# Contra Costa Reentry

# CICE

Winter 2017

# REENTRY PROFILE

Jason Bell is the Regional Director for Project Rebound at San Francisco State University. He reflects on how he used education to rebound to success: "After spending all of my 20s in the California prison system, I learned that there is not much correction in the California Department of Corrections. I served my time

in the 1990s, and discussions around the reintegration of former inmates were not as common back then as they are now. I had to figure out what to do with all of the years I was facing by myself, and I had many questions and concerns. I realized that just wanting to spend my years being productive was not enough. I had to figure out how to make my dreams come true in a place that did not encourage productive behavior and practice.

"After investigating the limited resources available to incarcerated students seeking higher education, I learned that I was eligible for outof-state programs, such as a correspondence program at Ohio University. With the help of supportive family members and the expert guidance from Project Rebound at San Francisco State University, I was able to use my time wisely. I realized I was afraid of higher education, but I also learned that there was so much I didn't know

about education. Once I found my direction in college, the process of learning turned out to be a huge benefit to my personal development.

"Because of my drive to learn, I have risen to heights that I never could have imagined. I owe much of my success to my support networks. Now, I

am part of a team that is a living example of what successful reintegration looks like in a college setting. I invite you to write to me if you want to learn more information about Project Rebound and how we can help you get on a track to a college education."

Project Rebound is located inside the Cesar Chavez Student Center, 1650 Holloway Avenue, T-138, San Francisco, CA 94132



# **EDITORS' NOTES**

Our second issue comes to you after many discussions in our team. We ran into some challenges after our first issue, and have come up with a few changes that we think will better serve you.

The most important change is that our newsletter will be printed quarterly, instead of monthly. We also added more pages, so we can deliver you useful information the way we had originally envisioned it—as a newspaper.

Our goal at the Reentry Success Center and the Reentry Network remains the same. We seek to end incarceration, addiction, homelessness, and hopelessness. We also look forward to supporting your journey towards independence. In this spirit, we are excited to bring you stories of resilience and success, and the many programs available to you both while you're incarcerated and when you reenter society.

# A POSITIVE SPIRIT FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The timing for our second issue is not a coincidence. The holidays are here. Surviving the season while locked up can be very difficult. You may find yourself comparing your life and your decisions to those of some imaginary person. You may be asking, "Why can't that be me?" "Why is everyone so much happier than I am?"

Many people make similar comparisons at some point in their life. They are not healthy.

There are two things we invite you to try this holiday season. The first is to seek out and find supportive people. They are everywhere, and often where you least expect them. The second is to begin a new tradition. Try coming up with something new. It can be simple. For example, consider taking a few extra seconds to appreciate what you have. You have the ability to see and understand these words, and the ability to put them to use. New traditions don't have to be complicated.

For our spring issue, we want to hear from you. What new tradition did you try? What comes to mind when you hear the word, spring? Please write to us at our addresses, located at the bottom of the back page. We look forward to hearing from you.

# REENTRY PROFILE



Michelle C. reflects on her journey—towards resilience: "Growing up I never dreamed that my path would include a stint in the Central California Rehabilitation and Corrections facility for women. "Felon" was a word that belonged in a world that was not mine. I had aspirations, dreams, and potential. I had an education, was successful in my career, and had everything that most people only dream of. All that was missing was... well maybe another drink. Voila! From Heaven to Hell in an instant. That "one last drink" led me straight down the path to hell, and I find myself now a formerly incarcerated felon: I'm a reentry story. I was sentenced to 16 months. I did about half of that. I was fortunate. It could have been worse.

"True, I'm still trying to find my way back from that 57th level of Hell. Prison isn't something you can adequately explain to someone who has never been there. The violence, the racism, the loss of choice, the endless boredom, the squalid conditions, the monotony of 672 empty hours in every month. But what most people fail to fully appreciate, significantly, is that being released from prison doesn't end the punishment. Really, it's just beginning.

"In many states, felons can't vote, can't own a gun, can't leave the state, have difficulty getting a passport or foreign visa, are limited in employment by a criminal background check, have difficulty finding housing and have probably lost most, if not all, of their personal belongings and

supportive relationships. I didn't even have a pair of socks to my name on the day I was released. None of my so-called friends would return my phone calls. I was homeless, broke, traumatized, and alone.

