



Time to change up our logo with new photos (see above). The logo/photos are seen in a lot of places including our program flyers that are included in the packet that all returning citizens receive when they are released from a Michigan prison.

If they haven't yet heard about our ability to help by then, they definitely know when they go through the packet! Which is great news.

The new logo contains photos of a lot of wonderful success stories including new homeowners, a few City of Detroit Employee of the month winners, a Department of Transportation Bus Driver, new trucking school graduates, many people renting their first residence ever, new car owners via our used vehicle program etc. as well as an employee of the Detroit Water and Sewage Department who chose to work seven days a week for two years straight!

There are many more great success stories behind each photo and throughout our program which now has over 4000 people!

## **DEJUAN:**

A big few days for Dejuan, who we first met last January and helped him at that time with job leads and gift cards for his basic necessities and subsequently helped him with work clothes as soon as he was employed.

He has been doing well and, most recently, has been employed with Goodwill Green Works where he was just promoted and will receive a raise and training to be a hi low driver.

Dejuan qualified for our assistance in getting into his own home (he'd been living in a crowded living situation with family members) and we helped with his move in costs and furniture and home furnishings.

He next qualified for our help in getting transportation through our Working Cars for Working People program. Now, shortly after moving in, he's the proud owner of a Yukon SUV. He was quite excited and appreciative and said to us: "Thank you so much, you are truly a blessing. I don't know where I would be without you. So, I'm going to return the favor by continuing to work hard and being the man, my children and society need me to be!"

That is all we could ask for from you Dejuan and we know you will continue to do that as you remain on your path of success!



## **CARMEN:**

It really is remarkable at times when we look back to when we met someone for the first and then, now, look at all they've accomplished and where they are at presently.

We first met Carmen in May of 2023 and she was living with her grandmother, had no money at all and just wanted a gas card so she could provide it to her grandmother for driving her around. She had an upcoming interview with a staffing company and had prior work in housekeeping. She was most interested in finding a place of her own.

We helped her with all her basic necessities at that time and soon thereafter she'd taken a job at Kroger who then put things on hold because of her background check. She had interviews at Dollar tree and Tim Hortons, and we were helping her with monthly bus passes. We then helped her with the cost of taking her road driving test for her license.

Fast forward eleven months later and her dream of a place of her own has now come true! We just helped Carmen get into her own housing and helped her with brand new furniture and home furnishings. She's been working at Detroit Manufacturing and part time at VIP Wear. She's come a long, long way and we're extremely proud of Carmen. She's also very proud of all that she has accomplished. Way to go Carmen!



## **STEVIE AND IVI:**

One of the problems when leaving prison is those people you were closest to, don't all get out around the same time, so you lose contact with your friends from prison. Or even if you get out at the same time, you don't yet have a phone and a number to share so you lose touch.

Thankfully, since we meet with large groups of returning citizens on a daily basis, it often happens at those meetings that there is a reunion of sorts as friends who lost touch meet up again. And it is very exciting to see that in action with enthusiastic greetings, big hugs, boisterous voices etc.

Just as it was the other day when Stevie and Ivi met up again. We first began working with Ivi last September and have helped him in a lot of ways and he's doing great, and we just helped him get into his own housing that he's renting with his niece. Stevie just got out of prison two days ago and hadn't see Ivi in six months. To say they were enthused to see each other would be an understatement.

It was very heartwarming to see! And we look forward to getting Stevie to a similar point of success like his buddy Ivi has obtained!



## **JAMES:**

Talk about setting yourself for success! James got out of prison a few weeks ago and given his prior skills as a certified automobile mechanic, he was able to land a job with United Car Company and two weeks after getting out he was working full time.

He currently takes a bus from Pontiac to his job in Detroit and then a co-worker picks up to take him the rest of the way. He has also obtained an apartment opportunity through his employer who also owns an apartment building which he rents out to his employees. A great deal all around.

We are helping him with casual clothing and work clothing and will help him with his move in costs to his apartment along with new furniture and home furnishings and then he will qualify for our car program.

Good news is he won't have to budget in the cost of labor for future car repairs when they become necessary as he can do that work by himself.

