

# VOICE

Winter-Spring 2020

## REENTRY PROFILE



When Mark was released after being locked up for 16 years, he was caught off guard, because he had to complete parole in unfamiliar territory: “When you first get out, you really don’t realize what’s gonna happen.

I came from a place where I was going to have stable housing, a job, a roof over my head, family, transportation—all of that already set up—to the parole board, the parole system, whatever you want to call it, which took it upon themselves to tell me that I couldn’t go back to my county. So, they paroled me to Contra Costa County. And they did this to me in the amount of time that I had no chance of getting any transitional housing—at all.

“I landed on the streets here, with my mom and my brother. For two days, we looked for a place for me to stay, and we couldn’t find nothing. And they were running out of money. They couldn’t afford no more motel rooms. They had to leave. My brother had a doctor’s appointment, so they literally dropped me off on this doorstep.

“I met Pat, and we told him the story, and he shook my hand and told me and my mother and my brother, ‘Don’t worry. We got this. You guys can leave. We’re gonna make sure your son is taken care of.’

“That was huge. From that point on, I realized what kind of strength not only I have, but Pat has, and my family has. He was determined that I had a place to stay, a roof over my head, and [he] was going to put me through the Alpha Program. He said, ‘I have an open spot. We’re gonna get you your ID. We’re gonna get you your Social Security card. We’re gonna put you through certain groups that you need for your parole conditions. We’re gonna help you get on your feet.’ At that point, I had no faith at all in the system. I was like, ‘Well, if this happens, great.’

“My brother purchased me a sleeping bag, with a canvas tarp to go over it, and some rainproof boots, and stuff like that. It was raining at that time. So, there was fear that I was going to be on the streets as a transient with nothing—no job, no house, no nothing.

“This reentry center took me in with open arms and made sure I had everything that I needed. If it wasn’t for this place, I’d probably still be out there digging garbage cans or in jail. I’d be in jail, because they would have thrown my ass back in jail because I’ve been on parole. And that’s the bottom line. I would not be where I’m at, right now, today, without [the center].

“Now, I have family support. So, within a short amount of time—it’s not even three months now—I have a vehicle to drive around, I’ve got several job interviews already that are looking real well, more job interviews coming up. I completed the Alpha Program. I completed the AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), NA (Narcotics Anonymous), anger management classes, and stuff that were put upon me as conditions of parole. I got to meet so many new people. I’ve got support from people in this county, just through this program,

from meeting people. People care about you and want to help you.

“You gotta dig down deep inside yourself and say, ‘Failure—that’s not an option, at all.’ You gotta say, ‘Okay, I’m gonna do this.’ The court or the parole says, ‘This is the path that you got to take,’ and you tell yourself that you’re gonna do whatever it takes to stay out of jail.