"I have a roof over my head, clothes on my back, and I've been given the opportunity to take classes to help me into a new career. I still have bad days, but, thankfully, I'm not wearing handcuffs or eating ramen. Every day the sun comes up is a good day."

"I'd done my time, I thought, addressed my failings, and admitted my mistakes. It was time to rebuild. How hard could it be: Just start over, right? Yet, nothing is the same as it was. The abundant opportunities I had before I was incarcerated have vanished CONTINUES ON PAGE 3

# **Goodwill of the Greater East Bay: Bridging People** to Their Purpose

"Fifteen years ago, I remember coming home from being incarcerated, without a skill or a trade," says Jerry Jones. "A job with a career is what I want most. That represents opportunity. That's huge for me."

Goodwill of the Greater East Bay, and other organizations throughout Contra Costa County, provided Jerry the job training he needed in order to avoid being "caught in the revolving door of recidivism again." He is now on a path to stability and success.

Since it was founded in 1919, Goodwill has been on a mission "to turn donations into jobs—offering a lifetime of purpose and opportunity." According to the organization's website, "Everyone has the opportunity to discover their full potential and

purpose, empowering them to reach financial independence and become productive members of our community."

> "Everyone has the opportunity to discover their full potential and purpose...and become productive members of our community."

When the "Bridges to Work" bill, called Assembly Bill 109, become state law in 2011, Goodwill of the Greater East Bay jumped at the opportunity to connect formerly incarcerated men and women

living in Contra Costa County with steady employment.

Assembly Bill 109 transferred responsibility for supervising certain felony offenders and state prison parolees to county jails and probation officers. The bill provides state money to pay for vital services and supports for formerly incarcerated men and women looking to make a fresh start.

Studies have shown that formerly incarcerated men and women who receive some type of training have lower chances of recidivism, or relapse. Goodwill programs in Forklift Certification and Food Handling Certification, and other trainings, offer hope that postive change and success are possible.

"Goodwill changed my life," says Jones, who now serves as an instructor in Goodwill's Bridges to Work Lab. He adds that his job gives him "the chance to impact those that are returning to society just as I did years ago."

# PROGRAMS (



# Men and Women of **Purpose: Guiding Transitions**

Inside a single-story building across the street from Nicholl Park in Richmond is Men and Women of Purpose, a nonprofit organization that serves those making the transition from jail back into the community. Staffed by people who have gone through similar life journeys, they build relationships with people when they are incarcerated. They will meet anyone who completes an inmate

request for them at West County Detention Facility, Marsh Creek Facility, and Martinez Detention Facility.

Men and Women of Purpose also provides assistance on getting a California ID, driver's license, and Social Security card. They are available to help with completing job and college applications. For formerly incarcerated residents facing barriers to securing housing and employment, Men and Women of Purpose can ease the process to coming back home.

If you're in jail, send an inmate request, asking for Men and Women of Purpose. If you are at the Adult School, ask for Janna and request for her to connect you to Men and Women of Purpose.

If you're reentering, please contact Fred at 510-768-8004 or write him at 2006 A Street, Suite 227, Antioch, CA 94509. Men and Women of Purpose looks forward to supporting you getting on track to achieving the positive and joyful life you want to live.

# PROGRAMS (5)



# **Transitions Medical Clinic Program: Improving Healthier Lifestyles**

Contra Costa Health Services has a communitybased Transitions Medical Clinic Program that provides short-term care for formerly incarcerated men and women who want to live healthy and free. The program offers a medical home with experienced and culturally sensitive staff, known as Reentry Health Conductors.

enrollment and patient navigation. They also provide links to community resources. Conductors lead the REMEDY Support Group, which teaches returning residents how to deal with everyday stress and how incarceration affects the mind, body, and spirit.

Transitions Medical Clinic Program runs out of East Contra Costa County every fourth Tuesday at Pittsburg Health Center, 2311 Loveridge Road, Pittsburg, and out of West Contra Costa County every first and third Thursday at West County Health Center, 13601 San Pablo Avenue, San





# **Get Out the Vote**

In these times, it's more important than ever to vote and have your voice heard.

Registering to vote and voting are especially important for those in our community who are spending time in jail or who have done time in prison. Your voice is often unheard. But your views on everything from local law enforcement to state funds for reentry are needed and valued.

