

VOICE

Issue 15 / 2021

REENTRY PROFILE



Carlton grew up in Vacaville, “had great, nice parents, a loving home—stuff like that. But I always found a way of doing the wrong thing. Growing up, I lived in a nice house. I started smoking a bit earlier than most people, found myself liking to get in trouble—maybe for attention—because both my parents work. So I would get in trouble here and there. As I got older, I started getting into more trouble.

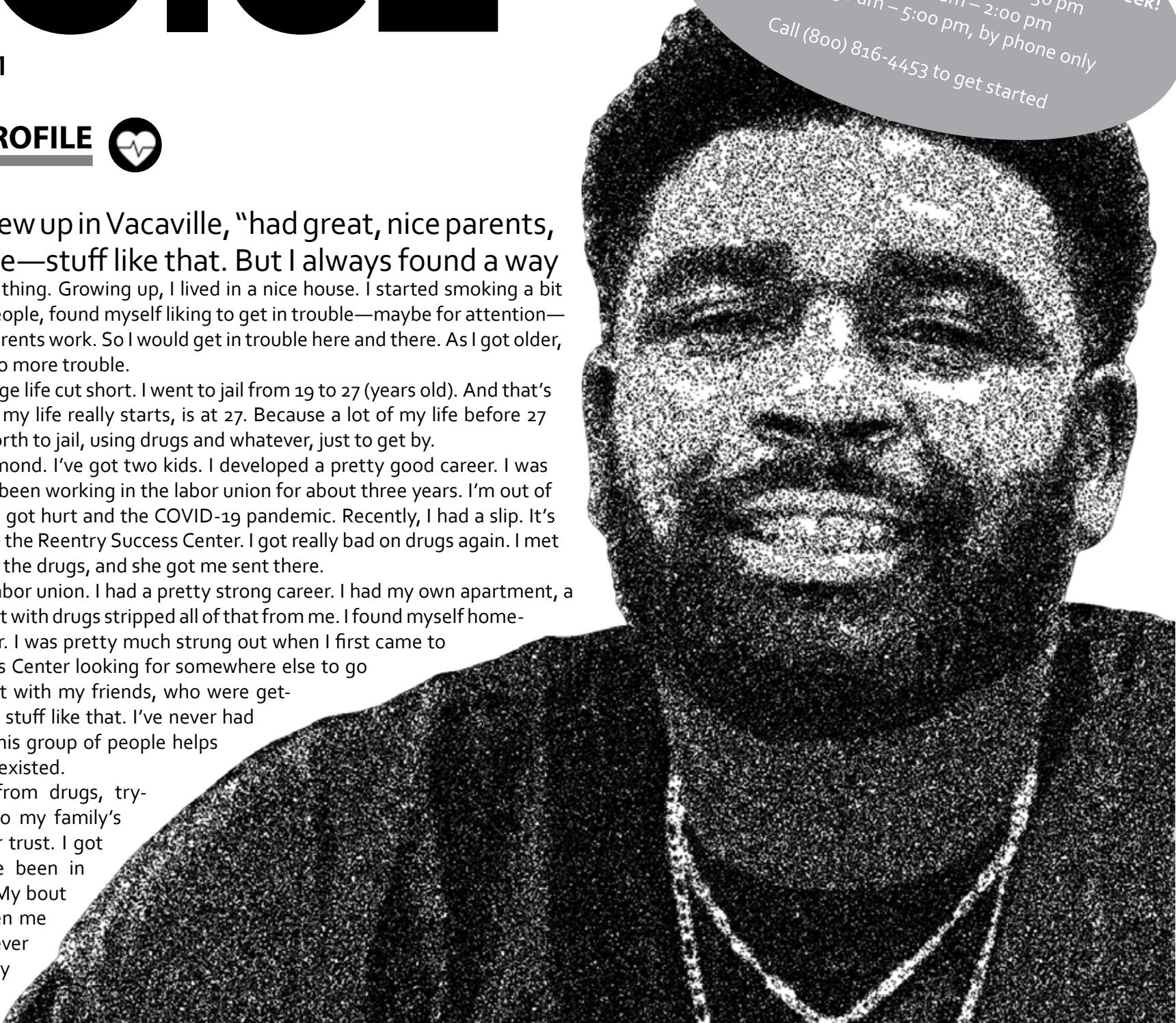
“I found my teenage life cut short. I went to jail from 19 to 27 (years old). And that’s pretty much where my life really starts, is at 27. Because a lot of my life before 27 was just back and forth to jail, using drugs and whatever, just to get by.