“Whoever decided to try [out the idea of a reentry center], they were

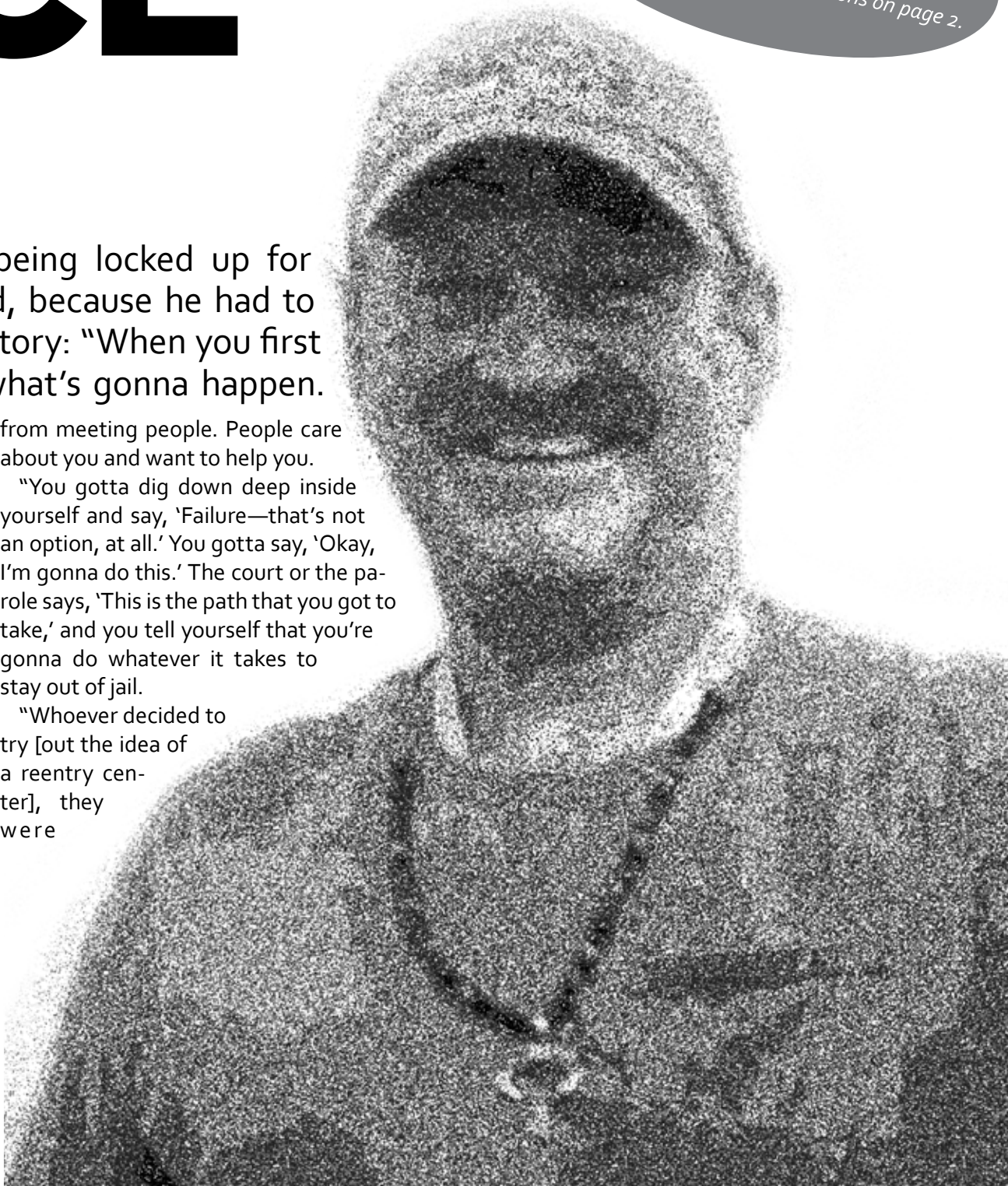
stepping in some water that hadn’t been treaded in before. They’re making it work. And they’re growing. You just look in Pat’s eyes and, right away, you know the sincerity in the man. Trusting him and a leap of faith was not a problem.

“He looked at me and said, ‘I got you.’ ‘Do not worry,’ he told my mom. She was crying, in tears. My brother was super stressed out, and he gave them comfort. They trusted him, too. It wasn’t a leap of faith at all after meeting Pat. It was like, ‘I trust this man. He’s got me.’

“We were in a bad situation. Because of him, I didn’t go to jail, I had a place to stay, I accomplished all the things that I just told you. And he continues to help not only me, but anybody that walks through this door. He helps everybody: the homeless people, all these guys that live around here. He literally takes care of them, gives them a place to stay out of the weather during the day.

“I’ve seen people come in here since I have, within a short amount of time, all wide-eyed and like, ‘Oh my goodness, what am I gonna do?’ I’ve seen Pat and the staff talk to them and, within five minutes, they’re calm, sitting at a table, filling out their forms and everything for this program. They walk away from here knowing that somebody’s got their back. It’s pretty cool.

“I did 16 years. Coming back out here—these cell phones, the way people communicate, the price of gas, the price of food, the price of a soda—I knew I was in trouble if **CONTINUES ON PAGE 2**



What is COVID-19, and what can you do to protect yourself?  
Read frequently asked questions on page 2.

## EDITORS’ NOTES

Dear readers,

As these stories were being written, it seemed the entire world—all 7.8 billion of us—was going on lockdown. Can you imagine that? The world was going through what anyone who has been or continues to be locked up has felt.

