



Cuyahoga County Reentry Review

Cuyahoga County Executive Candidates Forum

Anyone who has a personal or other interest in prisoner reentry in Cuyahoga County is invited to attend this forum. This important event will take place at the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County (ADAMHS) located at 2012 West 25th Street, 6th Floor on Wednesday, August 11, 2010 from 6:00-8:00 p.m.

The Greater Cleveland Reentry Leadership Coalition, Community Re-entry, Ohio Reentry Advocacy Coalition, Citizens for Equal Opportunity, and the United Pastors in Mission will host a Candidates Forum to allow people who were formerly incarcerated, advocates, citizens and government officials to meet with the candidates for the County Executive seat and share concerns about the struggles that returning citizens face when coming back into society from prison, such as housing, employment, education, health care, and basic needs. Moderators will ask the candidates questions about reentry. Individuals and family members will share their stories about what it's like to return to society from prison. The moderators are Mr. William M. Denihan, CEO of the ADAMHS Board and Chair of the Greater Cleveland Reentry Leadership Coalition; Interim Provost Geoffrey Mearns, Cleveland State University; and Mr. Edward Little,

Advocacy and Policy Coordinator, Office of Reentry.

“We welcome this opportunity to interact and share ideas with future state lawmakers on how we can work together to assist formerly incarcerated persons return to and remain in the community”

--William M. Denihan

The purpose of the Candidates Forum is to garner support for on-going and future efforts to reduce the 37.9% recidivism rate in Cuyahoga County. It is the opinion of The Greater Cleveland Reentry Strategy Leadership Coalition that the hard work and strong efforts across Cuyahoga County have contributed to the success of the 62.1% who did not return to prison for the period of 2006-2009. We would like the candidates to be aware that properly designed and implemented housing, employment, rehabilitation and treatment programs can reduce recidivism rates and are worth the investment.

Cuyahoga County, the state's most populous county, consistently has the highest number and percentage of returning citizens of all

of Ohio's 88 counties, averaging nearly 27%. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction expects that well over 40,000 inmates may return to Ohio communities in 2010 and approximately 10,000 will likely return to Cuyahoga County. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, (ODRC) data shows that ex-offenders returning to Cuyahoga County face obstacles which put them at high risk for recidivism: 51% do not have a high school diploma; 26% had no housing prior to incarceration; 69% had little or no family involvement/support; and 49% were unemployed prior to incarceration.

“We welcome this opportunity to interact with the candidates and share ideas on how we can work together to assist formerly incarcerated persons return to and remain in the community,” said William M. Denihan, CEO of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Cuyahoga County and Chair of the Cuyahoga County Reentry Leadership Coalition. ■

Source: Media advisory provided by the Greater Cleveland Reentry Strategy Education, Advocacy and Community Participation Subcommittee.

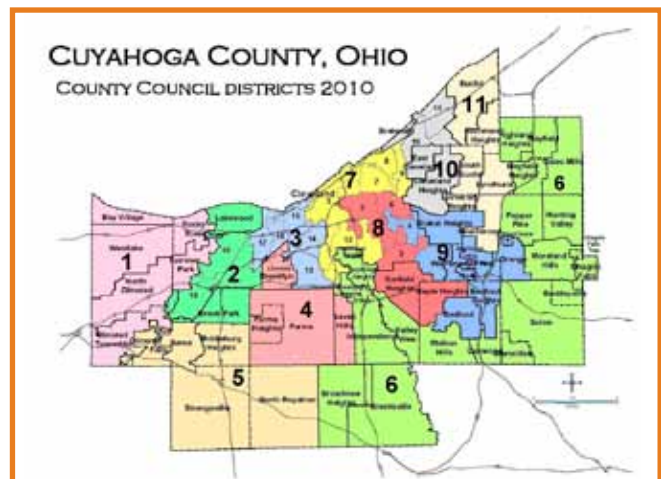
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Talking With: North Star Neighborhood Reentry Resource Members

Although North Star Neighborhood Reentry Resource Center just opened on February 15, 2010, judging by the Center's increasing calendar of events and sheer numbers of visitors it is becoming a well-respected and useful part of Cleveland's Hough neighborhood. For those who haven't heard about this special place, North Star is located at 1834 East 55th Street and is dedicated to helping returning citizens and their families find the resources they need to have a successful transition back into the community. As of June 30, 2010 more than 1,300 people have received information or services from the Center. Of those, 350 became North Star Members. Membership is free and allows the member access to additional services such as free admission to all programming and use of the Computer Lab. Reentry Review staff recently checked in with two members of North Star to hear what they had to say about it.

