



MARCH UPDATE FOR RETURNING HOPE TO RETURNING CITIZENS PROGRAM

Another great month as we helped on more than 200 occasions for returning citizens in a variety of ways including:

- Used vehicles
- Past due utility bills
- Eyeglasses
- Tools/Equipment for work
- Move in costs
- Furniture/Home Furnishings
- Bicycles
- Bus passes
- Car repairs
- Car notes
- Car Insurance
- Phone bills
- Computer for school/vocational training
- Professional test taking fees
- Secretary of State fees

We also helped in a lot of other ways as there are so many different areas of need for those coming back from prison. Here are some of the great stories of those we assisted in February.

KAYLA:

A lot can happen in a returning citizen's life in the span of five months.

When we met Kayla last September, she'd just gotten out of prison days prior, and we helped her with new clothing and other basic necessities.

She had reunited with her young boys who were being cared for by Kayla's mother while she was gone.

She got a good job with Dakkota Integrated Systems and has been working hard and is now moving into a place of her own and she couldn't be more excited.

We assisted with move in costs, furniture/appliances and home furnishings and everything is complete for her and her boys to move into.

A phenomenal success in five short months!



TIFFANY:

Big, big day for Tiffany last week!

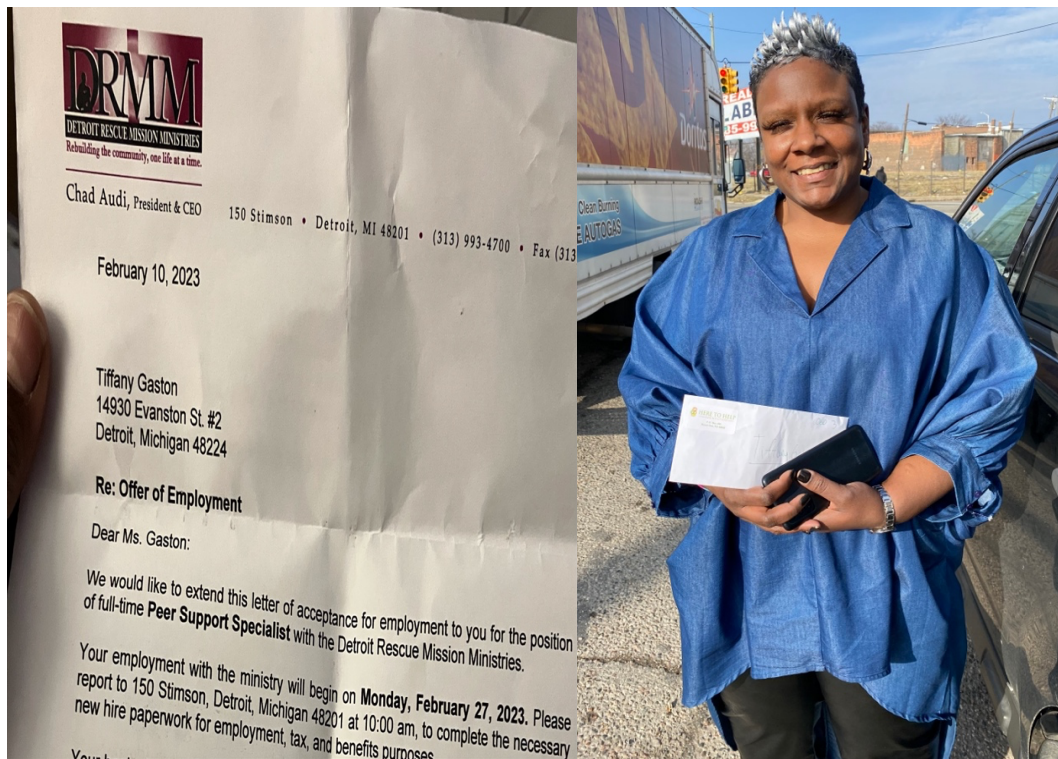
We've been working with her for a while now and she had been employed at a factory since August 2022.