A lot remains uncertain, but we know one thing is for sure: Our world is changing. That doesn’t mean it wasn’t changing before, because it has and continues to, but these changes are happening quickly. By the time you read this issue, the county could still be on lockdown, or the lockdown could have lifted.

Regardless, we write to assure you that we are still here to serve you. Our partners in the community are here, too. We are only a phone call away and look forward to supporting you before, during, and after any and all lockdowns.

Pat

Pat Mims  
Reentry Success Center

Patrice

Patrice Guillory  
The Reentry Network

P.S. Not on our mailing list? Write us, and let us know where to send our newsletters to you.



## COVID-19: Preventing Its Spread While Locked Up

COVID-19 is short for Coronavirus Disease 2019. It is the common name for the most recently discovered coronavirus, which caused an outbreak in Wuhan, China, last December. It has since spread around the world. The outbreak is currently in six of the seven continents (excluding Antarctica). Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause illness in animals and humans. The common cold is sometimes caused by a coronavirus. The flu is another form of viral infection.

According to the World Health Organization, the most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some infected people may experience aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms.

Most people (about 80%) recover from COVID-19 without needing special treatment. But some people do become seriously ill and develop difficulty breathing. Older people and people with underlying medical problems, like high

blood pressure, heart problems, or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness.

The disease spreads from person to person through saliva or nose drippings of an infected person. In the medical community, saliva and nose drippings are called droplets. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the infected person. People catch COVID-19 by touching these infected objects or surfaces, and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. People also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in these droplets from an infected person when they cough or breathe out.

You can reduce your chances of being infected by washing your hands with soap and water, trying to maintain a distance

of 3 ft. to 6 ft. from anyone who is coughing or sneezing, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, whenever possible. Seek medical attention and a CDC-approved test if you experience cough, fever, and difficulty breathing.

*In-custody and reentry services have been impacted by this outbreak. Men and women awaiting release and in need of supportive services, please send an inmate request through the Adult School to Game Plan for Success. They will connect you to the Reentry Success Center or Reentry Network.*

*The symptoms of this new disease are fever, tiredness, and dry cough.*

## 2020 Census: Counting People in Place

The 2020 Census has begun. This decennial survey matters—a lot. Its results help determine how much money from the federal government goes to states and communities. That money funds everything from health clinics to fire departments, and schools to roads and highways. Its results also determine how many seats are allocated to each state in Congress. The census is important to men and women who are locked up. According to Prison Policy Initiatives, here's why.

**Does the Census count incarcerated people as residents of the towns where they are incarcerated?**  
Yes.

**How do they count incarcerated people?**  
The Census sends forms to every American household with the following question: "How many people were living or staying in this house, apartment or mobile home on April 1, 2010?" The form instructs people who reply to exclude certain residents, including household members incarcerated in jails and prisons.

To count incarcerated people, census-takers visit prisons and distribute forms or collect the necessary data from administrators. Regardless of how their forms are filled out, the Census assigns incarcerated people to the prison's address.

**Why does the Census need to issue rules on where to count people?**

The Census is trying to be sure it counts everyone, and only counts them once. To ensure consistency, the Census developed the "usual residence rule." That means people will be counted where they "eat and sleep most of the time." For incarcerated people, who live in a place temporarily and involuntarily, the rule strays away from any other standard for residence.

**Does the "usual residence rule" require incarcerated people to be counted at the facility and not at home?**

The Census justifies counting incarcerated people at the prison with the usual residence rule. Incarcerated people do "eat and sleep most of the

time" in prison, but the Census and Congress have the power to change this rule.

**How could the Census count incarcerated people differently?**

The Census could allow incarcerated people to declare their own addresses, or use Department of Corrections' files to determine their homes of record.

**What's next?**

California has passed laws that will require reallocating prisoners' numbers to their last known home addresses. California will implement this and other changes after the 2020 Census.

*The 2020 Census has begun.*

**MARK, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE**

I didn't have help.

"If you're sitting in jail or prison right now and you think you need help or you know you need help, you need to look up the Reentry Success Center and reach out to them while you're still in jail. Get the address and write a letter even before you get released. That way, you're ahead of the game. They'll know you're coming.

