

# VOICE

Issue 22 / 2024

## REENTRY PROFILE

Kavon went through the Alpha program, an eight-week program that covers everything from housing assistance to employment assistance to education and public benefits. At the ceremony marking the end of the program, Kavon's daughter Kiana was in the audience. So was her sponsor, Nicole.

"My name is Kayvon, and I'm 54 years old. I'm a mother of one and a grandmother of two. I was born in New Orleans and raised in San Francisco. The highest education I got was a GED and some college. I worked for San Francisco General Hospital for several years and then I worked at Laguna Honda Hospital, with patients who had dementia. I worked in numerous places throughout San Francisco General Hospital. I worked in the emergency room. I worked in a psychiatric ward, as well. I worked in many different places throughout the City and County [of San Francisco]. I have experience behind me. I stopped working for San Francisco General Hospital due to some mental [health] problems. But when I go back into the workforce, I'm going to establish a new scenery for myself.

"I started school at Contra Costa Community College in San Pablo. It's going good. It's a little challenging, but it's just the beginning. There's a lot of help there at Contra Cost College, with tutoring and everything like that. I'm just getting back into the scene, so I have to get some practice [in].

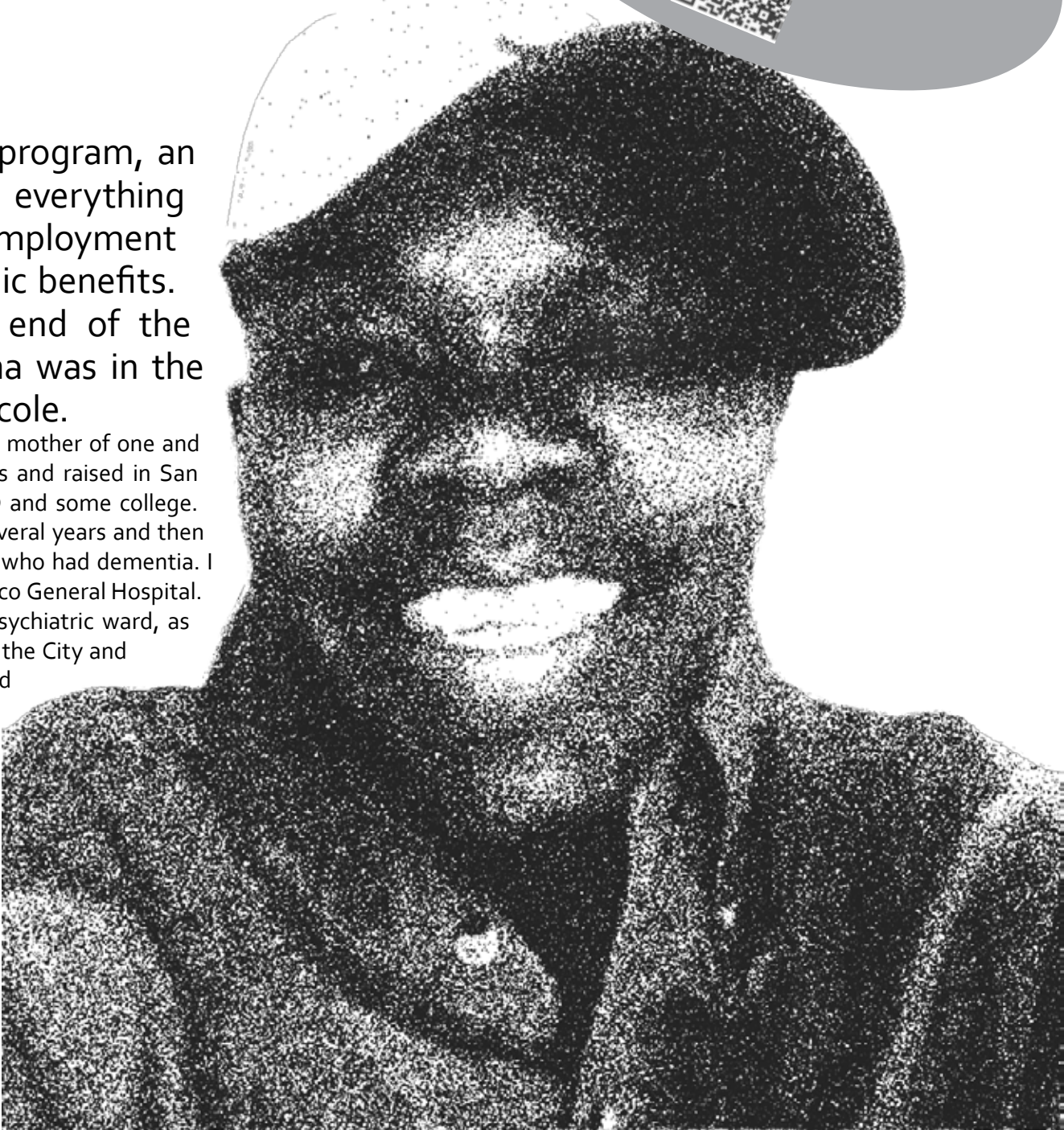
"I have motivation. I want to thrive and do more with myself. Right now, I'm on a fixed income and I don't want to stay at that point. I want to do more in my life. I'm just not doing anything with myself, every day, with my mental challenges. I don't want to be stuck at home. I want to still try to do something to help others, as well as help myself.