History has shown that Black and brown people,

especially those with a criminal history, have often been excluded from voting. As a result, laws have been passed that increase incarceration, segregation, and inequality. All that could change with your vote.

Recent elections have been won by razor-thin margins. Ten or twenty votes can decide the fate of local initiatives, city council races, and even who gets elected into the White House. All that and more could change, with your vote.

# A FEW THINGS TO KNOW:

- U.S. citizens currently serving a felony jail sentence or misdemeanor sentence in county jail can register to vote and vote. You can also register and vote while on probation, supervision or awaiting trial, or if homeless. Polls open at 7 am and close at 8 pm on election days.
- If you are in jail, you are entitled to receive a voter registration card if you are eligible to vote. You can register to vote up to 15 days before an upcoming election.
- When you are employed, you are protected by state law to two hours of paid time off to vote. Polls open at 7 am and close at 8 pm on election days.
- If you are already registered to vote, but you don't know your polling place, you can always go to another polling place and receive what's called a provisional ballot. Your vote will be counted. It will just be delayed.



#### **CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE**

behind a wall of stigma and bureaucracy. For a while, it seemed hopeless.

"Fortunately, there are resources available to people who are embarking upon reentry. The State of California has a well-funded program called AB 109. The program is designed to alleviate the burden on parole departments, instead offering the low-level offender the opportunity for community-based supervision effectively, structured probation. The program - if the ex-felon chooses to take advantage of it – provides transitional housing support, access to mental health professionals, assistance finding employment or vocational training, and even more. Most importantly, it provides support from trained professionals who care and understand.

"Essentially, if you want help, it's available. How much support you receive depends on how much you are willing to ask for. Today, I'm almost four months post-incarceration. Yes, I'm still deeply traumatized. But I get up every day and am grateful that at least I woke up free. At least I have some choices now. I have a roof over my head, clothes on my back, and I've been given the opportunity to take classes to help me into a new career. I still have bad days, but, thankfully, I'm not wearing handcuffs or eating ramen. Every day the sun comes up is a good day.

"I may be an ex-felon. But I'm still me. And I will never admit defeat. I'll learn from my mistakes, take my lumps like a big girl, and move on. Resilience. With the help of the reentry professionals assigned to my case - who haven't let me down yet in my quest – I'm moving on. They are holding the light at the end of the tunnel, and I'm so blessed."



# **EVENTS**

#### **MONDAYS (ONGOING)**

# Bridges to Work

9-11am, job-readiness services, open to men and women in East and Central County, Goodwill Industries, 3350 Clayton Road, Suite 100, Concord

#### **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

# **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

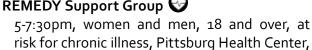
# FIRST & THIRD FRIDAY (ONGOING)

# 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)



2311 Loveridge Road, Pittsburg

# **EXPLORATIONS**

We want to promote your artwork, photography, and poetry. Please write us at info@reentrysuccess. org. Be sure to include "Reentry Newsletter Explorations" in the subject line. You can also send us regular mail. Our addresses are written below.

#### **POETRY**

A poem by Maya Angelou

#### **HUMAN FAMILY**

I note the obvious differences in the human family. Some of us are serious, some thrive on comedy.

Some declare their lives are lived as true profundity, and others claim they really live the real reality.

The variety of our skin tones can confuse, bemuse, delight, brown and pink and beige and purple, tan and blue and white.

I've sailed upon the seven seas and stopped in every land, I've seen the wonders of the world not yet one common man.

I know ten thousand women called Jane and Mary Jane, but I've not seen any two who really were the same.

Mirror twins are different although their features jibe, and lovers think quite different thoughts while lying side by side.

We love and lose in China, we weep on England's moors, and laugh and moan in Guinea, and thrive on Spanish shores.

We seek success in Finland, are born and die in Maine. In minor ways we differ, in major we're the same.

I note the obvious differences between each sort and type, but we are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike.

We are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike.

We are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike.

# **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**

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#### ANSWERS TO AUGUST 2017 ISSUE

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

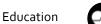
Reentry Success Center 912 Macdonald Avenue Richmond, CA 94801 reentrysuccess.org

Reentry Network at HealthRight 360 (HR360) 5119 Lone Tree Way Antioch, CA 94531 healthRIGHT36o.org















Financial

Employment