"Have faith in yourself and know that you can do anything you want to do, as long as you put your mind to it. There's nobody else in the world that's gonna look out for you but you. At the same time, there are resources out here, especially in Contra Costa County—the Reentry Success Center, and Rubicon, and some other ones. They're gonna have your back.

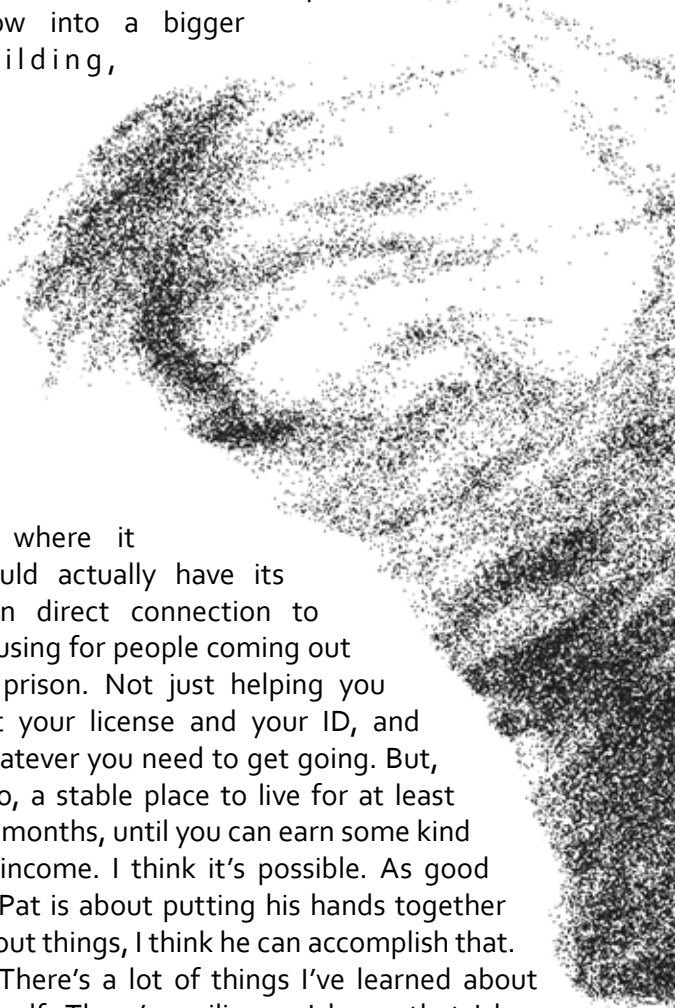
"If you're in prison and have any amount of time to do, I strongly recommend that you get in a vocation—whatever it is in the institution you're at. Take a welding [class], an auto class, a computer literacy class—all the vocations you can get—and go through them and complete the course. The people that I've talked to out here—if you've got certificates or vocational stuff under your belt—you're gonna bump to the top of the line on the jobs. Don't just sit around in your cell feeling sorry for yourself. Make yourself do something. It'll pay off when you get released.

"Some prisons only offer certain vocations. Whatever it is you're at, do it. If it's electronics, auto, painting, carpentry, welding, whatever it is: complete that. If you don't have family or support that you're paroling to, and you're gonna parole in Contra Costa County or any county, find out what kind of a reentry success center they have in your county and write to them while you're still incarcerated and get on a communication basis. These people will write back to you. When you're released, you know where you're going. You won't be like, 'Oh my god, I'm going to the street.' You'll be like, 'I'm going to 912 Macdonald, and I'm gonna meet Pat. We got things set up already.' That's the best advice I could give.

"I would like to see this place grow into a bigger building,

to where it would actually have its own direct connection to housing for people coming out of prison. Not just helping you get your license and your ID, and whatever you need to get going. But, also, a stable place to live for at least six months, until you can earn some kind of income. I think it's possible. As good as Pat is about putting his hands together about things, I think he can accomplish that.

"There's a lot of things I've learned about myself. There's resiliency. I know that I have a strong work ethic, that I have drive. I want to succeed."