Last October she pursued her desire to assist others and completed training to become a recovery coach to help those with substance abuse issues.

Tiffany was so excited to tell us that she officially got a job with Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries as a Peer Support Specialist and starts tomorrow.

She has come a long way since her release from prison and we are excited for her with this new job. She's accomplished so much in a short period of time.

Congrats Tiffany!



JOSIAH

There are success stories and there are SUCCESS stories!
Josiah is the latter.

We've been working with Josiah for almost two years now and have experienced the ups and downs together and assisted him in limiting the downs and now there is nothing but ups.

He's achieved certification/advanced training in a variety of skills and is now working for an oil refinery in Toledo. Since he's now off parole, his employer has been sending him out of state for job assignments working on oil rigs and making very good money and putting all his skills to work.

Josiah is very proud, and we are also very proud and happy for him.

We just met up again and he proudly gave us a copy of his latest resume. Impressive to say the least!



CARLOS AND WILLIAM:

Meet Carlos and William. Sentenced at 16 years of age, and 17 years of age.

They each doubled their age while in prison and are now returning to a world that they left as a child. Coming back as thirtysomething adults. It's an enormous change.

We met Carlos and William on the same day. William is already working a good job with Lipari Foods and we're helping Carlos land a permanent job as he's eager to work.

Carlos stated how he went from living with his parents, to living in prison and now he has freedom he's never experienced, and it's a big adjustment.

We'll be beside both of them as they adjust and as William texted us: "It is a big challenge and thank you so much for everything. Just having positivity around me to further succeed in life, well, you are a blessing."

We will do all we can.



CORDARRYL:

Long time coming.....

Cordarryl first contacted us over a year ago, within weeks of getting out of Federal prison.

We were set to meet; his ride fell through and then life happened. We followed up, he got busy etc.

We finally met a few days ago and as slow as things had gone previously, they moved with amazing speed this time around.

Codarryl has a good job, was ready to finally move into his own place and had a lead on an apartment. Within a couple days we'd helped him with move in costs, furniture, and home furnishings as he was able to move in quickly.

He's all settled into his new home, and he couldn't be happier. Took a while to materialize, but all is now very, very good in the end!



BRYAN:

Sometimes you can be on a great path of success as a returning citizen and all of a sudden everything is pulled out from right underneath you and desperation sinks in.

Bryan has a great job with the Chamber Music Society of Detroit and is also in an apprenticeship program to become an electrician.

Unfortunately, his car was just stolen along with all of his tools and equipment that he needed for his apprenticeship.

Without those items his apprenticeship program was at risk and all his hard work would have been for naught.

We moved quickly to assist Bryon and replaced all the tools and equipment, and he could resume his apprenticeship program without delay.

Very quickly back on track and doing great again!



ANTHONY:

Being locked up for 25 years is one thing. Spending all that time in prison is another when you are eventually declared to be innocent of any crime.

Such as it was with Anthony when he was exonerated and declared a free man last November. We began working with him at that time to assist as much as we could.

It's obviously been a big adjustment for Anthony, and he is now doing well as he's working and is about to become a first-time homeowner.

Between his savings and his family's help along with our assistance, Anthony just purchased his own home and that's a great feeling.

We will also help with much needed appliances of a washer, dryer, and a stove.

It's been a very long road for Anthony but he's home now, in his new home!



