



# Cuyahoga County Reentry Review

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## Insight and Inspiration from GCIRP Voices

Over the past eight months, the Greater Cleveland Integrated Re-Entry Project "GCIRP" has steadily progressed in providing intensive case management and supportive services for the clients, their children, as well as the support network persons. To date, GCIRP has 160 clients receiving case management services; 31 female and 129 male. Of the 160 clients, 71 are receiving behavioral health services from the Center for Families and Children and 89 are receiving intensive case management from Community Re-Entry. GCIRP has over 30 agencies represented in the wrap-around service network. These stories recount a few of the successes so far.

"John" has cycled in and out of prison or jail since he was just 13. He has been diagnosed with bi-polar disorder and is not stable unless he takes his medication. In the past, John seldom took his medications because he would self-medicate with drugs or alcohol, or he would take his prescription to feel better but then stop taking them. As a result of this and his violent behavior when using drugs and alcohol, he had a strained relationship with each of his parents and was banned from both of their houses.

John has been out of prison for nearly four months and has remained clean and on his medication. This is the longest

time John has not been incarcerated. He currently goes to meetings and is taking his medication regularly. John will most likely be eligible for Medicaid, based on his diagnosis however; it takes approximately six months to a year for him to get approved.

In the meantime he is seeing mental health professionals at the Center for Families and Children. He is working part time revamping housing with his cousin, and is now allowed to go over to both of his parents' houses. His parents agree he is doing very well and they are proud and excited. Fortunately, John has GCIRP and



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## Citizen Spotlight: William Brown

"If you're waiting for the perfect moment to do something- it's not going happen. There is no perfect moment to change - do it now."

That's was the day's message written on the whiteboard in the dining room of the Community Assessment and Treatment Services, Inc. (CATS) facility on Broadway the day Reentry Review staff visited for an interview. The message is upbeat and positive - just like the man who wrote it - Mr. William Brown. As the Kitchen Manager for CATS, Mr. Brown serves up wisdom and motivation every day, right along with his healthy meals.

"Nutrition is very important in a recovery community. Every day we do our best to make sure that our clients are getting everything they can to succeed," he said.

Mr. Brown's energy and enthusiasm are contagious. He's got a big smile and words of encouragement for everyone.

"I try to do the little things you can do to make a guy feel better about being here, to keep him focused. I tell them [the clients] 'It's up to you now. I know you can do it.'"

He knows it because he's done it himself. After repeated problems caused by substance abuse, Mr. Brown ended up being incarcerated for a year. He knew he needed to make a change but didn't know how.

"The fear of being a failure was killing me but I just kept failing," he said. "The wheels were falling off. I knew something had to change or my life would be a train wreck forever. I told myself - it's now or never."

His parole officer in Lorain County gave him two choices: Go back to prison or go to a treatment facility in Cleveland.

"I told her 'Cleveland sounds good.'"

That was in September 2006. By January 2007, Mr. Brown had completed the Therapeutic Community program and was hired to work in the kitchen.

"I had a degree in culinary arts that I earned in the Army at Ft. Riley, Kansas. I also had experience as a kitchen manager at a restaurant in Elyria. But I had to start from scratch here and work my way up," he said.

Mr. Brown was very motivated to get through the program.

"It helped that there were a lot of guys in there with the same struggle - the same problems with drugs or alcohol or whatever. We were there together for one purpose: that's change. You need to be with someone who is walking the same path as you," he said.

The Therapeutic Community at CATS provides a controlled environment where clients are held accountable for going to meetings and getting up for work. By the time Mr. Brown got there, he knew he needed the structure of a program to help him build a new foundation for his life.

"I was tough on myself - but for good reason. If you don't address addiction the right way - if you are not serious - it keeps coming back. Addiction doesn't know who you are - but at some point it's still going to kill you," he said.

While in the program, clients are responsible for maintaining the positive behavior of themselves and others. Violations of rules



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# Juvenile Reentry Court

Much attention has been focused in recent years on the difficulties faced by formerly incarcerated people as they try to reintegrate into mainstream society. Resources have been devoted to providing necessary services to the formerly incarcerated to increase the likelihood of successful reentry and reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

One group that has often been overlooked in relation to reentry is juvenile offenders. While many issues related to adult reentry also apply to juveniles (lack of education and job skills, mental health issues, substance abuse or addiction), challenges facing youthful offenders require different reentry strategies.

Current research evidence suggests that simply increasing the punitive nature of court imposed sanctions does not reduce future offenses. In contrast, reentry programs that focus on rehabilitation through educational and vocational training, substance abuse treatment, and cognitive behavioral counseling that addresses the dysfunctional thought processes of offenders, have been shown to have a substantial effect on reducing future offending.<sup>1</sup>

The role of the Juvenile Reentry Court is to manage reintegration of high risk youth back into the community after commitment to secure confinement or other out-of-home placement. Reentry Court, which is based on the drug court model, uses frequent appearances before the court in along with individualized treatment plans, the provision of multiple support services, graduated sanctions, and rewards for success. It is widely agreed that judicial leadership is essential to the juvenile reentry court model and that the Court must lead in a way that is both innovative and collaborative.