“Now I’m in Richmond. I’ve got two kids. I developed a pretty good career. I was in a labor union. I’d been working in the labor union for about three years. I’m out of work now because I got hurt and the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, I had a slip. It’s what brought me to the Reentry Success Center. I got really bad on drugs again. I met with a counselor for the drugs, and she got me sent there.

“I worked in the labor union. I had a pretty strong career. I had my own apartment, a nice vehicle. My bout with drugs stripped all of that from me. I found myself homeless, without my car. I was pretty much strung out when I first came to the Reentry Success Center looking for somewhere else to go besides hanging out with my friends, who were getting high and doing stuff like that. I’ve never had anybody like how this group of people helps out. I didn’t think it existed.

“I’m recovering from drugs, trying to get back into my family’s life and regain their trust. I got two boys, and I’ve been in and out for a year. My bout with drugs has taken me to places that I never thought that they

CONTINUES ON
PAGE 3



The Reentry Success Center is open 7 days a week!
Monday – Friday: 8:30 am – 8:30 pm
Saturday: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Sunday: 8:30 am – 5:00 pm, by phone only
Call (800) 816-4453 to get started

PROGRAMS



Office of Reentry and Justice: Changing Systems

Contra Costa County Office of Reentry and Justice (ORJ) oversees much of the county’s reentry system, including the providers that serve all individuals reentering the community. The office also conducts evaluations and keeps track of emerging issues, new research, and best practices. It has three focus areas: criminal justice, juvenile justice, and social justice. Since July 2020, the ORJ has been permanently moved to the County Probation Department.

Patrice Guillory, previously managing director of The Reentry Network at HealthRIGHT 360 and co-lead of this publication, transitioned to serve as the new director of the ORJ. She sat with us recently for an interview.

When did you start in your role as director of the ORJ?
I started on May 3, 2021.

Have the focus areas of the ORJ changed since the COVID-19 pandemic and the move to the

County Probation Department?

What you listed is still the same. What I would add is that the office is also actively utilizing research and evaluation and promoting best practices. It’s to the end of systems change and systems improvement. I think that’s critically important, so folks understand the ‘why’ behind pushing for evidence-based practices being implemented within our reentry system, or working closely with justice partners, or implementing more diversion programs, or looking at alternatives to incarceration, as they may change their policies and their practices to yield better outcomes. All of those things are to an end, which is systems change to ensure that our overall system operates differently, in a manner that actually creates conditions for healing and personal development and improvement for those who are touching the system.

What are some of the best practices you’ve seen in Contra Costa County that residents of other counties might not know about?

There is a strong emphasis on collaboration in our agency partnerships, as well as partnerships between the public

CONTINUES ON PAGE 2

EDITORS’ NOTES

Dear readers,
You’re bound to notice that there’s one signature below, not two. That’s because my co-lead Patrice has transitioned into a new role, which she discusses further in this issue. What’s also in store for you are stories of change: where change starts, how change happens, and where change resides.

Change is difficult to notice at times, meaning it can often feel like there’s no forward progress, only setback after setback after setback. It’s only after a certain amount of time has passed that we’re able to see how far we’ve come, how much change has been won.

Other times—and we all know this—change is quick: blink and the world is changed. What makes this issue special is that both examples are in the spotlight. Both are important. And both are given their due.