## Women’s Group: Carrying Hope into the Future

Linda Washington serves as a substance abuse counselor for Contra Costa Health Service, Behavioral Health Division. Recently, she took on a second role as a facilitator of the new women’s group that meets weekly at the Reentry Success Center. Linda took a few minutes out of her schedule to chat about the new program.

**Q: What’s your connection to the Reentry Success Center?**

A: I work for the County of Contra Costa. I come down to interview my clients here and also sign them up for services here. I’ve been coming here now for almost two years. I think they have a good program. I think they have good resources.

I’m with Community Connect. We connect all our clients to resources that are out in the community. When Pat asked me if I wanted to help to do the women’s group, I thought about it and said, “Yeah.” That’s my civic duty. That’s how I give back.

**Q: Why did you say, yes, so quickly to Pat’s invitation?**

A: I came from a large family, and my mother always had a lot of friends. Women always came over and, in the kitchen, they huddled over food and they talked. So I’ve always been around women’s groups, but nobody called them women’s groups back then.

I know, from working in this field, that women have been missing that connection to other women. We have a lot of fear going around now. You hear that women don’t trust each other. I was thinking I could help in bringing the women together and actually being a hope carrier for them, and helping them to see that there is still something we can get from each other. It would be good for me, also.

**Q: You mentioned a term, “hope carrier.” What’s the story behind that?**

A: There is so much stress in the world right now. We have a lot of people that are homeless, going to jail because of the crimes they commit because they are homeless. We have people that have just given up—like there is no hope. And then you people that still have a job, still have a place to stay, and life is okay for them because they have a roof over their head and a little bit

of money. [They are] struggling to get by. [They are] still feeling the stressors of every day. It’s like, you go out to get something to eat, you’re going to the store, you’re going to the pharmacy, and there’s always somebody there panhandling, that’s doing worse than you. That’s a stressor, having to say no.

I have to make sure that, in this field that I work in, I get my rest, eat (which I don’t always do perfectly). I have to really focus on that and do the best that I can so, when people come to me and they talk to me about what they’ve given up on or how life is so hard or why they feel they can’t get a job, I’m the one that has to say, “Yes you can.”

Sometimes, I carry the hope where the person needs [it]. When I see they kinda have given up on something, I could say, “Let’s see if we can try something else. Let’s see if we can go to somebody else.”

**Q: How do you see the hope-carrying play out in the women’s group?**

A: Once I find what they need. Once they come and we eat—because Pat’s going to supply dinner—and we listen to music, talk to each other, then I’ll find out what they need. It’s a circle. It gives me hope to give them hope. Now I have more resources than I know what to do with. So, what if we start talking and I see what they need, I could say, “Hey, you could do such and such. You could go to SparkPoint or connect here [at the Reentry Success Center].

What are you working on?” It’s all about making goals for ourselves. For most of us, right now, because of the stressors, it’s best to do short-term goals. We can find some successes if we make it through that short-term goal.

I talk to them just like they talk to people on the street. If they tell me they relapsed, I say, “Why did you do that? What are you going to do now?”

**Q: The Reentry Success Center has a way of bringing people together. Everyone meets people where they are.**

A: I’m the author of my story. I tell all of my clients that are in recovery, “You are an adult. It’s a personal choice. You could drink whatever you want to ‘cause it’s your choice. But, does it work for you? If it works for you and you want to do it,

make an adult decision. If it doesn’t, then maybe you need to do something else. You’re the author of your story. You’re the pro. Don’t nobody know your story better than you do.”

**Q: Since you’re the author of your own story, what are some of your aspirations for the women’s group? Who are those people?**

A: Just women. Young women. Old women. Women who feel good about themselves and just want to commune. Women who don’t feel good about themselves and just showed up because Pat told them about it or somebody else told them about the women’s group.

I just want the different women to come together and learn how to feel love again, and not judge. I’m thinking, “But for the grace of God, there go I.” So, I don’t want to talk about nobody, because that could be me. I want us to come and I want us to mirror each other.

There’s this exercise that I want to do at some point. Every woman has a scarf. One person dances and we all mimic what she’s doing. And

we do that and it just goes around in the circle—to bring in that positive, vibrant energy. I respect people’s religion—all of them. I feel like we’re all trying to get to the same place, and we’re just taking different roads. I like to bring people together to discuss that, too.