"My family keeps me motivated—my family and God. Also, everyday prayer; people, in general. I have a sponsor. I am a recovering addict. Going to meetings, interacting with other people in the same predicament that I'm in. School. That's why I wanted to go to school, so I could try to do something and get out the house. I suffer from PTSD. I got all these traits from working at San Francisco General Hospital, in dementia, and with city and county, and dealing with them all. It's challenging for me, but I take it one day at a time.

"I'm back in school for my own sanity. Staying in the house is not good. It's like I isolate. I have a means of isolating, and I can't do that, but always sitting there and isolating and everything. So with me going to school, it's just better for me.

"Everyone there is very nice and very helpful. There's a lot of different organizations that they got going on there at the school. Any time I need any help or anything like that, I have resources—a lot of resources that I can go and get help from. I struggle with English. I'm taking all these classes in English, and I have someone that I can go to and get help so I can strive better with my studies.

"My goal is the SPIRIT Program. The classes that I'm taking right **CONTINUES ON PAGE 2**



Check out our listing of support services accessible on a smartphone. Simply point your phone's camera on this QR Code:



## HOW TO

### Reset Expectations

A few issues ago, we had come up with the idea to make space for you, our readers, to send us the names of loved ones who passed away during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our purpose was to ensure our community is given the opportunity to spotlight the people who matter and who might not have been given the respect they truly deserved.

We had committed to listing their names and any related art or photos in Issue 21. But that issue came and went, because we didn't receive the submissions we had expected. So, lesson learned: now might not be the right time for remembrances. What now might be an opportunity for is to honor individuals who mean the world to us *and* who are still with us. Who are they? Why do they mean the world to you? Share your stories with us.

We aspire to keep this newspaper different from the others you read. We want it to *feel* alive. One of the ways to ensure it does is to keep the lines of communication open with you, our readers. Submit your stories by inmate request through the Adult School Game Plan for Success. Or write us at one of the addresses on the back of this issue.

## EDITORS' NOTES

Dear readers, Community. Collaboration. Connection. Each one matters, and all of them together matter even more. Each and every story in each and every issue of this newspaper lifts up the importance of these three qualities. They are what make us human, and they are what make living less about survival and more about thriving. We simply can't be resilient without putting them to good use.

In this issue, we share stories that, as one county partner said, bring hope and prove that recovery is real. We add to that sentiment that successful reentry is not only real, it's achievable and within reach. As our stories spotlight, all journeys require commitment, and education, and leadership. This last quality, leadership, isn't something that only a few possess—it's in all of us.

  
Charmaine Hoggatt  
The Reentry Network

  
Pat Mims  
Reentry Success Center

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

**KAVON, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE**  
now lead up to getting into the SPIRIT program. The program empowers you to work with other people that go through the same thing that you have been going through in your life, and they get you ready for that type of work. I found out about it through Antonia [Fernandez, AB 109 substance use counselor for Contra Costa County’s Alcohol & Other Drugs Services]. All classes are at Contra Cost College, but they’re so full. I’m just taking some classes right now: some English classes, some multicultural classes, and counseling skills classes just to get ready for the program.