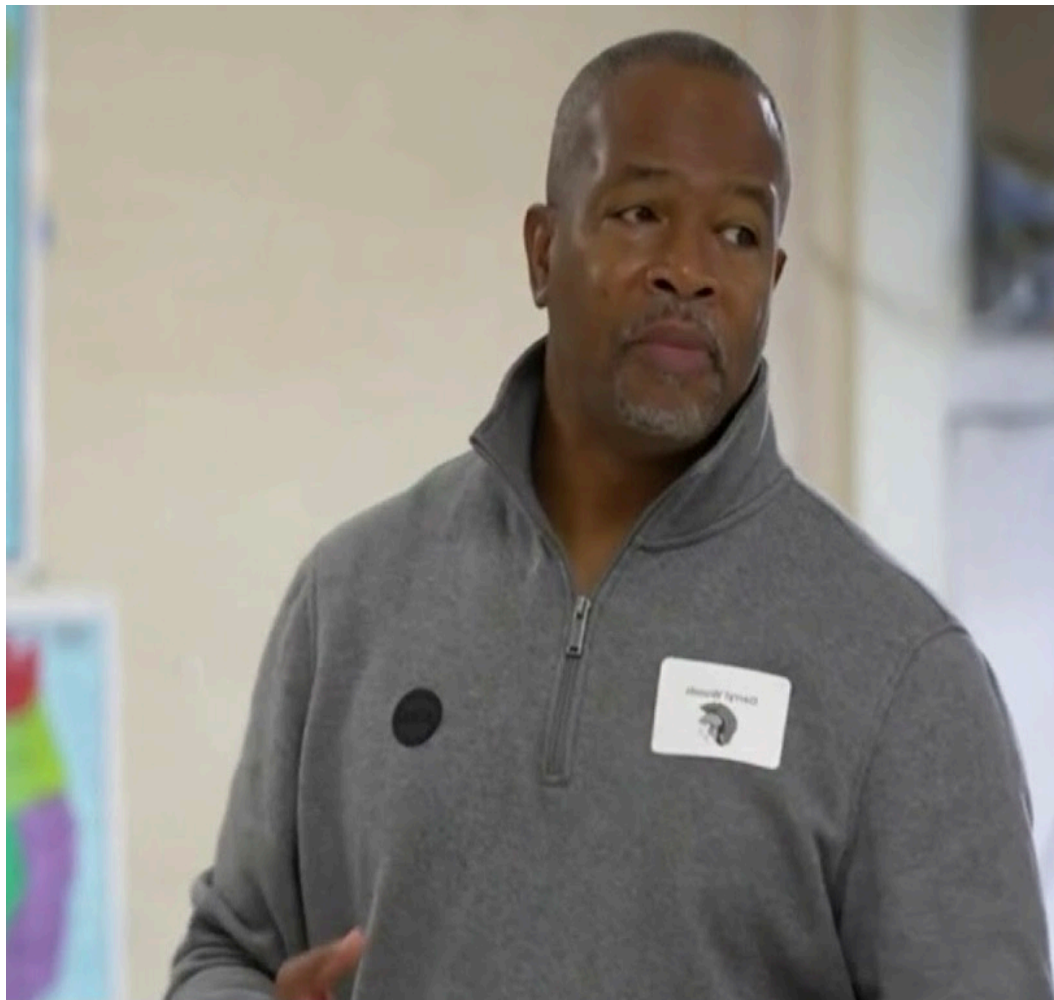
WILLIAM AND DARYLL:

We recently launched a mentoring program, connecting those just released with those we've been assisting in our program and who can offer their insight to those about to travel a similar path.

We just connected William with Darryl. One just getting home and one who has been doing great things since being home. After they met, William texted us:

“I just wanted to say again, thanks so very much for not only assisting me but also getting me connected with Darryl. It truly was a pleasure speaking with him and his program where he visits local schools to talk to the youth is so great. We are meeting this week to talk and have lunch. I really appreciate you!”

And we appreciate Darryl, offering his time and expertise.



ANDREW:

Part of the readjustment process, coming back from prison, is reconnecting with family members, including younger children.

And when you have obtained a place of your own, your desire is to make your home as welcoming and comfortable for your children to come visit.

We recently met Andrew and just assisted him with move in costs and household goods and we helped with his car note as he had spent his savings on new beds for his two children.

The only additional furniture he needed was a nice couch which would be a welcome addition for his two children coming to visit.