James is clearly going to be a great success story and much of that success has been obtained already as he's come a tremendous way in only a few weeks removed from prison. Way to go James!



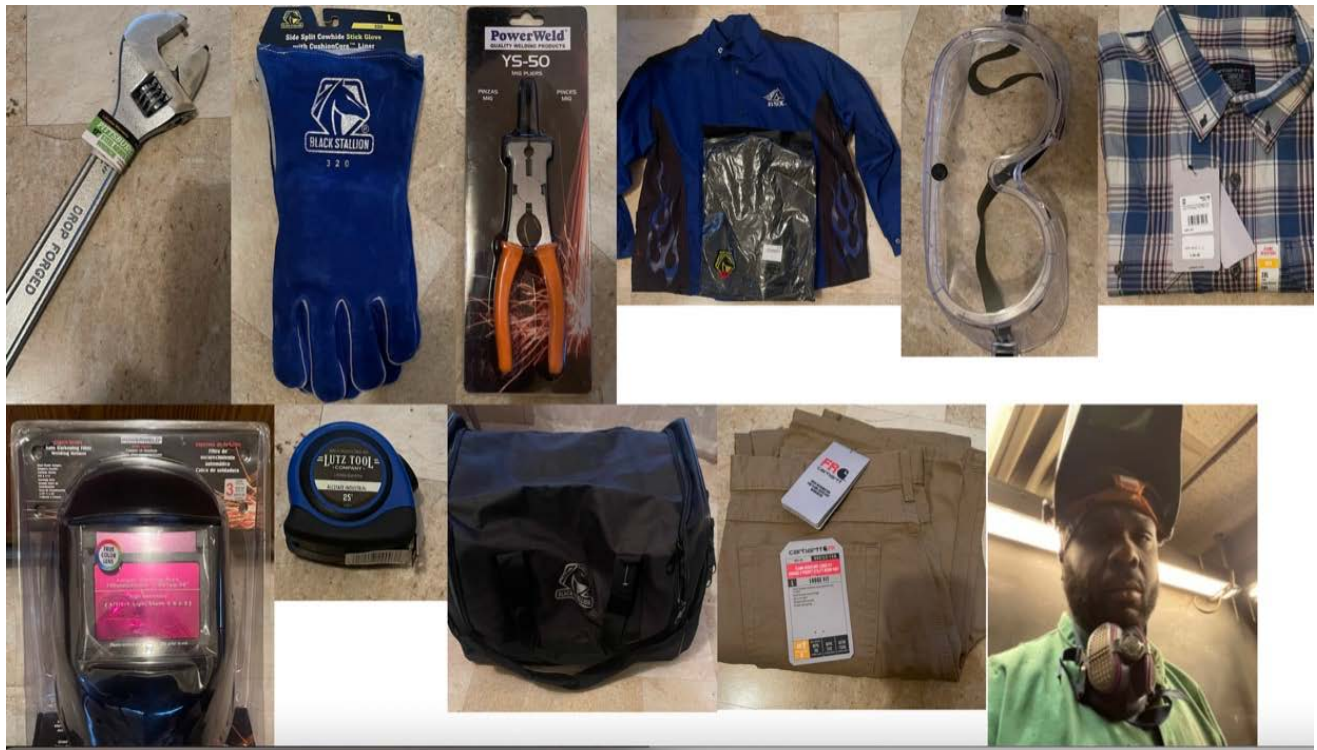
## **TYRESE:**

It's very exciting when someone is able to complete skilled trade training and obtain a very good job based on their new skills. It can really jump start things for the returning citizen as they begin to make good income and next in line is our help with housing and then a used vehicle to make it much easier to get to and from work.

There is always one issue that emerges and but for our help would be a major roadblock for people in starting their job. And that is obtaining the required tools and equipment to begin the job. No returning citizens has the savings to allow them to purchase those necessary items and that's where we come in as we just did for Tyrese.

He obtained skills as a welder and landed a very good job but needed a lot of items before he could begin employment. We jumped in and took care of everything for him and he's raring to go.