“What’s been helpful is when you have family behind you and you have someone to lean on. Also, when you just have faith in yourself. I just want to do more for myself and not give up. It’s hard just to get back out there, especially in my age. Actually, I see a lot of other people older than me that’s going to school. But, like I said, I do it day by day. The only thing I can do is just do it day by day, and it’s a little bit challenging, but I’m not going to give up.

“What motivates me is self-discipline. It’s very hard to keep doing something. It’s self-discipline because that’s the everyday thing that I have to do. I have to get up in the morning, pray in the morning, get ready to go out into this world every day, deal with people every day, know how to talk

to people every day, deal with different personalities every day. That’s challenging, you know what I’m saying? Praying every day that I wake up and I can come back home and safe.

**What is dementia?**

According to health care provider Kaiser Permanente, dementia is a loss of mental skills that affects daily life. It can cause problems with memory, problem-solving, and learning. It can also cause problems with thinking and planning.

Dementia usually gets worse over time. How quickly it gets worse is different for each person. Some people stay the same for years, while other lose skills quickly. Chances of having dementia rise as you get older. But this doesn’t mean everyone will get it.

Care for someone who has dementia changes over time. Health professionals are tasked with creating a safe environment that makes the tasks of daily living easier.

“The advice I would give is: Ahead. No, go ahead. Never give up. Just keep going. Even though challenges come up to push you back, keep going. And it’s hard because it’s like a cloud,

and all you got to do is just fight through that cloud and keep in stride. You can get through it—you can get through that cloud. You can make it, and you could do anything. I’m saying the cloud could be really thick and stuff. It depends. Pray every day that you can make it. Maybe one day you won’t get up and go the next day, get up and go and just say, ‘Dang.’

“That’s one thing that I try to do with reentry [at Alpha]. I only missed one day, but I had a doctor’s appointment and got excused for it. The last time I went through [Alpha], I missed several days because I was in and out from being on the streets, interacting with people I shouldn’t have been interacting with—drugs and drinking and everything like that. This time, I was just full clean. It’s a good feeling that I did go through it just clean. Nothing is keeping me back. Nothing’s stopping me from getting up every morning, going there.

“Never give up. Always have a plan. If you have one plan, have another plan. Keep your head up. Just keep moving forward. Always have ace in a hole. Always have reach out to people. Never give up. Stay positive. Always stay positive. We all fail, but we still have to get back up. So, just get back up, pat yourself off, pat yourself on the back, get back up and start all over again. Because, trust me, I have started all over again. Many times.”



**HOW TO** 

**Bounce Back and Get Your Life on Track**

*This article originally ran in Issue 3 (Spring 2018). Kavon’s reentry profile invited us to revisit our archives and reprint these ideas, which are as important as ever six years later.*

Preparing for release from jail or prison can stir up a lot of emotions. Having a fresh start may offer feelings of relief, but it can also stir up fear and anxiety about returning to tough circumstances, such as family life, finding work, finding safe housing, and staying clean and sober.

After release, it can be tempting to return to old behaviors that were not always positive—they were just enough to get by. You may be asking, “How can someone like me overcome these challenges?”

Here are some ideas to help get you started, which you can repeat as often as you need them.

**STAY POSITIVE, FIND HOPE, AND BELIEVE IN YOURSELF**

When you change your thoughts, you change your life. Though this alone won’t solve all your problems, it is important. By staying positive about the changes you can make (despite past mistakes) and being hopeful about the future, you can begin to focus on your inner strength to overcome such challenges. Believe in yourself. Embrace the idea that you are someone who is alive and worthy of love. You have to know deep down that you are capable of succeeding and, with a little help, can conquer the difficulties you may face at home and achieve the healthy life you want to live.

**CREATE A GOAL**

Who are you? Who do you want to be? Who are you becoming? What do you want to achieve in your life? Why are those things important to you? What’s most important to you?