Pat

Pat Mims
Reentry Success Center

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

Alcohol & Other Drugs Services: Advising Hope

Contra Costa County’s Alcohol & Other Drugs Services (AODS) falls under its behavioral health division for a good reason: positive health starts with positive behaviors. Just ask Antonia Fernandez, AB 109 substance use counselor for AODS. Before the pandemic, she was often seen at the Reentry Success Center, checking in with members, listening to concerns, and offering advice.

“Like any other disease, [alcohol and other drugs] is a struggle,” said Fernandez. “The disease of addiction often gets overlooked as a moral judgment, and it’s not a moral judgment. It’s not a moral decision. It’s been proven that it’s a disease. It affects conscious thinking. And, just like cancer, it riddles their life.”

AODS focuses on promoting individual and family responsibility, hope, and self-sufficiency through the following services:

- **Detoxification** involves withdrawal from alcohol, drugs, or both for a set amount of time. The client is given up to five days to adjust to the absence of drugs. The programs offered by the county are supervised 24 hours a day, in a non-medical setting, and

during which clients are closely watched, given information, motivated, and referred to longer-term treatment options.

- **Outpatient Drug-Free Counseling** provides individual, group, and family counseling, as well as education and relapse prevention services. Treatment in this service area includes intake, planning, and actions toward individualized treatment and discharge, in addition to education on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Ongoing support through groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA are recommended.
- **Residential Programs** are 24-hour-a-day, seven days per week settings that require a minimum of 40 hours per week of counseling, supportive activities such as stress management and relapse prevention, or both. Treatment in this service area is similar to that listed for Outpatient Counseling, however ongoing support through groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA is required. Additionally, to ensure continued care, AODS requires formal linkages among the various treatment options and providers.

- **Methadone** is contracted out to Bay Area Addiction Research and Treatment, Inc. (BAART), which provides methadone maintenance and detox services for heroin addiction. Clients receive supervised daily doses of methadone, and they also receive counseling to ensure optimal health.

Fernandez’s role at the Reentry Success Center falls under AODS Specialized Services. AODS contracts court, parole, and probation-mandated substance abuse treatment and intervention services, which include countywide AB 109 efforts.

AODS follows the Criminal Justice Services treatment philosophy and approach to clients, which is “to provide accurate information about the possible consequences of alcohol and other drug misuse; provide clients the opportunity to explore related ideas and feelings in a controlled group setting; and enforce compliance with firm attendance and behavioral standards.”

“I’m really glad to be on the journey, because I understand the population,” said Fernandez. “I’m your recovery cheerleader. I can motivate, I can talk on the recovery side, and I’m willing to meet clients wherever they’re at.”

Look out for a Q&A with AB 109 Substance Use Counselor Antonia Fernandez in an upcoming issue.

ORJ, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

sector and our nonprofit or community-based providers. To do that around criminal justice issues is not always the easiest thing to do, from what I’ve seen in other jurisdictions. Especially during the pandemic, when there was a lot of heightened civil unrest from those who are being murdered by law enforcement, the chasm between law enforcement and criminal justice overall in the community continued to widen.

Within our own community, I think there’s an understanding that all parties involved need each other. And so those collaborations are often very strong.

Are there moments or areas of tension?

Absolutely. But the tensions aren’t so heightened where it breaks the partnerships. Where we’re being challenged with now is to take those partnerships and those collaborations and ensure that we are not just doing pilot projects—where we pat ourselves on the back and say, ‘We did a great job here with this project or this program’—but changing the way we do business around justice initiatives, justice reform, and reentry. We’re all now moving in a direction where we utilize those partnerships to improve our systems rather than just implementing pilots here or there, and not knowing how we can institutionalize that work in the long haul.

Are you partnering in any way with District Attorney Diana Becton’s office?

We don’t have any direct partnerships with DA Becton’s office. They’re certainly looking forward to supporting some of our diversion efforts with young people and also the creation of community courts, an opportunity to participate and help her shape that with a local police departments. One of the things we’re missing right now is more engagement with local law enforcement. Our county agencies and county justice partners have been very involved in a number of different initiatives, whether it’s working together

collaboratively or on what they’ve spearheaded within their own departments. But the missing link is local law enforcement. In working with DA’s office, we’re more able to do some of that partnership with them. I’m hoping that through those avenues, we can bridge that gap.

