



## SEPTEMBER UPDATE FOR RETURNING HOPE TO RETURNING CITIZENS PROGRAM

It's always exciting at the beginning of each month as that is when people are moving into their own place for the first time and sometimes their first place they could ever call their own!

During that time frame, on a daily basis, we are meeting those we are helping and providing help with a security deposit or first month rent and home furnishings and we've already arranged with Al's Furniture to provide furniture on their exact move in date.

At the end of August and beginning of September, we provided help to 19 people moving into their own residence and for many days in a row our afternoons looked like this as we provided much needed home furnishings (pots and pans, dishes, glasses, silverware, sheets, blanket, pillows, pillowcases, towels, washcloths etc.):



Good times all around and everyone is quite excited to have their own possessions in their own place and we are very excited as well knowing that these individuals have achieved self-sufficiency after doing great at their respective job, accumulated some savings and are ready to be on their own.

Here are some other great stories over the last 30 days from some of those we had the pleasure of assisting:

**MONICA:**

It's said a positive attitude means so much and at times it is hard to remain positive as a returning citizen given the obstacles they face

but Monica has always had a smile on her face every time we've met over the 16 months of our working together. She currently works for Hertz as a car transporter and is doing great and when we met with her the other day she again brought her smile along as she had the first time we met her! Great to see her doing so wonderful and we are very proud of her ongoing success. 😊👏



### **JOHNNY:**

No one appreciates a home of their own, more than someone who has spent many years confined to a prison cell. Johnny put in his time both in prison and in working towards getting a good job and being able to save money to go towards move in costs and finding a good place to rent. The time has now come, and we are there to help pay for half those move in costs and furnish his entire house for him. He was very happy and texted: "I don't know how to say thank enough! Thank God and you for all the help. You have really been a blessing and may God keep his hands on you!"



### **SHAQUANA:**

Bottom line is we all make mistakes and obviously some are more significant than others. Shaquana made a mistake, served a short sentence in prison, and has learned from that and moved forward. It's a testament to who she truly is that her job working with individuals in foster care through the Catholic Charities of Southeastern Michigan was waiting for her upon her release.

So, she's working there again, and we've begun assisting her as a returning citizen as she's definitely someone we know will be very successful as she is bright, determined, and focused and she's also doing great things in helping foster children. 🙌🙌



**CHARLES:**

Sometimes the stars align perfectly and what was a bad situation suddenly becomes a good one. Charles, a returning citizen, was doing great and making good money in his job as a professional window washer until his landlord sold the home he was living in, and he had to

move immediately. He contacted us for help at the exact same time as another landlord, who we had cultivated a relationship with, called to say she had a flat in a home available to rent. We connected them and within 24 hours Charles was in his new residence and we assisted with his security deposit. The stars aligned very nicely for all involved. Including for his dog Betty lol.



**JOHNNY AND DANTE:**

The beauty of our returning citizen program being two years old is that when we meet with those we are assisting each day, there is an

active mentoring program between those we've been helping for a while now and those who have been recently released. No better mentor than someone who has already walked the walk.

Like the other day, where Johnny (who we were assisting with move in costs, furniture etc. as he has a good job and a new home to rent) met Dante who we just began to help. Johnny gave him wisdom, gave Dante a great job connection to call, gave advice re parole etc. Wonderful to see in action!



**TIREZAH:**

5.5% of prisoners in Michigan are women and word of mouth has spread quickly amongst all MI female returning citizens of our ability to assist with their transition back to their community/family etc. We've helped a lot of these determined individuals. We just had the pleasure of continuing our assistance with Tirezah, who we have been working with last March, as she moved into her own residence. We helped with her move in costs along with a bed, nightstand, couch, dining room table etc. And lots of home furnishings as shown here, and well deserved for her!





**ANDREW:**

Rent prices are going up everywhere and that makes things very difficult for those coming back from prison, who already have a limited choice of places to rent because many won't even consider renting to someone with a criminal record. So, a big shout out to those landlords who look at the current person and allow someone to make a good impression and become a tenant at a reasonable rate. People like Beverly W. who rented to Andrew in June and he's doing great, proudly paying rent on the 1st of each month, never missing a day of work and being a wonderful tenant and a great success story.



## **Michael, Walter, Robert and Edward**

Let's face facts. Being in prison for 20 years or more, family members pass away, and former friends will scatter. Many returning citizens have absolutely no one when they are released. Those with nowhere to go will often wind up in transitional housing with other returning citizens. Some being friends from prison, some new acquaintances becoming friends. Sometimes, those newly released will come to meet us with having traveled together. Such as Michael, Walter, Robert, and Edward who all came together to meet us the other day. We helped them in many ways and look forward to seeing their success moving forward together.



## **TUESDAYS:**

For many years now, every Tuesday afternoon we are at the transitional housing location of Operation Get Down on the east side of Detroit. There we meet those who have been out of prison for a very

short time. It's a new beginning and a time to provide help with getting new clothing, toiletries, food, job leads etc.

We meet, individually, anywhere from 18 to 25 people every visit who are new to our program and go over all the things that we can do for them, assess their current needs and, most importantly, provide as much hope as possible that things are going to turn out well and they will be very successful in this transition. Definitely the highlight of each week for us!



### **BRIANNA:**

Enthusiasm is often critical to success and it's great when one completes their prison sentence, and they are still in their mid-twenties and have their whole life ahead of them and possess the strong desire to make things happen. As Brianna has done since we met her last April. She got a career coach, obtained a job, saved money while living in a homeless shelter and we helped her along the way and eventually her dream was realized in having her own place to call home.

We just helped her move into a rental house and she was beyond excited. We couldn't be happier for her as very, very well deserved, and wonderful success achieved by her in a short period of time!



## **CAREMA:**

At over \$25.00 per hour, it's always wonderful to see a returning citizen obtain the training for a real career path as Carema just did as she's beginning her carpentry trade apprenticeship through the Detroit Carpenters and Millwrights at that pay rate and just needed the required tools to get things going.

We provided her work clothes, a carpenter nail pouch, tape measure, hammer, pry bar, nail puller, a tool bag on wheels, chalk line, speed square, wrench, carpenter pencils, a carpenter level and personal protective equipment including hardhat, work boots, safety glasses and work gloves.

Carema's now ready to roll, receive a high rate of pay and continue forward on a great path of success. We are very excited for her! 🙌



## **HOPE:**

After 20 years of living in a small prison cell, a returning citizen will be quite pleased with getting a home of their own and even if it as a small place.

After two decades away, Hope is working a great job in a Dental lab, and we recently helped her get her first home to rent which was small but altogether perfect. We did everything possible to accommodate her furniture needs, including providing a small dining room table to fit into her kitchen corner and a providing a stacked washer and dryer. Hope was very, very thankful, and excited! As are we with her tremendous success in a short period of time.



Hope you enjoyed reading these stories as much as we enjoyed working with these individuals and experiencing, with them, their great path to success!

Stay well and enjoy your September.

All the best,

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