Tyrese has already obtained much success with much more to follow and we are happy to have helped him get the necessary items to begin work! Always a big hurdle for people to do on their own.



## **CURTIS:**

A big shout out to the City of Detroit as they are very felon friendly and employ many of those in our program for returning citizens. Predominately in three departments including:

1. Detroit Water and Sewage Department
2. Detroit Department of Transportation (bus driver)
3. Blight Removal/Detroit Demolition Department

We do steer many of those in our program to apply for these positions and it worked out great for Curtis who had been struggling with prior employment and experiencing layoffs, low pay etc. He got a job in the Blight Removal Department, and it pays well, and he enjoys it and he's doing great.

We just got him into housing last week and two days later we were able to assist him with a nice Volvo vehicle. He was incredibly appreciative and wanted to pay it forward with us by offering his services in providing rides to anyone who needed assistance.

Very kind of Curtis and we will definitely take him up on his generous offer. He's a very good success story!



## **AARON:**

It is really exciting to see more and more people recognize that they can afford to purchase a home and even with taxes and insurance and their monthly mortgage cost, they still are paying no more than if they were renting a house or an apartment.

In the month of March, we had six people purchase homes which is very cool. Many of them had some grant assistance for closing costs along with the money we put in to lower those costs.

Including Aaron who just bought a home for he and his mother and we helped with the closing costs and provided all the furniture that he and his mother needed along with home furnishings (including a television set) so now their house is complete with anything they need.

Aaron has a very good job with the City of Detroit where he has been employed for over a year now and he works a lot of overtime hours which can pay him as much as \$30.00 per hour. Paying his mortgage is not an issue and we are very excited for him to become a first-time homeowner!





## **ANTONIO:**

A shout out to the Michigan Department of Correction's Vocational Village program which does provide a skilled trades training program that aims to provide a positive learning community for prisoners who are serious about completing technical education.

There are over 12 programs offered including CDL training, Computer Coding, Masonry, Welding, Cosmetology, Horticulture etc. They also offer optician training where someone can complete that program and be certified with the American Board of Opticianry. As occurred with Antonio, who we met recently, and we learned of his skilled training while in prison.

He is now applying for jobs in that field but since he needed income right away he took a low paying job to have money coming in. Brighter days are ahead when he is able to obtain a job commensurate with his optician training.

We helped him with gift cards so he could obtain basic necessities including work clothes, food, toiletries etc. We also provided him a queen size mattress, box spring and frame and look forward to helping him further as moves forward and obtains employment as an optician.

So again, a shout out to the Vocational Village program and all those who are involved in the training of prisoners and those companies who subsequently are willing to employ returning citizens.



## **WILLIE:**

Returning citizens can definitely experience a feeling of unease that even when things are going relatively well there remains a concern that one unanticipated occurrence could quickly change their path of success.

Such is the case of Willie who we've helped in many, many ways over the last eight months since we first met. He has a skilled trade as a locksmith and has been doing well working for a company and we initially helped him with his basic necessities, then assisted with his move in costs to his new residence and helped with furniture and home furnishings and repaired his truck for him a few months ago.

Despite another landlord taking over Willie's month to month lease and raising his rent by \$300 per month last January, Willie was still on top of all his bills and doing very well.

Until he wasn't as his truck was recently stolen. He desperately needed a vehicle to maintain his job and immediately sought out our help. We were quickly able to get him into a nice vehicle and back on the road and resuming his job as a locksmith.

Back on his path of success! So critical for Willie. He was very, very appreciative.



## **DONOVAN:**

We've said it before, that if prison offers one thing it is the opportunity to think.

And Donovan thought.

He thought how he needed to change things this time around when he got out. Needed to set goals. Needed to hit the ground running. And most importantly he needed to be a great father and active in the life of his children.

Donovan definitely put those thoughts into action as he got in contact with us as soon as he got out. And we mean within minutes. We set up a meeting and got together within 24 hours of his walking out of prison. He'd already applied for jobs, with a possible position at Mastronardi Produce (very felon friendly business) looking promising. And he has the main goal of getting a house so his children can come and stay with him.