What are you looking forward to working on in the coming year? What makes you get up in the morning?

I’m building up my office. That’s definitely what gets me up in the morning. The ORJ was one of those pilots for a long time: It was a pilot for two and a half years in the CAO’s office. And then it moved over to the Probation Department, now under the leadership of Chief Esa Ehmen-Krause. She’s new to the county, as well. She came over from Alameda County. As grateful as I am that we’re within the same department, there’s work to be done for our offices to be a little bit more integrated and to share lessons learned and resources, and to have the ability to support the individuals that the Probation Department touches. Moving beyond that, to also expand our capacity. We could do more research and evaluation, more promotion of what those best practices are, and ensure through the resources we have access to that we’re putting out investments in the community and supporting our providers in their implementation of those best practices or those evidence-based practices.

Where do you see the work going? Where would you like to see it go?

I’d like to see us be an agent of systems change. That takes time. What I mean by that is that we change the way we do business. We have a lot of well-intentioned agencies, partners, and programs. And when I say ‘we,’ it’s a collective ‘we,’ it’s a proverbial ‘we,’ not just simply the ORJ.

I don’t think being well intentioned is enough. It’s a part of it. But it’s not enough. That’s why I see our office leading the way for us to be more

intentional about changing the way that we do things, understanding that that’s going to create tension. It may mean adjusting what your norm is, professionally, to better suit where things are going, where things are headed, in order to better support the folks who are being touched by our system. If, ultimately, the goal is to reduce recidivism, to reduce incarceration, to ensure that folks have what they need and that they don’t touch the system to begin with, then that requires that we operate differently. That requires us to be more integrated in our work: sharing data and information, and having shared responsibility when it comes to the communities that we’re serving.

One thing our community is really great about is that we love to collaborate, we love to partner, and often we are in agreement with certain values and principles. How we implement those principles in a more pragmatic way is where we often get lost. I’m hoping that my office can help in supporting and figuring that out.

Is there anything else you’d like to add?

Even though the ORJ is positioned high up there—by ‘high up there,’ I mean further and further away from the justice-involved person or the family member who is trying to figure out what to do with their nephew, son, or daughter that’s returning home—just know that the changes we’re seeking to make and the investments we’re seeking to make are so that there is an opportunity for healing and restoration. That’s the goal here. It’s not just simply to be about elevating best practices and evaluations, and all those good things. Those are all tools to help us assess whether or not what we’re doing is on track to creating those kinds of conditions for everyday people. It is to gauge whether or not people can come home. Or people can get reconnected with their families. Or that young people don’t touch the system at all—that they have what they need. That there’s healing, there’s restoration, and ultimately lives and individuals are thriving. That’s the goal.

CARLTON, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE would take me. Being able to come to the Center helps. So does being able to pop up on a Zoom video.

“When I first came to the Center, I was still using drugs, and I was trying to get into an inpatient program. With their help, I was able to get into an inpatient program. I first came in February, and I was seeking drugs. They pointed me to the direction I had to go, and I just followed up.

“I went to the inpatient program. And once I left the inpatient program, I still wanted to use drugs, but the Reentry Success Center gave me somewhere to go, and somewhere to be accountable to, and somebody to see my face every day to be, like, ‘He’s still doing the right thing.’ I’ve been drug-free since March 1.

“I had lost the respect of pretty much a lot of the people I had around me. I wasn’t able to see my kids by myself anymore. My kids used to come over to my house. I was taking care of my kids. Then it got to the point where I was no longer seeing my kids on my own. Somebody wanted to watch me, to make sure I wasn’t doing anything, and to correct and make sure I didn’t have drugs around.

