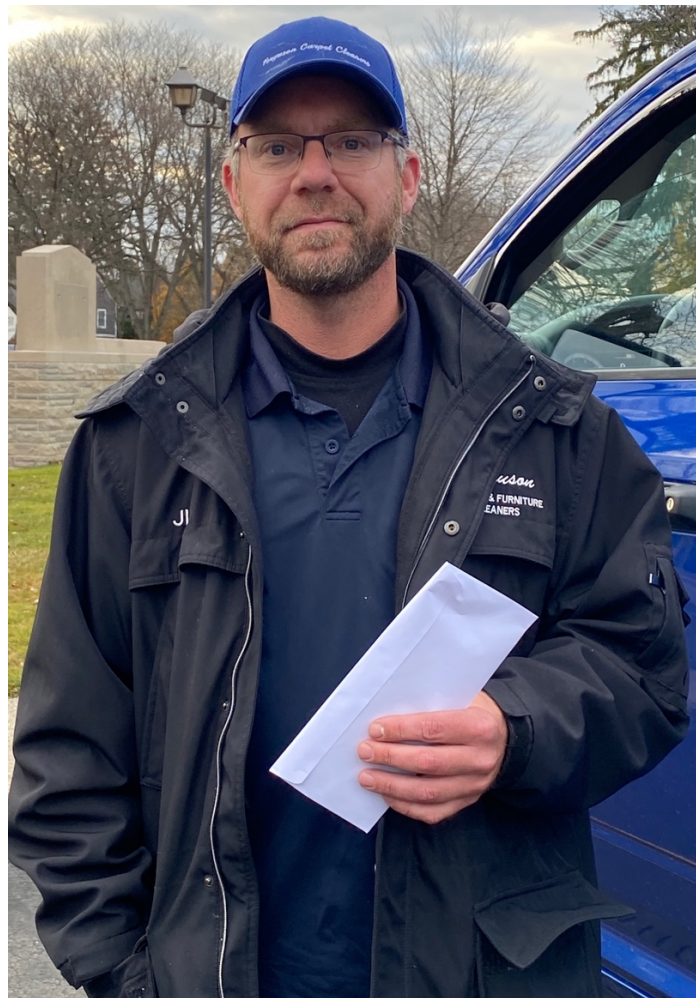
JAMES:

It goes without saying that we all make mistakes and yes, sometimes those mistakes involve breaking the law and the individual does prison time as punishment.

And sometimes, when released, that person is able to resurrect their life and their profession very quickly given the relationships they had established before they went away.

As it is for James who had a good carpet cleaning business before doing one year in prison but since being released in September he has reconnected with former clients and the business of Ferguson Carpet and Furniture Cleaners is doing very well now.

We have helped along the way and glad to now see the hard work of James paying off!



JOHN:

When you've been living with others in a small prison cell for over 20 years and then living with many others in transitional housing upon being released, you definitely welcome the opportunity to get a place of your own. A comfortable home that is just yours and provides you peace and quiet when you desire it.

John was released about a year ago and is 66 years old and has been working full time for a while now. Just the other day we helped him with his move in costs and provided furniture and a lot of home furnishings.

He could not be happier right now as he enjoys his own home for the first time. Ever. John is very thankful, and he should be very proud for how he has turned his life around!



RONALD:

Crimes of desperation.

That's what the vast majority of criminal acts are, arising from the offenders' sense of desperation which is usually financial.

That doesn't excuse the breaking of laws, but it provides some context as to why crimes are committed.

Even a desperate act out of one's love for a child. As Ronald did break the law in transporting drugs as he was desperate for money to pay for a program to help his autistic daughter.

No excuse for breaking the law, but his actions do have some background to make it easier to understand why he did what he did.

Ronald did his time and is now reunited with his daughter and he's doing great and providing for her. We've helped him a lot and he should be proud of all he has accomplished to no longer feel such desperation.



JOSIAH:

It's wonderful to see returning citizens pursue a career path and Josiah has done so by getting his Commercial Driver License but also gained the certification to remove asbestos.

The combination allows him to drive a truck for the company he works for and go to other states in removing asbestos.

He's doing great, making very good money, and has taken care of all his past bills and will be fine moving forward - except he had to get caught up on his car note.