Goals are in place, and it is one thing to think something and another thing to do something. So far, Donovan is definitely doing something, and we anticipate much success in his future as we look forward to assisting him accomplish all his goals!



## LAKEISHA:

Not much of a choice when you consider the option of paying money each month to your landlord for rent or paying towards your mortgage and building equity with home ownership.

That's what Lakeisha was thinking when she began looking into whether buying a house was an option. She quickly concluded it was and Lakeisha is a tremendous success story as not many people within less than a year have earned their Commercial Driver License, obtained a job with the Detroit Water and Sewage Department, and purchased their own home!

Incredibly impressive and it's been our pleasure to assist her on this tremendous path of success. And recently helping her with closing costs and new furniture and lots of home furnishings was very exciting for us as it was for Lakeisha.

She worked hard to get to this point, and we are very proud of her and as she should be, Lakeisha is very proud of how far she's been able to come in eleven months. Amazing! But that's what hard work accomplishes!



## **ERIC:**

One of the requirements to qualify for our used vehicle program is to be in your own rental home or a home one has purchased. That establishes a certain level of self-sufficiency of being able to pay your monthly bills and now we can evaluate whether someone can afford the additional monthly expenses of car insurance, gasoline, saving for future car repairs etc.

But the beauty of running our own programs is since we make the rules we can bend the rules where that is appropriate. Such as with Eric who requested an application to our Working Cars for Working People program as he had a very good job with the City of Detroit, worked a lot of overtime hours, and was earning a nice income. However, he lived at home with his elderly mother who he was taking care of.

We made an exception to the requirement referenced above as he really needed a vehicle as he was spending up to \$800 per month on Uber rides and if he could get rid of that expense he'd be able to afford insurance, gas, repairs etc.

We were able to help him get into his dream car of an older Chevy Malibu Classic as his late father had one. The car was in exceptional shape and Eric was really excited. So, we assisted him with the purchase, and he was incredibly happy and appreciative!



## **JOHN:**

It always comes back to hope. If you have no legitimate hope, you have no options, you have no path to success, you have no valid dreams, no optimism.

We met John right after he got out of prison and began assisting him immediately. He specifically told us, “On the inside before we get out I am telling you we are scared as places say they will help, and no one ever does. When we got word about you we had some hope things would be different. Meeting you now, you are the real deal and I just want to say thank you. You give us all hope.”

John’s application to us had already given us a flavor of his thoughts as he stated that he didn’t have much family still alive, and he desperately wanted to succeed in becoming a productive member of society. He understood he was starting from the bottom and with our assistance he had a sense of motivation to not return to the streets.

We will be beside John every step of the way and are equally determined that he will be another wonderful success story! We are working on getting him into a Commercial Driver License program, helped him out with all of his basic needs at present and look forward to getting him into his own housing once he is employed. Success is on the way!



## VIC:

Everyone should have as good a friend as Victor does in Wayne!

Wayne contacted us a few weeks ago on behalf of his friend Victor, who was in prison and would be getting out on April 9<sup>th</sup>. We advised Wayne he could apply on behalf of Victor, and we could schedule a meeting with Vic the day he was released.

Wayne completed a thorough application for Victor, and we were all set to meet Vic on the 9<sup>th</sup>, just a few short hours after Wayne had picked him up from prison and brought him to us.

Victor is poised to hit the ground running as he has been in touch with his former employer and can resume his position with that company as a Commercial Licensed Driver and will start very shortly. We've already helped him with tools needed for his job.

He will begin earning a solid income and we will very soon be able to get him into his own housing and assist him with a vehicle to get to and from work.

Shout out again to Wayne who remained a good friend, through thick and thin, and is of great assistance to Victor!