“My family stopped talking to me. I basically stopped paying bills. I lost my truck—I still don’t know where that truck is. (Laughs.) It was a pretty nice truck. I had a 2014 Dodge Ram. I just—boom. My mind was starting to go, and I was, like, I don’t want to lose anything else. I don’t want to lose my kids fully. I don’t want to lose the respect of everybody I have around me. It’s time for me to shape up.

“At the program, I learned that I don’t want to just rush back into my kid’s life, because that’s what I normally do. I get clean for a little bit. ‘Hey, I’m here. I’m back. I’m sorry.’ And then a mishap happens. I might relapse, or whatever. Then, I’m back out again. So, for me, I’ve moved into this SLE (Sober Living Environment), instead of moving directly back home.

That way I can slowly introduce myself back into their life and be, like, ‘Hey, I’m here to stay. I’m not I’m not going anywhere.’

“I’m slowly building it. I can see the trust coming back. My kids ask for me every day now. They don’t look afraid to be around me. Their mom’s not afraid to leave them with me. Every relationship that I have is slowly starting to get stronger. I don’t want to lose that. The feeling that I have now is what I lost, and it’s what made me seek recovery.

“I don’t have any huge goals at this point in time. I don’t want to take on too much. I’m fairly new in recovery, and I don’t want to overwhelm myself. Right now, the only goals I have is to seek to be around healthy people. Help out in the community where I can help out. Continue to rebuild my relationship with my kids. And just be a positive person.

I have started school. I want to change my career. I got into a car accident while I was at work, and I don’t know if I’ll be able to do the same kind of work that I used to do. My goal is to just get basic education. Longer term, maybe next year, I want to go back to doing industrial safety or something to do with construction. I can still stay in the same field and keep the knowledge that I’ve developed from the labor union, but use it

in a different aspect from, you know, banging a hammer all day.

“Right now, my goal is to get back into school, get my brain back to functioning like normal, and just be productive every day. I want to be productive. I want to be doing something positive every day.

“Like I said, I’ve been on probation and stuff like that most of my life, and I’ve never gotten out like this. When I when I first got out, I was, like, ‘I don’t want to do this no more.’ I went to probation. I was, like, ‘Hey, can you help me with this?’ And they were, like, ‘Here’s a piece of paper. Go do it yourself.’

“At the Center, they help you out with your health insurance. They help you to start school. They gave me a laptop. They’ve got other like community-involved activities that you can get into, like cleaning up the park, and stuff like that. The group setting where you have a space where nobody is judging you. You can lay out how you feel. They’re teaching communication skills, like how to talk about things when you’re angry.

“I didn’t learn that stuff, so I didn’t know how to verbally talk to people, how to communicate that I’m angry, or how to de-escalate a confrontation. My only way to deal with stuff was, like, ‘Okay, I’m cool, I’m about to get high.’ But, like I said, I’ve been able to actually sit down, learn something, and just come to class. It’s a different space other than hanging out.

“If I had to choose one word to describe myself, I would say resilient. This isn’t the first time that I’ve been down. But this is the first time that I was

down and I was, like, ‘Somebody help me.’ This time I asked and I got it. When I first came out here, to Richmond, I had never worked. I didn’t know what that was.

“In Richmond, I’ve learned what work ethic is. I learned a career. I learned how to be a father. I learned how to pay bills. I learned how to go to the doctor. There was just things I just didn’t know in life.

And I’ve learned them.

“I’ve learned where to seek help. I’ve also learned that you can ask for help, and that there are people out there that will help you, cuz, man, I’ve been down. I’ve been down so many times. I asked and I received it, and it feels good.

“At the Reentry Success Center, every time I’ve asked for help, it’s always been, ‘Yes, I’ll see what I can do.’ I’ve never experienced that. Like I said, I grew up with pretty good parents. My grandparents were always helpful and stuff, but I chose to do different things.

“They told me, ‘We’re not gonna give you a helping hand to destroy yourself. If you’re gonna destroy yourself, destroy yourself on your own.’ So, when the time came to pick myself up, I wanted to do that on my own. I reached out to my family, but was, like, ‘This is hard.’ That’s what made me want to stop. I could see that I was hurting them. I was hurting them by my drug use. At the same time, it was a big lesson to see that I can stand on my own.