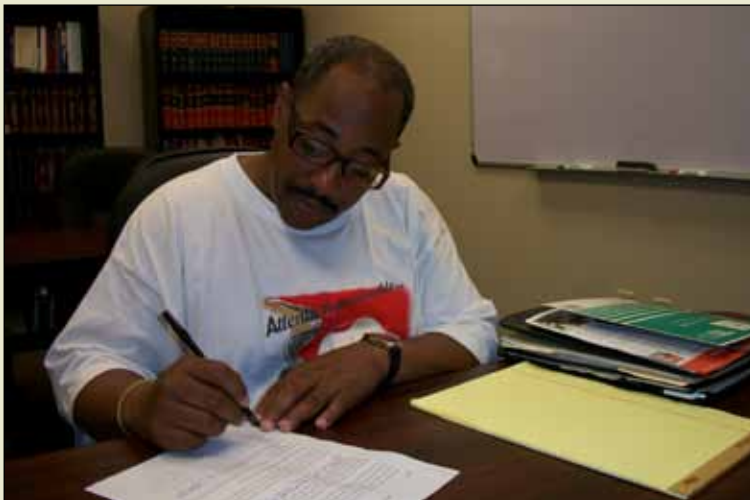
A Hard Won Experience

These are the written words of a self-styled youth advocate, novice writer and motivational speaker with lots of positive energy he is determined to get out.

"Gregory Allen McPherson speaks; often times it seems that my words have no meaning, nor my ears any sound. Being fully aware that I may be able to help children when I speak out against violence, drugs, institutional bureaucracy and its treachery; my voice cannot be silenced."

Mr. McPherson was released on April 1, 2010 and on that day found living arrangements at Cuyahoga Reentry – a neighborhood halfway house.

At that time, Cuyahoga Reentry was under reconstruction,



Gregory Allen McPherson

but Mr. McPherson said, "I was in a hostile environment. I couldn't wait for the 11th hour; it would be too late for me."

"North Star is a one, maybe two minute walk to get here from Cuyahoga Reentry," he said. "My case manager trusted me to follow an itinerary to seek resources that were conducive to reentry."

Since his first visit to North Star, Mr. McPherson has received his birth certificate, state identification, two email accounts, and eye glasses and edited his bio. His aspiration is to be a motivational speaker and he has become a well-liked member of North Star.

Still, Mr. McPherson has good relationships with some special people in his life and he appreciates the support he gets from his mother, Ms. Eloise McPherson, a member of a fellowship to which he belongs, Mr. Orlando Keith Lee and his mentor, Mr. Walter Tobias. Because of them, Mr. McPherson says, "my transition back into society has been a smooth journey thus far."

"I am grateful for the benefits I received at North Star. Kaaren Ray, Marcus Bell, Allecia Creighton and Nicky Roberts have helped me tremendously. The hope that may have died with individuals is alive at North Star."

Gregory McPherson said he was not always this way. He credits God for the revelation that took place in his mind and his spirit during his fourth, and what he considers will be his last, incarceration.

"Gratitude is to be eternally grateful to God," he said. "As a young man I was a slave to my impulses and my loyalty to people threatened to imprison my entire future. After repeatedly reading the story of Joseph in the Bible, I learned forgiveness, the most precious gift I have ever given myself."

Currently, Mr. McPherson spends much of his time writing. He enjoys reading biographies and black history, and of course, he volunteers to speak out. He left Reentry Review with some closing thoughts:

"I have been given eyes to see and a mind to think and now I know a great secret of life, for I perceive at last that all my problems, discouragement and heartaches are in truth, great opportunities in disguise. I will no longer be fooled by the garments people wear for mine eyes are open, I will look beyond the cloth and I will not be deceived. I am one of nature's greatest miracles."

Brain Gain: Reentering Tri-C Student Sees Bright Future in Cleveland

Jason Falkner

Jason Falkner is a busy man and a familiar face at North Star. He's there pretty much every day, he said, attending AA meetings, networking and searching for jobs on the Internet or checking his community voicemail – all services provided by the North Star Center. In April 2010, he found out about North Star through Oriana House, Inc. and quickly became involved in activities. He attended the North Star's Open House and helped park cars for the event. Since then, he has gotten his birth certificate and identification, enrolled in Towards Employment's job preparation program, filled out the federal FAFSA form to get student financial aid, and is now attending classes at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) for the Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Program. He's still looking for permanent housing but feels very confident that he will be employed, housed and fully self-sufficient by the end of this year.



Mr. Falkner won't be part of our local "brain drain"- he plans to get his CNC Certificate and stay in Cleveland. CNC is an essential part of precision machining wherein CNC professionals use computers to set up and operate precision cutting machines for manufacturing. Mr. Falkner earned his GED in 2008 and had some experience in the industry. Mr. Falkner says that there are a lot of jobs available for people with his skill set. He is making the most of his abilities – math skills, blueprint reading and three years past experience with quality control.