## **ANTOINE:**

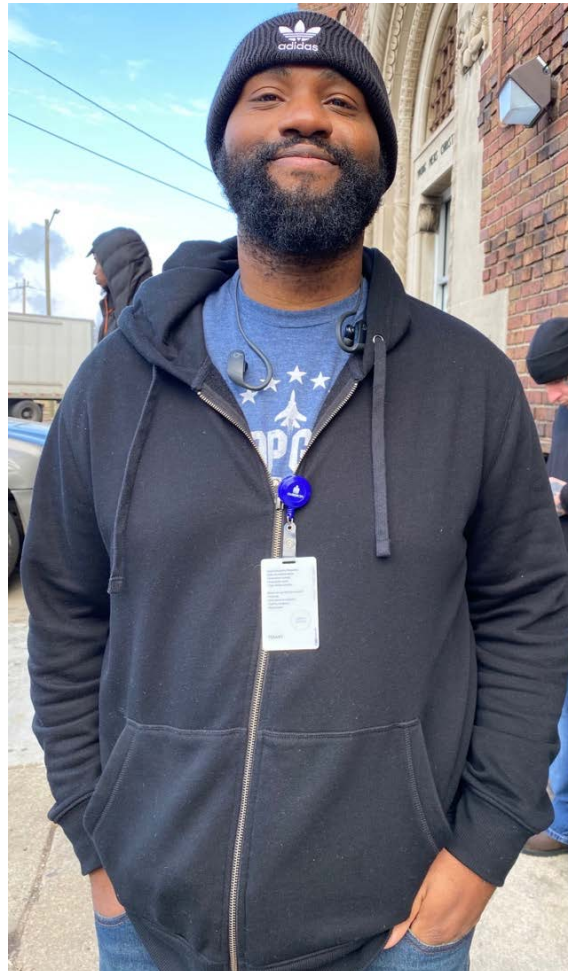
It's always nice to see a returning citizen get a good job very quickly after leaving prison and then maintain that job for a long while as the pay is good, they like the job, and their employer likes them.

That's the case with Antoine as we first met him back in January of 2023 and now over 15 months later he is still working at Indulta Media in Detroit and doing very, very well.

We previously helped Antoine with basic needs when he got out of prison and a computer that he needed for his job. He's now in a position to move into his very own home and we just assisted him with move in costs, furniture, and home furnishings.

He has a great plan of completing this one-year rental lease and then purchasing his own home.

We're certain that plan will come to fruition as Antoine is very smart, organized and determined. He's a great success story and that steady work history is all part of that success. Way to go Antoine!





## **LATOYA AND SHEILA:**

It's always very exciting for us to get that text or email that contains a copy of the State License for a skilled trade that a returning citizen had worked very hard to obtain.

It is great on so many levels for them as all their hard work has paid off, they have achieved something which was a significant goal for them, it allows them to obtain secure employment with good pay and benefits etc.

We often help during the course of their training with their basic needs and bills so they can stay afloat. Once they are licensed the big roadblock is the tools and equipment that they need to start their job.

As it was for Latoya and Sheila who both obtained their Cosmetology License this week, had job offers and were ready to get started but they both needed a cordless clipper, cordless trimmer, flat iron, curling iron, blow dryer, brushes, hair clips, spray bottles, apron, cutting capes, combs, brushes, blades for clippers, shavers, etc.

We took care of things that were needed for both of them, and it was expensive but a great long-term investment., They're now set to start their jobs. Hurdle removed and all good moving forward!



## **RODERIC:**

9.5 years is a long time to spend in prison while you fight for your innocence and watch your case go up and down the court process while you appeal your conviction.

That was the situation for Roderic who steadfastly maintained his innocence and eventually the Supreme Court of Michigan agreed that he was entitled to a new trial. Roderic was released from prison while waiting for his opportunity to clear his name and hear those words of “Not guilty.”

His sister was his strongest supporter while he was in prison and who helped fight the most for his release but, tragically, shortly after Ricardo came home his sister was diagnosed with cancer. A year later she passed away and though Roderic felt fortunate to be out of prison to spend that final time together with his sister, he misses her terribly and is now caring for her children.

We have begun helping Roderic in a variety of ways and will be there for him as he moves forward, and his case has now been officially dismissed by the prosecutor. 🙌



## **TARUS:**

It's always easier to obtain employment when someone has particular skills, like Tarus who has car detailing skills, and his prior employer was more than willing to take him back as an employee.