### Juvenile Reentry Court Structure

The Cuyahoga County Juvenile Reentry Court, under the leadership of Administrative Judge Thomas O'Malley, Acting Court Administrator Marita Kavalec, Magistrate Valerie Bickerstaff, specialized-docket Coordinator Elise Tompkins, and the entire Reentry Court Team, fully embraces the new leadership role of the court as envisioned by the national Juvenile Reentry Court model. The Juvenile Reentry Court Team is made up of the Juvenile Court Magistrate, the public defender, parole officer, the prosecutor, service providers, and the specialized docket coordinator for Juvenile Court. The goal of the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Reentry Court Program is to use the unique judicial authority of the Court along with dedicated service professionals to reduce recidivism among youth returning from the Ohio Department of Youth Services. The Court manages the return of participating youth, using its authority to apply graduated sanctions and positive reinforcement to support the youth's reintegration. The Reentry Court is able to provide a high degree of personal contact with the youth as well as a way to help take care of problems that might present barriers to a successful reentry.



The Court currently conducts Reentry Court hearings on Monday afternoons. Each Monday the Reentry Team meets right before the Court hearing to review the history of new candidates for the program. The Reentry Team recently started visiting Cuyahoga Hills and Indian River DYS institutions every month to meet with staff and prospective participants. Once someone is selected to participate in the Reentry Program, the team will meet monthly with the youth and their family to prepare for release.

Now in its second year, Reentry Court is still getting started. The new Cuyahoga County Juvenile Justice Center is scheduled to open in early 2011. As the Court seeks to use best-practices in the new facility, it is the perfect time for the Court to go ahead with a model approach to juvenile reentry.

### Collaboration as the Core:

Each year the program will identify at least 40 high-risk juvenile offenders who are currently committed to the Cuyahoga Hills, and Indian River facilities of the Ohio Department of Youth Services (ODYS). These youth will be between the ages of 14 and 20, with plans of returning to the Cleveland area upon release. Based on ODYS statistics, these youth will most likely be African-American males.

To close the gaps in service and to better coordinate programing for each youth, the Court will collaborate with ODYS, Catholic Charities, Juvenile Treatment Alternatives to Safer Communities (TASC), Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C), Teen Start Inc.'s 3MB-Men Mentoring Men and Boys, Towards Employment, and other agencies to provide education services, job training and placement, youth advocacy and case management, mentoring, cognitive skill building, and substance abuse and chemical dependency counseling.

### Selection:

ODYS staff along with the parole officer, the youth advocate, and the entire Reentry team will screen youth based on the following criteria: (1) serious nature of the committing offense(s); (2) youth's educational performance and conduct while in the institution; (3) family support; (4) substance abuse and/or chemical dependency issues; (5) restrictions on release shown in the journal entry of committing Judge; (6) mental health status of youth; (7) youth's willingness to participate in program services; and (8) youth's willingness to agree to intense parole and court supervision upon release.

Once a youth has been chosen to participate in Reentry Court, the Public Defender will file a motion with the Court requesting judicial "early" release. To be eligible for judicial release youth must serve at least half their commitment time plus one day. For example, youth sentenced to a 1 year commitment would be eligible for judicial release after serving 6

**Citizen Spotlight: William Brown** (Continued from Front Cover)

are cause for being written up on a “slip” that is followed by a learning experience – some form of discipline that is determined by the group.

Mr. Brown said that, when participating in the program, “We are all responsible for each other in here. I’m going to call you on your negative behaviors. I know you’re going to hold me accountable just like I’m going to hold you accountable. If one of your peers is writing you a ticket that can help save your life—how could you be mad at that?”

One of the main things that kept him motivated during the program was participating in sports.

“Idle time is really not good in recovery – changing my people, places, and things was huge in building my foundation,” Mr. Brown said.

He played on the Center’s basketball and softball teams. He is now the coach for both.

“That’s the beauty of the sports,” he said. “Families can come to our games – there are a lot of families who come to every game. Maybe you haven’t seen your son in years and now you’re seeing him involved in doing something fun. He’s not high when he’s playing softball – he’s not drunk, but he’s still having fun. My mother and my sons came to my games – it was a great way for me to get back out there and play sports I hadn’t played in a long time. That makes a difference. It was huge for me,” he said.

“Right now we’re the three-time defending softball champions! CATS got us brand new jerseys for winning three straight seasons. We play in a league against a lot of other centers – Y-Haven, City Mission, Stella Maris – we’re real proud of that. If somebody is with a center now or has been

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You really do,  
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**– William Brown**

before and is interested in playing sports, we’ll find a place for you,” Mr. Brown said.

Mr. Brown enjoys being a good father to his three sons. He has stayed close and supported them and they are growing up to be successful young men. His oldest son attends culinary school in Pittsburgh. His middle son will attend Bluffton University in the fall and his youngest is completing an accelerated paramedic training program while still in high school.

