

VOICE

August 2017

REENTRY PROFILE

Kyle Dunson is pursuing a master’s degree in social work and interning with the Contra Costa Public Defender’s Office. He reflects on his journey home from prison. “In 2006, after 13 separate prison terms and 37 felonies, I was paroled after serving

28 out of 36 months. All of this was, of course, clean time, because like most people with a substance abuse issue, I did not use while inside. I got drunk on the ride home.

“Going from drunk to tweaked was a short trip, and after being out for only 27 days, I saw myself in the mirror. I saw what I had been reduced to, and I knew, without a doubt, that I was headed back to prison, where I would die. I also knew that, if I did not want to die, then I had to change. I called my parole agent, instead of running from him, and asked for help. He got me into treatment. This year, I celebrated 11 years of sobriety and recovery.

“My life has been about making the right decisions, in the right moments, for the right reasons. For me, luck is, at its simplest, when preparation meets opportunity. This is the message I would pass on to those beginning their reintegration into the communities from which they came.

“Try to do the opposite of what your habitual

nature is compelling you to do. If you have a problem with drugs and alcohol, when the desire to use confronts you, go to a meeting. If you have a problem with violence, when the anger begins to erupt, calm yourself by embracing the offending party instead of punching them. If you have a problem stealing, pay for something—anything. If you isolate, talk to someone. If you hold it in, let it out. If you hate, love. If you hurt, heal. If you destroy, create. Do these things. Get in the habit of doing these things. Your dignity, self-respect, worth, family, happiness, tranquility, peace and life will be returned to you.

“If you are getting ready to get out, use the opportunity you have by changing what it is you’ve always done. Understand that, when used properly, your past is a unique qualification rather than a limitation to an ever-expanding world of possibilities. People with experiences like ours are not destined to die in prison. No. We are better suited to serve those who come behind us. By helping them achieve, we help ourselves.”

PROGRAMS

Partners in Transformation

Welcome to our first issue! We, the Reentry Success Center and the Reentry Network, developed this newsletter to support you in making healthy and positive choices in order to achieve success. You experienced many hardships and challenges, and the road to success is not easy. We are here and we are ready to walk with you down that road.

Over the next several months, we will provide information you need to begin your journey toward recovery and well-being. We will share programs and services that are available to you, such as employment services, housing as-

sistance, family support, medical and mental health, substance use treatment and support, and legal services. Why? To guide you home. We invite you to take advantage of all the opportunities available, and we are here to answer your questions.

Thank you for choosing to pick up and read this newsletter. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve you. Our goal is to end incarceration, addiction, homelessness, and hopelessness. We look forward to supporting your journey toward independence. We want to help you overcome obstacles that may be keeping you from pursuing your goals. We know your greatness is possible. We know you can succeed. Let us walk down that path together.

What Are the Reentry Success Center and the Reentry Network?

The Reentry Success Center and the Reentry Network are your points of entry to services and programs in Contra Costa County. They were designed to address the unique circumstances of men and women, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, children and grandchildren, who have a history of being involved in the criminal justice system.

The Reentry Success Center is located in Richmond, two blocks from Richmond BART. We operate as a hub of reentry services for individuals and families who have been

impacted by incarceration.

The Reentry Network operates as a community of service organizations with locations throughout Central and East Contra Costa County. We provide critical resources to support individuals returning home from incarceration, and their families. Together, the Reentry Success Center and the Reentry Network aim to break the cycle of incarceration by being a beacon of hope and healing for all Contra Costa County residents in the criminal justice system. Please locate both our addresses and contact details on the back of this issue.



EVENTS

MONDAYS (ONGOING)

Bridges to Work 9-11am, county-wide services and resources, open to men and women, Goodwill Industries, 3350 Clayton Road, Suite 100, Concord

THURSDAYS (ONGOING)

LGBT Wellness Recovery Action Plan 1-2:15pm, free community workshop to develop skills to manage anxiety and stress, Rainbow Community Center, 2118 Willow Pass Road, Suite 500, Concord

FIRST & THIRD TUESDAY (ONGOING)

HIV/AIDS East County Support Group Men and women, 18 and over, Community Presbyterian Church, 200 East Leland Road, Pittsburg

FIRST & THIRD TUESDAY (ONGOING)

Reentry Orientation 10am-12pm, employment, housing, health and other assistance, Reentry Success Center, 912 Macdonald Ave, Richmond

FIRST & THIRD THURSDAY (ONGOING)

