



# Cuyahoga County Reentry Review

## City of Cleveland Reentry Exposition Draws Hundreds of Attendees

By Mary Kelley

On April 21, 2011 the City of Cleveland hosted a Reentry Resource Exposition to provide information and resources to citizens returning home from incarceration. More than 500 attendees had the opportunity to meet with 75 agencies from our state, county and local government, along with faith-based, grassroots and community based organizations. Attendees included formerly incarcerated people in addition to family and friends seeking services and resources for those have not been released yet.

"Professionals in the reentry field and formerly incarcerated persons told us what they needed to successfully reintegrate into our community. We found the partners in the community to address their needs," said Blaine Griffin, Executive Director of the Community Relations Board for the City of Cleveland.

"For the city to have an event in collaboration with our reentry partners was an ambitious and arduous task, but with the help of a great planning team, we did it!" said event

manager Sharyna Cloud. "A lot of people were seeking help not only for themselves but also for family and friends that they know are going to need the help when they are released. At the Expo, they became familiar with what services and resources are available in the community."

City of Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson attended the event. He spoke with some of the attendees and agency vendors to make sure the right agencies were there and that the event was a success. Many of the attendees were very impressed with the professionalism of the agency providers and the resources available.

"We feel the need to support the formerly incarcerated because they are a growing sector of our community and they deserve a chance to provide a positive impact," Mr. Griffin said. "We will continue to find innovative and creative ways to help them."

"The City of Cleveland cares very much about the formerly incarcerated population and will continue to do everything we can to support them as they transition back into our communities," Ms. Cloud said. "We



*Access to Healthcare is an Urgent Need for Many Returning Citizens*

were very pleased to have sponsored such an event and we look forward to having other events with our partners in the future."

There are many different ways to find out more about help that is available for people returning home from incarceration. For more information about reentry services in Cuyahoga County, call 211. 211 is United Way's First Call for Help Line. United Way First Call for Help also distributes the Going Home to Stay Guide. The Guide is available at North Star and online at [www.211cleveland.org/pdfs/communityreentry.pdf](http://www.211cleveland.org/pdfs/communityreentry.pdf).



*The Cleveland Convention Center was filled with information tables*

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## Employer Awareness Workshop By Mary Kelley



*Employer Awareness Workshop Attendees*



*Attorney Brian Lamb of  
Thompson Hine LLP and  
the Cleveland Lawyers Reentry  
Initiative*



*Ed Little from the Office of Reentry and Dr. Wanda Suber from the Ohio Department of  
Rehabilitation and Correction*



*Eduardo Romero from the City of Cleveland and Ryan Neumeyer from Ross, Brittain and  
Schonberg Co., L.P.A*

Finding secure, stable employment is one of the major challenges facing formerly incarcerated people when they return home from prison. Research has shown that formerly incarcerated people who can stay employed have a more successful transition back into the community, are better able to support their families, and are less likely to return to prison.

In order for these positive outcomes to happen, however, there must be employers who are willing to give the formerly incarcerated a second chance and hire them to work in their organizations. In an effort to educate potential employers and their legal counsel about the issues surrounding hiring people with criminal backgrounds, the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry held an Employer Awareness Workshop on May 11, 2011. Judging by the attendance and participation of a diverse group of interested local professionals, the issue of hiring and retaining job seekers with criminal histories is gaining more attention as a matter of critical importance in our local workforce and economic development plans.

One hundred and one human resource professionals, attorneys, employers and those who work in community reentry attended this informative, one-day workshop. The workshop was divided into two tracks, one designed for those working in human resources and one for attorneys. The attorneys and human resource professionals earned six hours of continuing professional education credit.

Brian Lamb, a business litigation attorney with Thompson Hine, facilitated the morning sessions and provided an overview of policy issues relating to the hiring of individuals with criminal histories. In the first session, Ryan Neumeyer, an employment attorney with Ross, Brittain and Schonberg Co., presented the topic of employment liability and negligent hiring and supervision from a management representation perspective. Alicia Guardia, an immigration, criminal and consumer law attorney with Guardia Law Firm, discussed the increasingly common use of background checks by employers as part of the hiring process and the variety of issues this practice presents to both employers and job applicants.