“What’s been most helpful is to celebrate small wins, take things day by day. I’ve learned a little bit of planning. I journal. I schedule now, to show up on time. I no longer have to feed my addiction before I can be available to somebody. Just taking things step by step, and doing the next right

thing. That’s pretty much the biggest thing that I’ve learned.

“My advice to others is not to try to do things too fast. It felt like I was in a race when I got out of jail. You want to catch up, so you do things a lot faster, you try to cut corners, you want a job, you want a house. You want all those things super fast, because everybody else has them.

“If you take things slow, and you ask for the proper help, and you go about things the proper way, nobody can take those things from you. Just trusting the process. It’s a process to get out. You’re not just going to boom, boom, boom, right on your feet. You don’t want to burn yourself out trying to go too fast. Take your time.”

HOW TO

Use the New Reentry Network Mobile App

The Reentry Network at HealthRIGHT 360 released a new, free resource for mobile phone users. The resource, or “app,” includes a short introduction video with useful tips, reentry resources throughout the State of California, contact information for county probation departments, and many more videos focusing on recovery and success.



1. Select to watch the introduction video.
2. Select to locate reentry programs, from Alameda County to Contra Costa County to Santa Clara County.
3. Select to locate addresses and phone numbers of probation departments across California.
4. Select to watch videos focusing on everything from reentry planning to wellness and recovery to financial education.

Browse the app (or scan the QR Code on the back page): <https://reentrynetwork.glideapp.io>

EVENTS

MONDAYS (ONGOING)

Women’s Group

5:30-7:30pm, a safe space open to women for engaging conversations related to everyday life, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 819 7876 0844, Passcode: 087117)

TUESDAYS (ONGOING)

Forward Thinking Men’s Group

5:30-7:30pm, open to men for decompression and sharing of challenges, barriers, achievements, and everyday events, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 838 3610 6614, Passcode: 537151)

WEDNESDAYS (ONGOING)

Restorative Practices: Arts Class

5:30-7:30pm, open to community, members, and drop-ins, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 853 0178 5241, Passcode: 144468)

THURSDAYS (ONGOING)

Restorative Circles

5:30-7:30pm, open to community, members, and drop-ins, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 813 1747 0885, Passcode: 370520)

OTHER

Transportation Services

8:30am-8:00pm, Monday-Friday, available for free to all justice-impacted members in Contra Costa County for medical appointments, legal appointments, COVID-19 testing, probation services, job interviews, and more; call (510) 679-2122 for more information; people who are in custody and awaiting release from county jail, please connect to this service through the Game Change for Success (GPS) program

Mobile Resource App

Housing assistance, employment, education, vocational training, legal services, recovery support, and family support services made accessible directly on a smartphone, through the following QR Code:



Reentry Network App

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

“Untitled,” by d.c.

I want to believe
that one day
I’m going to be able
to say
“I made it”

I will smile
everytime
I look into the mirror
and I will embrace
my flaws and mistakes
that make me
me.

I will wake up
every morning
and prepare breakfast
for myself
and my scars
will remind me
how strong I’ve always been.

Because
If you really want to be happy
fall in love with yourself, dear
and never
let your happiness rely on others.
And then
happiness will find you.
I promise.

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

					2			7
7		2		8		5	1	6
						8		2
		5	9	1	3	6	8	4
6								1
4	1	8	6	2	7	3		
5		4						
1	6	3		4		2		5
9			2					

© 2019 KrazyDad.com

ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS ISSUE

8	1	4	2	5	3	7	6	9
9	7	2	6	8	1	3	5	4
6	3	5	4	9	7	8	1	2
4	5	8	9	7	6	1	2	3
1	2	9	5	3	8	4	7	6
7	6	3	1	4	2	9	8	5
5	4	1	7	2	9	6	3	8
2	8	6	3	1	4	5	9	7
3	9	7	8	6	5	2	4	1

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