Mr. Falkner has a lot of family support and plans to complete his Tri-C Certificate program at the end of October so he can get out of the criminal justice system and get on the right track. He says that North Star was a big help in getting started.

"North Star is a good place. Help is here for you if you want it. The staff is amazing – they care about you," he said. "When you come in, Ms. Allecia Creighton has a bright smile and it just makes your day when you come into the Center. Other places can give you the runaround, but here they are straight-up forward with you. If you need it, they can get it done. You can get help right here, right now."

Sources: Mr. Marcus Bell at North Star Neighborhood Reentry Resource Center, Personal interviews with Mr. Jason Falkner and Mr. Gregory McPherson, and Mr. McPherson's bio/resume excerpted in part.

We want to hear from you...

Your comments are important to us.

Write to us at

Cuyahoga County Department of Justice Affairs

Office of Reentry

310 West Lakeside Avenue, Suite 550

Cleveland, OH 44113

Our website:

<http://ja.cuyahogacounty.us/en-us/office-reentry.aspx>

Fugitive Safe Surrender Comes Back to Cleveland

In 2005, more than 850 fugitives safely turned themselves in at the Mt. Sinai Baptist Church in the Fairfax neighborhood of Cleveland. This was the first Fugitive Safe Surrender (FSS) event in the United States. The United States Marshal for the Northern District of Ohio, Peter Elliott, started the program right here as a result of a traffic stop that turned deadly when Cleveland Police Officer Wayne Leon was killed by a man with an outstanding warrant.

In the last five years, Fugitive Safe Surrenders have been held in all over the country and more than 25,000 people have voluntarily turned themselves in. The program is recognized by both law enforcement and community leaders as an overwhelming success. Marshal Elliott was honored with a Proclamation on the floor of the United States House of Representatives for creating this model program. FSS has undoubtedly saved lives and allowed people to begin their lives anew as the first step in reentering society. This fall, FSS returns home to Cleveland. It is scheduled for September 22- 25, 2010 and will be held at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Oakwood Village.

Details of the upcoming Fugitive Safe Surrender are still being planned and finalized. *Reentry Review* will have more information on this in our September edition.

Sources: www.usmarshals.gov/safesurrender,
Edward Little- Office of Reentry,
US Marshal Peter Elliott

Juvenile Reentry Court in Practice

STORY CLARIFICATION

During the past two months the *Reentry Review* highlighted the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court Reentry Court (REC). Magistrate Valerie Bickerstaff has presided over the docket for approximately two years and, with the REC team, is striving to reach a vision of service to youth returning to the community and their families as described in recent editions.



With its partners, Catholic Charities (TASC and Parmadale), Applewood, Village Network, ODYS and the Public Defenders and Prosecutors Offices, a goal of early engagement with youth and families, using assessment tools to provide individualized and effective interventions to reduce recidivism and increase public safety has been defined.

The stated goal and more can be achieved through expanding our partnerships, as well as having the ability to fund opportunities for education, employment and housing for youth involved.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Marita Kavelec, Court Administrator

Elise Tompkins, Deputy Director Specialized Dockets, Services and Supervision

The Citizen Circles Concept



Citizen participation and guidance is essential for correctional practices inside and outside institutions. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction has embraced the needs related to offenders returning home from correctional settings and as such one strategy is the implementation of Citizen Circles. The focus is on eight dynamic domain areas: employment, education, associates/social interactions, family/marital, substance abuse and community functioning, personal/emotional orientation and attitude. They create partnerships that promote positive interaction and accountability for offenders upon release. Circle members address risks that contribute to criminal activity by taking ownership of the solution. It is an opportunity for citizens to communicate expectations for successful reentry and help offenders recognize the harm their behavior has caused others. Offenders are able to make amends and demonstrate their value and potential to the community.

Citizen Circles Locations

The Euclid Avenue Citizen Circle

The Church of the Covenant
Kathleen Farkas
11202 Euclid Ave.
2nd Monday of every month at 7:00 pm
216.421.0482 ext. 282

East Cleveland

Andrea Graham
1850 Belmore Ave.
Last Wednesday of every month
at 5:00 pm
216.249.0330

Zion Chapel

Rev. Dennis Jonel
4234 Lee Rd.
3rd Monday of every month at 6:00 pm
216.752.2743

CEOGC

Medical Arts Building
Lewis West
2475 E. 22nd St.
(Lower level)
2nd Monday of every month at 11:30 am
216.357.2621

Mt. Pleasant

Murtis Taylor Center
Diane Coates
13924 Bartlett Ave.
1st Tuesday of every month at 6:00 pm
216.751.1085



COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS:

Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry
email: ReentryInfo@cuyahogacounty.us
phone: 216.698.2501

To receive a copy of **Going Home to Stay**



contact First Call for Help at 216.436.2000 or go online and download a copy at www.211cleveland.org/pdfs/communityreentry.pdf