**Q: What are some of the ways people can find elements of the women’s group, even while locked up?**

A: Hmm. I have not thought about that, but at some point I would be interested in taking a women’s group into the jails. They probably already have them. But I would design something that’s different from what they already have. Because, as I think about that, I could visualize some of the women’s faces. I would create something where I could carry hope to them. I want to make sure that it’s multicultural, so that we could dig deep. I want to dig deep and instill love in them. I want the fighting and the stuff that you’re probably doing here...you don’t have to do that no more. Let’s try something different. I’m going to give that [question] some thought.

*The Women’s Group meets at 912 Macdonald Avenue, Richmond, every Monday, 5:30-7:30pm. For more information, call (510) 679-2122.*



EVENTS

MONDAYS (ONGOING)

Men’s Support Group
5:30-7:30pm, Rubicon Programs, 101 Broadway, Richmond

TUESDAYS (ONGOING)

Women’s Support Group/Girl Talk
5:30-7:30pm, Rubicon Programs, 418 West 4th Street, Antioch

WEDNESDAYS (ONGOING)

Men’s Support Group
5:30-7:30pm, Rubicon Programs, 418 West 4th Street, Antioch

Restorative Circles
5:30-7:30pm, community, members, and drop-ins welcome, Reentry Success Center, 912 Macdonald Ave, Richmond

THURSDAYS (ONGOING)

LGBT Wellness Recovery Action Plan
1:00-2:15pm, free community workshop to develop skills to manage anxiety and stress, Rainbow Community Center, 2118 Willow Pass Road, Suite 500, Concord

REMEDY Support Group
5:00-7:30pm, women and men, 18 and over, at risk for chronic illness; first and third Thursdays at West County Health Clinic, 13601 San Pablo Ave, San Pablo; second and fourth Thursdays at Pittsburg Health Center, 2311 Loveridge Road, Pittsburg

Men’s Support Group
5:30-7:30pm, Reentry Success Center, 912 Macdonald Ave, Richmond

FIRST & THIRD TUESDAY (ONGOING)

Reentry Orientation
10:00am-12:00pm, employment, housing, health and other assistance, Reentry Success Center, 912 Macdonald Ave, Richmond

FIRST & THIRD FRIDAY (ONGOING)

Debtor’s Rights Clinic
9:30am-1:00pm, 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

LAST THURSDAY (ONGOING)

“Reentry: The BIGGER Picture” Workshop
6:00-8:00pm, hosted by the Reentry Network at HealthRight 360, 5119 Lone Tree Way, Antioch

EXPLORATIONS

We want to promote your artwork, photography, and poetry. Please write us at one of the mailing addresses below. Be sure to include “Reentry Newsletter Explorations” in the subject line.

POETRY

Selections by Kenneth Byrd

A REASON TO BE HAPPY, 12/31/2019

Being alive
Having choices to be who we want
Being who we are instead of a front.
Knowing the consequences for good and evil
Standing up and doing good for the people negative and positive everyday like a sequal
Children living it up to become good people.
Staying focus as the world continue to spit out evil people.
Being happy is not a front only what our heart wants.

UNTITLED, 01/2020

Who do we choose to be
A sinner is like the devil wants to see
Happy, and loved like God instilled in me
A crook who believes in the things that dont matter
A person who refuse to change so they continue to walk on the wrong side of the ladder
A child who wants to continue to be lost
or an adult who will step up and pay the cost
A person who refuse to see the truth
Someone who gets off in always being rude
Someone who blames the past for always being crude
or a boss who can accept a loss so who do you choose to be?
Who you choose is what you need to prove.

GAMES

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

CURRENT ISSUE

9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled for a Sudoku puzzle.

ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS ISSUE

9x9 grid with numbers pre-filled for a Sudoku puzzle, representing the solution to the previous issue.

Contra Costa Reentry VOICE is published quarterly 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



Contra Costa County
30 Muir Road
Martinez, CA 94553
co.contra-costa.ca.us

The following icons are included in the sections and next to specific events as a visual aid, for readers who prefer to scan our content. We hope you find them useful.



Housing



Family



Financial



Education



Health



Employment



Benefits



Legal