Perhaps you always had some idea of who you

wanted to be, but just never had a chance to work toward it. Perhaps you never thought about who you’d become because you were just trying to get by. What better time than now to imagine what the next phase of your life could be, and moving towards your goal.

**FIND SUPPORT AND STAY CONNECTED**

Thinking positively and letting go of old patterns in your life is hard work. It requires courage and commitment. Once you make the effort, you’ll want to find people who will support you. Consider finding people who could mentor and encourage you, and help you get connected to the resources you need to reach your goal.

*Thinking positively and letting go of old patterns require courage and commitment.*

Your support system doesn’t have to be limited to friends and family, although that’s a great place to start. You can also find support in local Twelve Step programs (such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous), the faith community, and organizations that offer reentry services. If you need help building a positive support system, please write to us and we’ll help you find positive connections to people in the community who are open to supporting you.

Once you find your support, it’s important to stay connected. When you make progress—by working again, having your own place, and having everything in your life feeling upbeat—stay connected. When your life appears to be turning for the worst, stay connected. Having a strong support system means you’ll increase your chances of going through life feeling less alone

and disconnected from the rest of the world. We all have trials we go through, and none of us can overcome them alone. Be honest with yourself about the help you need, and stay connected.

**FOLLOW UP AND FOLLOW THROUGH**

Your word is your bond. It rings true in the streets and in the board room. It requires integrity. What is integrity? Integrity is defined as “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.” It’s the quality of being honest.

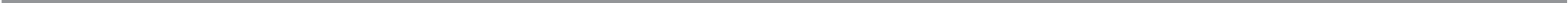
It’s not enough to commit to doing something, only to later not follow through with it. If you accept a job and not show up to work without calling in, it’s dishonest and lacking in integrity. You may be asking, “What if I really can’t do the job or follow through on the commitments I once thought I could do?”

Being honest with yourself and others, and being open to talking about any changes you may be experiencing, is a good way of addressing what you can and cannot do. It’s called knowing your limits. We all have them. The key to having and keeping your integrity is by following through with what you say you’ll do. If you can’t do it, be honest by following up and letting others know your limitations.

**TAKE IT ONE DAY AT A TIME**

Life after jail or prison will have its ups and downs. The important thing to remember is to take it one day at a time. If that seems too difficult, take things one step at a time. Change takes time.

Did you know it takes at least 21 days of consistently doing a new thing in order to replace an old habit? In some cases, the time is even longer. Consider viewing your life as a marathon. You have to pace yourself and be consistent, in order to get to the finish line. You may come across some hurdles here and there, and that’s okay. You can overcome them. You may also encounter successes along the way, and that’s okay too. Stay encouraged and keep moving forward.



# Contra Costa College: Teeming with Spirit

At least four AC Transit lines—71, 72, 74, and 76—drop passengers off at Contra Costa College’s brick-studded central hub, which include the college’s Student Services building, Administration building, cafeteria, bookstore, Fireside Hall, and classrooms. The grounds are well-maintained, clean, and soothing—a perfect environment for the college’s over 7,000 socioeconomically-diverse students, most of whom are Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Since it opened in 1949, just after the wartime shipbuilding boom that brought thousands of Black families to the area, Contra Costa College has set out to work from a bold set of values. One of those is that “all individuals have inherent worth and dignity and are entitled to develop their full potential.” Another is that the college “is an integral part of the greater community and serves as a model of excellence, providing education to help its students fulfill their dreams.” Yet another is that “it maintains that its students will enjoy an improved quality of life, that communities will prosper economically and socially, and that families and neighborhoods will be strengthened when residents share a commitment to lifelong learning.”

Students enrolled in Contra Costa College have 125 different degrees and certificates to choose from, in subjects as varied as African American Studies, Automotive Services, Computer Science, Culinary Arts, and Political Science. At the time of this issue’s publication, the college also offers free tuition for full-time students for two academic years and offers resources to justice-impacted individuals who want to continue with their education. The college’s key partners in the county are the Reentry Success Center and the Safe Return Project, both located in Richmond.