The second morning session featured Ed Little, Legislative and Policy Analyst from the Office of Reentry, and Dr. Wanda Suber, from the Executive Staff of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. They discussed the real barriers that the formerly incarcerated face when seeking employment and incentives that are available for companies that hire reentrants, including the free federal bonding program.



Getting the job is the first step. Keeping the job requires a longer-term commitment from both the employee and the employer. Smart employers realize that employee assistance programs are a cost-effective way to keep a high-quality and productive workforce. Miguel Torres, Regional Manager of Associate Relations for The Home Depot, Patrick Gaul, Sales Manager for Ease@Work, and Chelsea Mills, Senior Manager of Business Services at Towards Employment, presented an overview of Employee Assistance Programs.

Workshop attendees were invited to choose two of four intensive workshop sessions in the afternoon featuring expanded and spirited discussions of the four topics introduced in the morning. Mr. Eduardo Romero, Risk Manager for the City of Cleveland joined Ryan Neumeyer for the Employer Liability afternoon session. The workshop was well-attended and, overall, the evaluations for all sessions were positive.

The sponsors of the Employer Awareness Workshop included: The Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry, United Way of Greater Cleveland, Tri-C Corporate College East and the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association. The workshop was also supported by: The Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County, the Center for Families and Children, the Community Re-Entry Program, the Cleveland Society for Human Resource Management, The Home Depot, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, Ross, Brittain, & Schonberg Co., L.P.A., Thompson Hine LLP and Towards Employment, Inc.

The Office of Reentry would like to thank the planning committee, sponsors and supporters for their invaluable assistance in producing this workshop.



*Attorney Alicia Guardia of Guardia Law Firm, LLC*



*Luis Vazquez from the Office of Reentry*



*Chelsea Mills from Towards Employment, Patrick Gaul from Center for Families and Children and Miguel Torres from The Home Depot*

## ***\*Save the Date\****

### **Open Door Open House & Discussion**

**June 22, 2011**

**9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

Carl B. Stokes Social Service Mall

6001 Woodland Avenue

1st Floor Community Room

Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Please join us for an informational session about the Open Door Reentry Housing Program followed by a tour of the facilities. Open Door is a reentry-dedicated, sober living environment designed to assist men transitioning through reentry.

The event features Opening Remarks by C. Ellen Connally, Cuyahoga County Council President and testimonials of men who are living in the Open Door Housing Program. Please join us!

Register by June 10 @ <http://opendoorhousingprogram-openhouse.eventbrite.com>

## City of Cleveland Reentry Exposition Draws Hundreds of Attendees *Continued from Front cover*

The North Star Reentry Resource Center is located at 1834 East 55th Street in Cleveland Ohio. North Star's phone number is 216-881-5440 and their website is [www.northstarreentry.org](http://www.northstarreentry.org).

For more general information about Cuyahoga County's reentry initiatives, visit the Office of Reentry's website at [www.reentry.cuyahogacounty.us](http://www.reentry.cuyahogacounty.us) is available at North Star and online at [www.211cleveland.org/pdfs/communityreentry.pdf](http://www.211cleveland.org/pdfs/communityreentry.pdf).

## Open Door Celebrates Earth Day 2011 *By Mary Kelley*

On April 29, 2011 Open Door residents braved the cold and rain and participated in their first Earth Day clean up project. According to Program Director Jenn Lasky, the thought for the day was, "For it is in giving that we receive."

Residents were informed about the project the week prior to the clean up. Lasky said, "Cleaning up the planet and taking pride in where we live was what we were looking to accomplish. I was encouraged by the participation of the residents and their willingness to give back to the community." The residents were asked to volunteer an hour cleaning up the surrounding outdoor lots and fields which were litter filled. More than half of the residents participated in the clean up. More than 25 over-sized trash bags were quickly filled and disposed of correctly.

Open Door is located on Woodland Avenue in the Stokes Mall. It is sober-living housing for men going through the reentry process. Open Door is operated by Y-Haven and the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority. It is funded by Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services – Office of Reentry and Community Vision Council through a grant to the Center for Families and Children.

For questions regarding the Open Door Program contact Jenn Lasky at 216-431-2018 extension 247.



*Open Door Residents on Earth Day*



*Clean up in action*

### COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS:

Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry  
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phone: 216.698.2501



*We want to hear from you...*  
Your comments are important to us.

*Write to us at*

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