We quickly ordered a couch and within hours it was delivered and just in time for his children coming over.

Everything in place. Long time coming. Long future ahead, together.



TYRONE:

Here's a wild statistic.

Only slightly above 50% of busses in Detroit run on time.

That makes it very difficult for returning citizens to rely on busses to timely get to work.

They're forced to rely on rides from co-workers or family members or friends which also aren't always reliable.

It's thus very exciting when we can provide a used vehicle to those that meet our requirements including full time employment, adequate income to afford insurance/saving for car repair etc.

As with Tyrone, who we have been working with for six months now and we helped get him into his very own Chevy Impala yesterday.

No more worries about getting to work on time at Dakkota Integrated Systems, where he's a valued employee.

He couldn't be happier. Nor could we.



DAMON:

The harsh reality is that many times, after coming home from prison, people find themselves homeless and living “on the streets.”

Just as it was for Damon who was living in his box truck and struggling but has recently found success as an independent contractor and scrapping for steel.

He is making good money and as he said to us, “I got to get off the streets.”

We helped him get into his own home and assisted with furniture and household goods.

He’s finally in his first ever home and a steel scrapper is hard work, but his goal of housing has been achieved and Damon will keep working hard to remain off the streets.

He’s proud, as he should be!



SHERNARD:

We meet with recently released returning citizens at 4:30pm Monday through Friday and at 12:30pm on Saturday and Sunday.

There's the old saying that arriving early is on time and arriving at the scheduled time is late.

One thing we've seen is when individuals are intent on turning their life around, they always arrive early to our initial meeting. Always!

Yesterday there was a record setting "early" as Shernard was concerned about navigating to our east Detroit location from his west side residence, that he wound up getting there 3.5 hours early.

And with no complaints as he's excited to start fresh, and he's hit the ground running and signed up with Greening of Detroit job training and he's already had interviews for current part time work.

We know one thing. Shernard will enthusiastically be early to work every day!



TIHARA:

“I really am trying to do right and get back on my feet but it's hard to do so when I don't have help, please help me.”

Those are the words of Tihara when she first texted us last May; just released from prison after eleven years.

We immediately met her in person and she'd already obtained a job at 7-11.

We helped her with all her basic necessities (clothing, food, toiletries, work clothes etc.) as she moved in with her sister. Since that time, she has maintained her job at 7-11 and is doing great and she was able to save money for some of her move in costs on an apartment.

We helped her with the remainder of her move in costs, along with furniture and all household goods. Tihara is so very excited to have finally moved into a place of her own.

She's worked hard to get to this point and continued success definitely lies ahead for her.



JOHNNY:

Many returning citizens seek to further their education by getting their GED or an associate degree or a bachelor's degree.

Most everyone has to combine their schooling with a job so monthly bills can be paid. Johnny works the night shift at Walmart, while also pursuing his degree in Business Management.

We began working with him about a year ago and it's always very exciting to have helped someone all that time and then see them get to the point of self-sufficiency and into their own home.

We just helped Johnny move into his own rental home and he's got big plans as he completes his bachelor's degree. W

We're looking forward to more success and more progress for Johnny over our next year together!



BATINA:

Moms!

They're often a great source of help when their child returns from prison, as well as having been the caregiver to grandchildren while their child was away.

Batina's mom, Alicia, fulfilled that role and has now welcomed Batina back into her home while Batina pursues her Commercial Driver License.

Batina has been in school for a few weeks now and is doing great. With the help of her mom who works three different jobs now including as a real estate agent, at Amazon and as a health care aide.

Batina's very grateful to say the least. When we provided Walmart Gift Cards to obtain things she needed, Batina was beyond ecstatic. She could also finally help her mother out for the first time in many years.

Thanks mom!



WILLIE:

We move quickly and Willie is moving quickly as well.

He's only been out of prison five days, and we met him less than 24 hours after he contacted us.