Shortly after we met in January, Tarus resumed his job with Drake's Collision, doing mobile car detailing. He was living with his mother at that time and was in no hurry to get into his own housing. Fast forward three months later and he'd saved some money and was ready to start looking.

His mother knew someone with a place to rent and shortly thereafter Tarus was approved to move in and contacted us for assistance. We were more than glad to assist with his move in costs and new furniture and home furnishings. The beginning of each week we replenish our supplies of the latter with sheets, towels/washcloths, blanket, pillows, pillowcases, silverware, glasses, pots and pans, dishes, and a mattress pad.

Tarus is now all moved in and very appreciative of all our assistance. He's come a long way in a few short months and is a hard worker achieving much success. Way to go Tarus!



## **BRYCE:**

Talk about hitting the ground running as Bryce was only out of prison for a few days before we met in person. Days before that he'd already asked us for job leads (we usually provide that information after our first meeting) so he could start applying places even before we met. He'd also looked for schooling so he could finish the computer coding education he had begun in prison.

Bryce was also having his mother's car transferred to his name as she had gifted that to him to help him get to job interviews and, ultimately, his employment once he got a job offer.

We are assisting him in getting a job at LM Manufacturing, helped him with gift cards to obtain basic necessities, are providing him a computer so he can complete his computer coding education, and are assisting him with a car repair for some current issues with the vehicle his mom provided.

We anticipate great things from Bryce as he is organized, smart, determined and a go-getter. It is a great investment for us to help him now and moving forward on his path of success!



## **DEMARIO:**

When we met Demario in March we knew right away that he was going to make things happen. He had great skills as a chef and shortly after we met he had two job offers at very popular Detroit restaurants. Rather than choose one over the other he took both jobs and has been working around 80 hours a week since he started.

Demario has no complaints with his very busy schedule as he told us that his plan all along was to work as much possible when he was released and save as much money as possible.

We've helped him in many ways including gift cards and all his work attire, a set of cooking knives, and a chef backpack for his items. Demario has other dreams as well and that's to give back to his community as best as possible including working with a Detroit food co-op which teaches people to cook using community garden resources. He's also applied to work with Goodwill as a school tutor.

He's constantly learning as he pursues all his various interests. He's taken many Zoom seminars along these lines, though it's a bit cumbersome doing that on his phone and given his tutoring aspirations etc. it was important for us to assist him with a computer.

We just met to provide that as well as some comfortable work shoes for his two jobs, where he's spending a lot of time on his feet!



## **DION:**

It's always quite beneficial if a prisoner takes advantage of some of the skilled trades available to learn while in prison. Especially with respect to getting a Commercial Driver License as classroom education etc. can be done in prison and passage of the written test. Although no actual on the road training occurs, there is the ability to learn to drive via a simulation machine.

Dion took advantage of all that while in prison and passed his written test. When we first met in February he was only waiting on the class to open up for his enrollment and to then begin his on the road training.

That eventually occurred and he just completed the program and took his road test and passed with flying colors!

We've helped him with various things both before and during his training and now we are assisting him afterwards by assisting with his getting a good paying job with a trucking company.

All of which will occur very soon. We can then assist Dion with housing and eventually a vehicle to help him get to and from work.

He's come a long way in a short period of time. It was easy to see, when we first met, that he was going to make things happen. As he did!



## **WILLIAM:**

Since our program has been going for almost four years now, every day we receive a text from someone who is excited to share the news that they are now off parole. No more ankle monitor, no more monthly fees, no more restrictions on their travel, no more ongoing check ins with one's parole agent etc.

It is a proud and joyous time to have accomplished getting off parole as conditional freedom is over and full freedom exists.

William just contacted us to advise he was off parole as he said: "I officially made it off of parole today. Today now begins a new beginning to a new life and a 2nd chance at freedom ...Thanks for everything you have done to help get me to his point. It will never be forgotten."

We've helped William in lots of ways including gift cards for basic necessities, provided him furniture and home furnishings along with a car purchase to get to and from work as well as a car repair on his prior vehicle before it went down for good.