He'd fallen behind when a series of unanticipated and expensive car repairs occurred.

Josiah needed the car to get to and from his job and we quickly took care of his car note and all is good.

He will also be moving into his first ever apartment in the next week



JOHN:

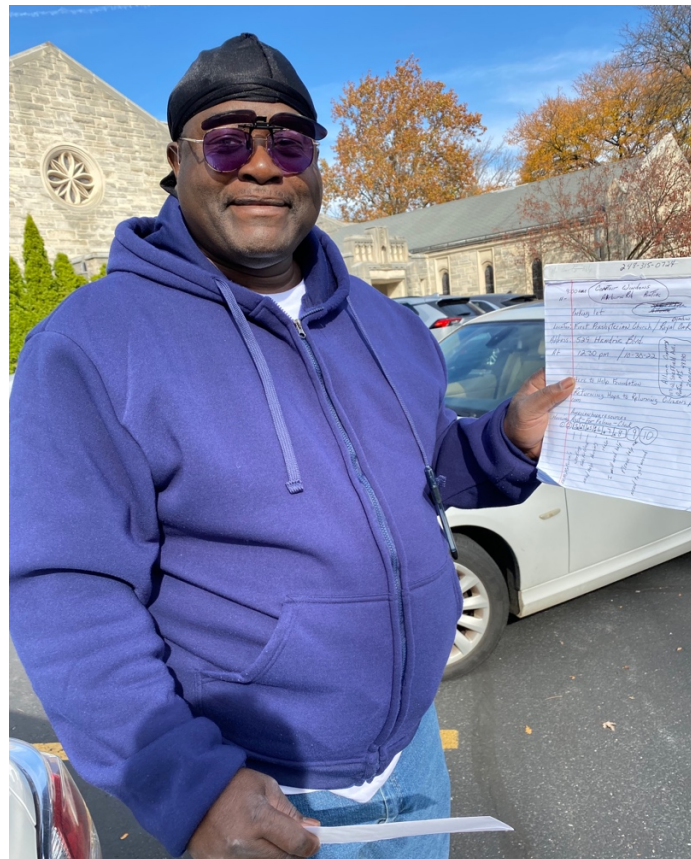
It has been said that attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.

And that is very applicable to returning citizens where we have seen how a good attitude can make a big impact on those trying to be successful.

When we met recently, John he had a tremendously upbeat and positive attitude. He was enthusiastic on what we could offer him in assistance and was incredibly organized. Not only had he thoroughly read about our program, but he had taken a lot of notes from that reading and came to our meeting with a full notebook of information from our website.

Very impressive!

He's off to a great start and welcome the opportunity to assist him moving forward!



LYNN:

We've posted a couple of times regarding returning citizen Lynn McNeal who is a tremendous success story.

And we yet again have another opportunity to report his achievements.

When we began working with Lynn a few years ago he stated on his application that he'd spent 33 years, 5 months, 25 days, 8 hours, 15 minutes 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."

And he has been. He has a new job with the Detroit City Council, and he just received, as shown in the photo below, a Certificate of Appreciation for his outstanding commitment and work in the Grandmont Community in Detroit.

Congratulations again to our friend Lynn!



LECETO:

Sometimes, as a returning citizen, you have to go that extra yard to be successful and that may mean working two jobs to try to make ends meet.

Leceto is an incredibly hard worker and currently works two jobs, at Everything Turkey and Hazel's Place Lounge, all of which did allow to him to save for some of the money owed to get into his own place.

He needed a home large enough to have a second bedroom for his daughter.

We helped him with his move in costs and are providing all the furniture and home furnishings that he needs, and the home will be fully complete for him and his daughter.

Hard work can indeed pay off very nicely!



JAMES:

44 years.

That is an incredibly long time to be in prison.

But that is the years served by James.

Not only had the world changed dramatically by the time of his release, but the family he knew was gone.

He had little assistance in his transition until he connected with us, and we have been able to provide help with his basic necessities.

He's now getting SSI and we've assisted him moving into his own residence and are working with him on obtaining a part time job.

James is smart and organized and we are doing our best to help him make this huge adjustment back to his community.

So far, so good.



Another year ending and a great year for our returning citizens program.

Have a great Holiday Season!

Best,

Bob