REMEDY Support Group 5-7:30pm, women and men, 18 and over, at risk for chronic illness, West County Health Clinic, 13601 San Pablo Ave, San Pablo

FIRST & THIRD FRIDAY (ONGOING)

Debtor’s Rights Clinic 9:30am-1pm, debt collection lawsuit and harassment support, (first Friday) SparkPoint–Contra Costa West, 1000 Macdonald Ave, Richmond and (third Friday) SparkPoint–Contra Costa East, 3105 Willow Pass Road, Bay Point

SECOND & FOURTH TUESDAY (ONGOING)

REMEDY Support Group 5-7:30pm, women and men, 18 and over, at risk for chronic illness, Pittsburg Health Center, 2311 Loveridge Road, Pittsburg

HOW TO

Create a Road Map to Coming Home

As you read this newsletter, you will come across the word, reentry, quite often. So, what is reentry? Reentry means the process of coming back to your community after incarceration. The Reentry Network and Reentry Success Center are part of a community of organizations in Contra Costa County whose role is to support and empower women and men coming home from jail or prison. We embrace a journey towards healing, and we work with you to build your road map to a successful life. There are three steps toward achieving this goal:

STEP 1: GET CONNECTED

If you want to transition from jail to the community programs that will support your return home, it is very important to get connected while you’re still on the inside. Remember the name, Janna. She is a Reentry Transitional Specialist, and her role is to work with you to prepare a plan and connect you to services and resources after incarceration.

Send an inmate request through the Adult School to meet with Janna (remember her

name), and she will schedule an appointment with you to develop a reentry plan. After that, she will send your plan to the Reentry Success Center, the Reentry Network, or any of the organizations in our community that can offer their assistance after your release from jail.

Send an inmate request through the Adult School to meet with Janna.

STEP 2: GET READY

Once you make the decision to get connected to services, it is important to know that you will need to make different choices than what you may have done in the past – and these choices will ultimately be positive ones. In other words, it is important to follow through on your word and to be sure to show up to your scheduled appointments. Your word is your bond. If you live by this mantra, you will start to see real changes in your life, because you will start showing up. If you have challenges in this area, we are here to support you.

STEP 3: BE PREPARED

Once you have decided to do things differently, it is good to remind yourself that it may not be easy, but it will definitely be worth it. What is worth more than peace of mind, healing, and true happiness?

At first, it may be difficult to make different choices. It may feel awkward. You may feel discouraged, unsure, and may even want to quit. Just remember, however, that this is part of the process, and it is normal to have these feelings. And, under no circumstances, should you ever quit on yourself. Success is achievable. In future issues, we look forward to sharing stories of others who have walked down similar roads and have learned how to overcome their obstacles.

We are not selling you a dream or claiming you will never experience challenges ever again, because you will. We are, however, offering support to help you find answers on how to overcome your challenges, so you can remain on the path of positivity. This is what we do: we are here to help you gain the tools and resources to learn how to make different life choices and how to overcome challenges when they arise. Please join us.

EXPLORATIONS

We want to promote your artwork, photography, and poetry. Please write us at our addresses below. Be sure to include "c/o Reentry Newsletter Explorations" on the mailing address. We will write back to confirm we received your letter, and we will do our best to include it in one of our issues.

POETRY

Selection of poems by Langston Hughes

DREAMS

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

I CONTINUE TO DREAM

I take my dreams and make of them
a bronze vase and a round fountain with a
beautiful statue in its center.
And a song with a broken heart and I ask you:
Do you understand my dreams?
Sometimes you say you do,
And sometimes you say you don’t.
Either way it doesn’t matter.
I continue to dream.

THE DREAM KEEPER

Bring me all of your dreams,
You dreamer,
Bring me all your
Heart melodies
That I may wrap them
In a blue cloud-cloth
Away from the too-rough fingers
Of the world.

A DREAM DEFERRED

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

I DREAM A WORLD

I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom’s way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind—
Of such I dream, my world!


GAMES

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Fill in the blank squares, so each row, each column, and each block contain all digits 1 thru 9. Answers will be in next month’s issue.

Contra Costa Reentry Voice is published monthly by the following organizations:



Reentry Success Center
912 Macdonald Avenue
Richmond, CA 94801
reentrysuccess.org



Reentry Network at HealthRight 360
5119 Lone Tree Way
Antioch, CA 94531
healthRIGHT360.org

Housing

Education

Benefits

Family

Health

Legal

Financial

Employment