One of Contra Costa College’s accredited programs is the SPIRIT Program. SPIRIT, short for Service Provider Individualized Recovery Intensive Training, is a 9-unit course taught in collaboration with Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services.

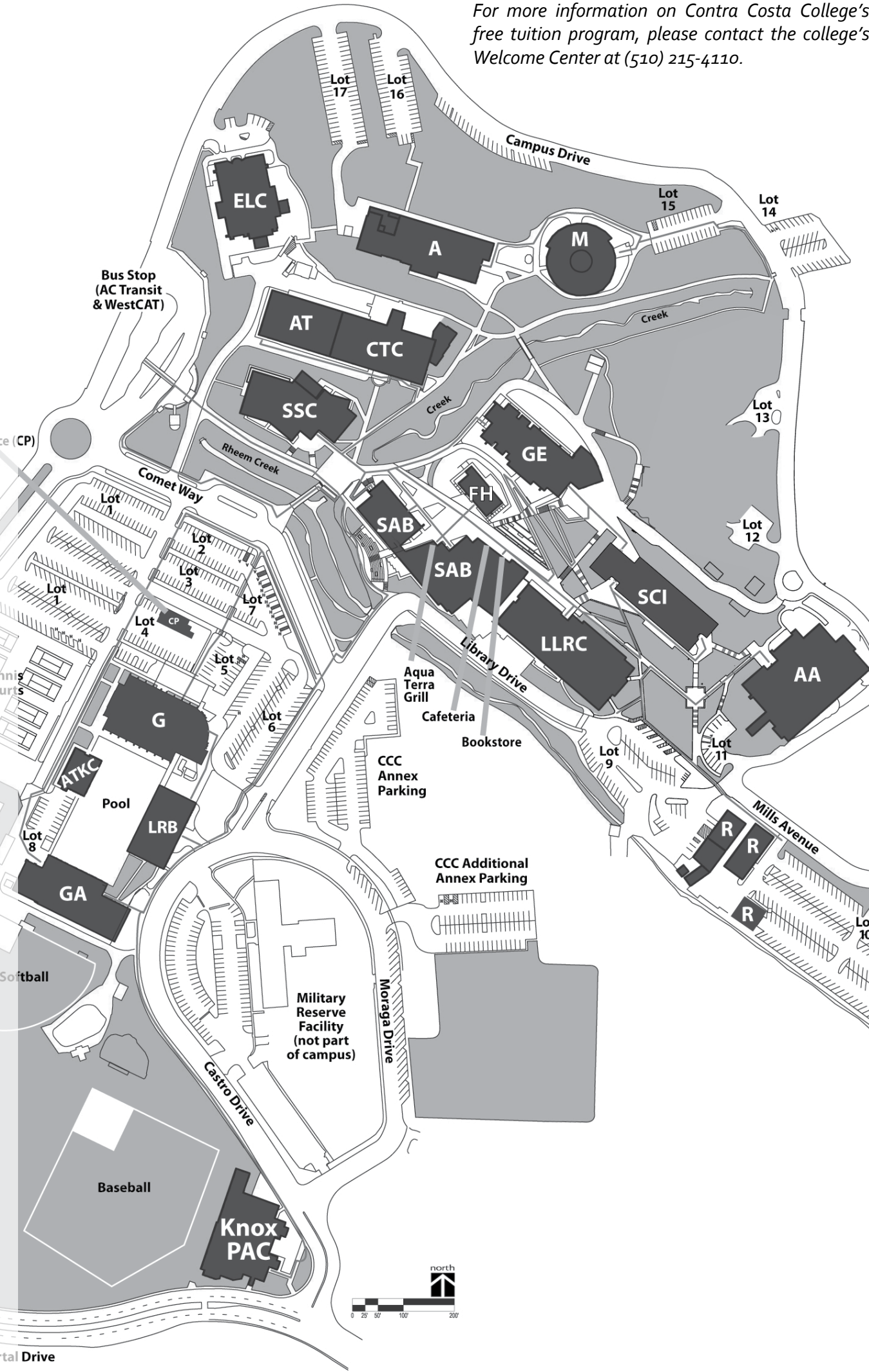
According to the Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services website, the course teaches students “how to develop core skills to empower themselves by attaining and maintaining... resiliency through self-awareness and peer/family support, while learning to assist others in doing the same.” Completion of the class leads to a certificate.