Prior to his incarceration, he had his own home improvement company and Willie has hit the ground running now in resurrecting that business as quickly as he can.

We helped him with all the basic necessities he currently needs and we're providing him the tools/equipment he requires to get his business going again.

We're confident he'll very successfully resume his prior business and will be a wonderful redemption and success story.

Go Willie!



MARIA:

Taking advantage of opportunities while in prison is the beginning step to be successful upon exiting prison.

Maria did just that as she began her Commercial Driver License training in prison and already passed the written portion of the test once she was released a few week ago after 10 years in prison.

She's now taking the road work training to complete her CDL and should be employed within the next month.

We met with her shortly after her release and she's very appreciative of our help and very enthusiastic about getting her CLD and getting a job and we'll help her get a place of her own.

We look forward to being part of her path of success.

All of which began while she was in prison.



OPERATION GET DOWN:

Every Tuesday. 52 weeks per year. 1:30 PM. Like clockwork. At that time, you'll find us at the Operation Get Down housing shelter on the east side of Detroit that serves as transitional housing for those just getting out of prison and having no family/friends with whom to stay.

It's a temporary solution, as the goal is to soon leave there after find housing of one's own.

That's where we come in. Every Tuesday we meet with, on average, 18 returning citizens and begin helping them in a variety of ways. Including job placement, bus passes, clothing, work clothes, steel toed boots, toiletries, food etc.

It's said, "The longest journey begins with but a single step."

And every Tuesday, we begin our journey together with many people with that first step.



RONALD:

Sometimes the path is not so straight for a returning citizen with lots of hurdles to get over.

Such is the case with Ronald, who we have been working with for a while. He encountered some difficulties and was recently homeless until meeting Derrick, at church, who gave him an opportunity.

Sometimes that's all one needs.

Ronald has skills with home improvement and Derrick hired him to fix up homes that Derrick owned. Ronald did so well that he's now in charge of hiring his own crew and has full time employment.

He's no longer homeless as we got him into his own home and provided him furniture and home furnishings.

Those hurdles are gone for Ronald on his path of success!



URSULA:

15 years of working for the same company and doing a great job, may lead to resuming that job after completing one's prison sentence.

That's the beauty of second chances.

And that's what happened with Ursula who worked that long for the Michigan Consumer Evaluation Team, in evaluating the management and implementation of health-related services.

After completing her 3.5-year prison sentence, Ursula was welcomed back to her old job and she's doing very well.

She's currently living with a friend, and we helped Ursula with basic necessities along with home furnishings, bedroom furniture and gasoline cards.

We look forward to seeing her continued success with this second chance opportunity that she's making the most of!



DARRYL:

We had to wrap our head around the hours, but Darryl's work and school schedule confirmed what we know.

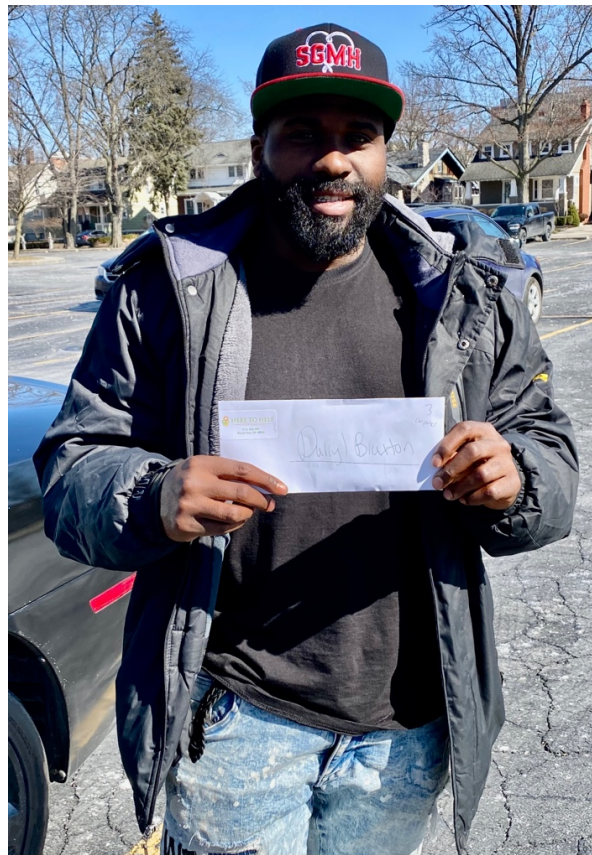
Returning citizens are some of the hardest working people! Darryl works as a car porter at Ford Motor Company from 6pm-6am. And then goes straight to training for his Commercial Driver's License up until 5pm.