William is doing very well and even better now getting to this point of being off parole. Congrats to you William! Enjoy the new freedom.



## **ALFRED:**

It's always a great feeling to have begun working with someone who has just gotten out, who has particular goals in mind and with our help and their perseverance those goals are obtained.

We met Albert last November right after he was released from the Federal Halfway House, and he expressed his goal of getting his Commercial Driver License. We helped him with gift cards for basic necessities like clothing, shoes, food etc. And we referred him to Michigan Works for his pursuit of his CDL and their assistance with his tuition.

He got on a waiting list for the program and took a job at Popeye's restaurant and we helped him with his work clothes etc. He was eventually admitted into the program, which was an accelerated program via 160 Driving Academy. Alfred did great and just obtained his CDL and we provided him our detailed CDL job leads, and he will soon be employed at a very good paying job.

Great to see Alfred accomplish his main goal when he was released from prison. He did all he needed to do to get to this point and he's rightfully proud!





## **LUKE:**

It's quite amazing and impressive how quickly some returning citizens move along on their path of success in getting a job, skilled trade training, housing etc.

We first met Luke in January and as Federal returning citizen, he was in a halfway house and had begun working at Dakkota Integrated Systems. He also obtained certification in blight removal, asbestos abatement, and heavy equipment operator through the Detroit Training Center.

Luke was then advised his time was up at the halfway house and he needed to immediately find a place to live which is all the more difficult for those like Luke who have no family to go to first when they are released and before they are able to find a place of their own to rent.

We assisted Luke in obtaining a place to rent and helped with his move in costs and furniture and home furnishings.

He is currently seeking employment utilizing his skilled trade training and that will result in an increase in his income. He's doing well and is a hard worker and moving quickly along his path of success.



## **ANDRE:**

With all those we work with who were sentenced to life in prison as a juvenile, and due to a change in the law are now getting out of prison after 30-50 years, it is quite amazing how they are able to acclimate back into their community.

We met Andre right after he was released from his life sentence after having served 34.5 years. A shout out to the State Appellate Defender Office who assisted Andre in getting released for time served. When we met, Andre had already applied for a job with the City of Detroit which sounded pretty promising.

What he wanted most of all was to take a class in learning phone and computer literacy given those things are completely new to him. He had mastered the ability to text as we communicated a lot in that manner but all the other associated skills he really needed some help with.

We provided him a bunch of programs that would be able to teach him those skills and help with his transition. We will be helping him with his basic needs and housing etc. as we get him into a stable environment. All things considered, he is doing pretty well for someone who went to prison at 17 years of age and is now 51 years old!



## **BRANDON:**

Just like with any of us, things can be going very well and then something very unexpected occurs throwing everything into disarray.

That's what happened to Brandon who we first started assisting almost three years ago and we helped him along the way with work attire and furniture and all his basic necessities. He inherited his uncle's home and had been living there along with his two children.

Then, out of nowhere, the home caught fire due to an electrical issue and everything they had was destroyed. We helped he and his children replace their clothing etc. and we connected Brandon with a landlord to rent him a home large enough for the family.

He just moved in, and we assisted with his move in costs and furniture and home furnishings and more new replacement clothing. Brandon has a good job and can handle all his monthly bills just fine.

It's been a rough couple of months for him after the fire, but better days are now ahead that he can settle back into a home with his children!



## **JESSE:**

Here is another great example of an organized and determined returning citizen hitting the ground running as soon as they were released and accomplishing a lot in a short period of time.

Jesse just got out a few weeks back after serving 11 years and quickly got a part time job at U-Haul.

U-Haul provides much opportunity for advancement and Jesse's already taking advantage of this. He also completed his Commercial Driver Training while in prison to get his permit, which he now has. He just has to complete the on-road training and he's already enrolled in Suburban Trucking and will begin shortly.

After he gets his full CDL he will have lots of opportunities for good jobs, including staying with U-Haul. We have helped him with all his clothing including work clothes, food and other basic necessities as well as with a car repair.

Things are looking very good for organized and determined Jesse, and he's already on a very good path of success. We are excited to see him continue achieving!