The program is intended for individuals who fit at least one of the following criteria:

- A person who has self-identified as having lived experience of recovery from a mental health condition, substance use disorder, or both.
- A transition-age youth or young adult 18 or older who has self-identified as having lived experience of recovery from a mental health condition, substance use disorder, or both.
- A person with lived experience as a self-identified family member of an adult experiencing a mental health condition, substance use disorder, or both.
- A person who is parenting or has parented a child or adult experiencing a mental health condition, substance use disorder, or both. This person may be a birth parent, adoptive parent, or family member standing in for an absent parent.

As county partner Hume Center mentions on its website, “SPIRIT brings hope to the system, proving that recovery is real and showing that lived experience is a vital ingredient in being effective healers.”

For general information about Contra Costa College, please call (510) 235-7800 or schedule a time to discuss your educational goals with a reentry coach at the Reentry Success Center or at The Reentry Network at HealthRIGHT 360. For more information on Contra Costa College’s free tuition program, please contact the college’s Welcome Center at (510) 215-4110.



BUILDING NAME	
AO	Additional Athletic Offices
AA	Applied Arts
AA-Annex	Legacy AA-Annex and Storage
A	Art
AT	Automotive Technology
B	Biological Sciences
CP	Campus Police/Safety Center
CTC	Computer Technology Center
ELC	Early Learning Center
FH	Fireside Hall
G	Gymnasium
GA	Gym Annex (Athletic Office)
GE	General Education
LLRC	Library and Learning Resource Center
L	Locker Room Building
M	Music
PAC/KNOX	John and Jean Knox Performing Arts Center
PS	Physical Sciences
R	Receiving/Buildings & Grounds
SAB	Student & Administration Building
SCI	Science Center
SSC	Student Services Center: Admissions, Counseling, Financial Aid and Welcome Center
T	Athletic Training and Kinesiology Center


Campus map and legend courtesy of Contra Costa College

EVENTS


MONDAYS (ONGOING)

**Women’s Group**  5:30-7:30pm, open to women interested in conversations related to everyday life, Reentry Success Center; call 800-816-4453 for details

TUESDAYS (ONGOING)






**Mental Health Group**  11:45am-12:45am, open to community, members, and drop-ins, Community Outreach Center, 525 E. 18th Street, Antioch

WEDNESDAYS (ONGOING)

**Restorative Practices: Arts Class**  5:30-7:30pm, open to community, members, and drop-ins, Reentry Success Center; call 800-816-4453 for details

THURSDAYS (ONGOING)


**Mental Health Group**  11:45am-12:45am, open to community, members, and drop-ins, Community Outreach Center, 525 E. 18th Street, Antioch

**Restorative Circles**      5:30-7:30pm, open to community, members, and drop-ins, Reentry Success Center; call 800-816-4453 for details









FRIDAYS (ONGOING)


**Forward Thinking Men’s Group**  5:30-7:30pm, open to men interested in conversations related to everyday life, Reentry Success Center; call 800-816-4453 for details

OTHER

**Community Green Space Clean-Up**  10:00am-2:00pm, open to all, every third Saturday of the month, in-person across the street from the Reentry Success Center

**Monthly Workshops**      6:00-8:00pm, open to community and members, last Wednesday of the month, Reentry Network at HealthRIGHT 360; call 925-732-1357 for details

**Welcome Home Reentry Resource Fair and Block Party**         10:00am-3:00pm, July 26; free and open to everyone, Reentry Success Center; call 800-816-4453 for details

**Alpha Program**  New cohort begins August 12, Reentry Success Center; call 800-816-4453 for details

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.

ART

Inspirational quotes on the exterior walls of the old Turk and Fillmore Substation in San Francisco



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 THE PREVIOUS ISSUE

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9	4	2	8	5	1	7	3	6
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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



Education



Benefits



Family



Health



Legal



Financial



Employment