That doesn't leave a lot of room for sleep but as he says, "You have to do what you have to do."

His CDL program accommodates him at times so he can get some rest but it's definitely hard to go to school while also needing a job/income to support yourself.

We are trying to make his life easier before he completes his CDL and gets a nice paying job.

It's very clear though Darryl will be a big success story with his incredible work ethic and a great investment for our help!



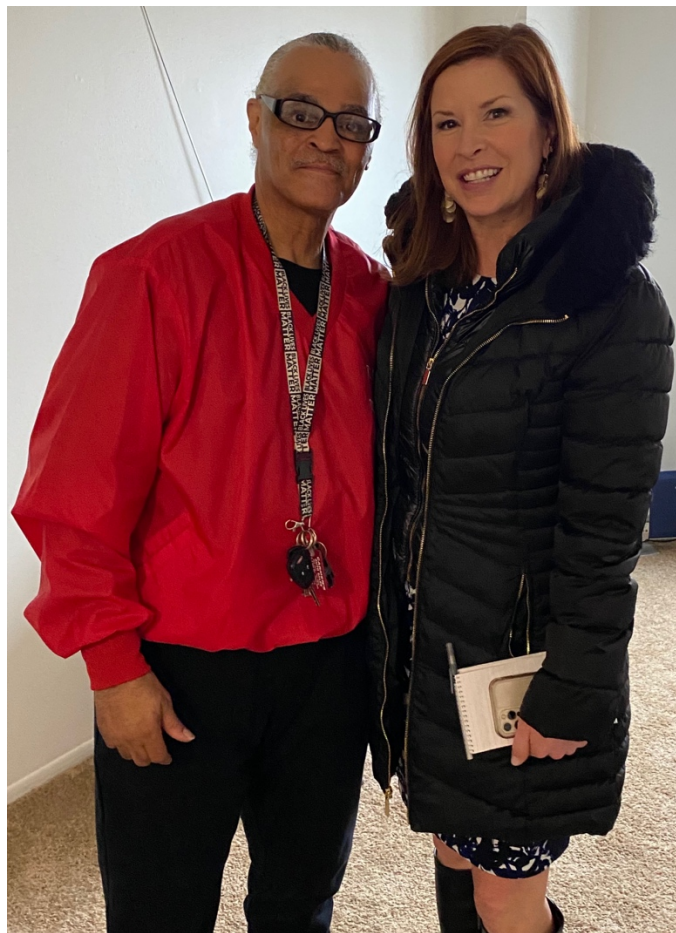
JAMES:

If you missed in our email with this newsletter, here is a phenomenal story from Fox 2 News Detroit reporter Amy Lange on our friend James Cole, who we have been working with since last July after he was released from prison after 37 years!

The story details James' background as a competitive boxer and his main competitor, Detroit legend and six-time World Champion Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns.

As James states though, his toughest competitor was the streets of Detroit and all of which landed him in prison.

It is all about redemption now and a second chance at life. Click here for the story: [Returning Citizen Gets 2nd Chance](#)



I hope you enjoyed this update of some of those we were able to help this past month and here's hoping Spring weather arrives quickly and sticks around.

All the best,

Bob