“When they came to visit me while I was incarcerated, I made it my business to tell them, ‘you don’t want to do what I’m doing now. I’m telling you this is horrible. Every bad thing you have ever heard about it is true. You don’t have to experience this. I’ve done it for you. You don’t need to do this.’ They took it to heart and they are all doing exactly what they need to be doing. I’m very proud of them. I’m always going to be there for them. If I hadn’t got my life back together, I wouldn’t be in a position to do things for them.”

We asked Mr. Brown what he would say to returning citizens that were facing the same challenges he faced.

“You control your own destiny. You really do,” he said. “ Now is the time. Now is the time! Don’t wait to make a positive change. I don’t think there is anything you can’t do if you really apply yourself.”

And to those people in the community who aren’t willing to give formerly incarcerated people a second chance, Mr. Brown had this to say:

“Some of the best people have had problems – we all go through something. You find some really good people in these rooms. I’ve met a ton of them over my few years here. If you gave some of them an opportunity, they’ll make you proud of them.”

Mr. Brown recently went on his first vacation and also just bought his first house a few weeks ago. This summer, he will start studying to be a Certified Alcohol and Drug Addiction Counselor through Lehman College. As usual, he is motivated and positive about the future.

“It’s awesome,” he said. “That’s my ultimate goal – to give back. Anytime you’ve come through a situation like this and walked in the same shoes, it’s important to make the road better for the next person. People have helped me and I know the program works. Karma comes back.”

“Guys I’ve worked with here are always coming back to let us know how they’re doing –they got a new job - things seem to be paying off for them. Those are the moments when you know it’s worth it. I’ve got a passion to do this and I love my job. When they see me here someday, I want people to say: ‘That’s Brown. Man, he’s been here forever!’” ■

months and one day. Youth who have a mandatory minimum sentence (e.g., 1 or 3 year specification) must serve at least the minimum sentence period plus one day to become eligible for reentry.

Motions for judicial release will be reviewed first by the committing Judge. If approved by the Judge, the Motion will then be forwarded to Magistrate Bickerstaff for an official court proceeding accepting the youth into the Reentry Program. ■

<sup>1</sup> *Lessons Learned About Reducing Recidivism from Research on Correctional and Juvenile Delinquency Programs*, David Wilson, George Mason University, October 2009.

**Next month: Juvenile Reentry Court in Practice**

***We want to hear from you...***  
 Your comments are important to us.  
***Write to us at***  
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## Insight and Inspiration... *(Continued from Front Cover)*

will not fall in between the cracks while waiting for his Medicaid to kick in. Due to the support of GCIRP, John is able to stay with his prescription medication and receive case management and counseling support.

"Jane" was transferred from North East Pre-Release Center to South East Women's Center on December 14, 2009 with an undetermined final release date. Despite this fact, Jane remained focused and engaged in the program. Jane, along with her case manager continued to work towards setting goals and objectives. Knowing there was no set "out" date, Jane continued with the program, navigating community resources, and working closely with her GCIRP case manager.

Jane began working at Burger King on February 10, 2010. Although this is a part time position, Jane has a positive outlook, reporting that her self esteem is improving. Jane is working with a "sponsor" (12-step) attending meetings, enjoying fellowship and step work. She was referred to Cleveland Scholarship Program (CSP) for assistance with accessing academic

resources and tools. Jane expects to be enrolled at Tri-C for the summer 2010 semester.

"Sue" was released early from the North East Pre-Release Center in November 2009 and immediately began working with her uncle as part of his Christmas/seasonal rush. Knowing she would not be working with him after the first of the year she continued to look for employment. In January 2010, she began work with an auction house that sells used restaurant equipment. Sue truly enjoys her work; and this opportunity allows her to travel out of town on a regular basis to the auction sites. She continues to live with her support person (grandmother) and continues to work with her case manager.

We will continue to monitor the progress of these and other GCIRP participants as part of our effort to evaluate the ability of GCIRP to succeed in its mission to assist formerly incarcerated men, women and their families in making successful transitions back into the community. ■

## 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.  
2<sup>nd</sup> 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.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of every month at 6:00 pm  
216.752.2743

### **CEOGC**

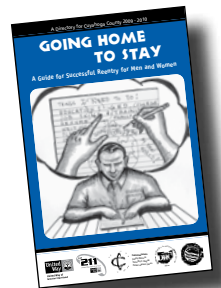
### **Medical Arts Building**

Lewis West  
2475 E. 22nd St.  
(Lower level)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month at 11:30 am  
216.357.2621

### **Mt. Pleasant**

### **Murtis Taylor Center**

Diane Cox  
13411 Kinsman Ave.  
1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of every month at 6:00 pm  
216.751.1085



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](http://www.211cleveland.org/pdfs/communityreentry.pdf)

## GREATER CLEVELAND STRATEGY Cuyahoga County Reentry Review



COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS:  
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