

Reentry Advocate

November 2009 • Volume 3, Issue 11

Reentry and the Community

The Office of Reentry hosts "Reentry and the Community," a FREE and public meeting Monday, Nov. 9th • 10 am to 4 pm, at the Visiting Nurse Association • 2500 E. 22nd St.

Nov 9

Office of Reentry Issues 2009 Annual Report



is to target resources toward sound, comprehensive and cost effective solutions so that services are effectively provided for those who need them out of the more than 6000 individuals returning to the county on an annual basis. Under the direction of Manager Luis Vazquez, the office provides focused leadership and strong organizational capacity in a variety of areas.

The Cuyahoga County Department of Justice Affairs - Office of Reentry recently released its 2009 Comprehensive Report, which highlights its efforts to assist policy makers, community leaders and service providers in identifying the reentry challenges facing Greater Cleveland. The ultimate goal of the office

The Office of Reentry also oversees implementation of the initiatives of the Greater Cleveland Reentry Strategy, which engages in advocacy, education, training, funding, data collection, research, and service coordination surrounding reentry.

Annual Report continued on pg. 2

*We want to hear
from you...*

Voices from Behind Bars

Please submit your stories to:
P.O. Box 6031053
Cleveland, OH 44103

In This Issue

- 1.... *Office of Reentry Issues
2009 Annual Report*
- 1.... *Voices from Behind Bars*
- 1.... *Grassroots Organizations
Make Impact*
- 2.... *Greater Cleveland
Integrated Reentry Project
(GCIRP) Update*
- 3.... *Attorney General Eric
Holder's Speech at the
2009 American Bar
Association Convention,
Part Three*

Voices from Behind Bars

This feature has proven so popular that we have received more letters than we can handle or have space for, so we are excerpting **three** of them from prisoners around the state for this issue.

Voices continued on pg. 4

Glimmers of Hope: Grassroots Organizations Make Impact

On succeeding days at the end of September two grassroots organizations held events that had a significant impact on reentry, albeit from differing perspectives. On Tuesday, September 29, the Northeast Ohio Reentry Coalition

(NORC) held its first-ever Development Conference: "Changing the Face of Reentry," at Scott Auditorium on MetroHealth's Main Campus. The well-attended event featured over a dozen presenters.

Grassroots continued on pg. 3

The Greater Cleveland Integrated Reentry Project (GCIRP) Update

The Greater Cleveland Integrated Reentry Project (GCIRP) broke ground in August 2009, and began assisting offenders and their families to prepare for reentry. Recruitment, Intake/Eligibility screening, and Assessment services have been provided in four facilities, including Northeast Pre-Release Center, Cuyahoga County Jail, Oriana House, and Lorain Correctional Institution. The prisoners have enthusiastically embraced the GCIRP program and the unique services it offers. GCIRP

case management staff, along with collaborating service providers, are delivering services to the first group of GCIRP clients, scheduled to be released in December. Eagles Wings Outreach and Providing Real Opportunities for Ex-Offenders to Succeed received funding through the Department of Justice's Second Chance Act to facilitate a mentoring program for the GCIRP clients. In addition, Big Brothers Big Sisters was awarded a mentoring grant from Health and Human Services,

allowing GCIRP enrolled children to participate in their mentoring program. It is apparent, as this initiative unfolds, that prisoners returning to Cuyahoga County have a demonstrated motivation to be a part of community reform through their participation in the GCIRP. It is apparent, as this initiative unfolds, that prisoners returning to Cuyahoga County have a demonstrated motivation to be a part of community reform through their participation in the Greater Cleveland Integrated Reentry Project.

Annual Report from pg. 1

The overarching goal of the office is to increase public safety and eliminate the confusion that can result from a lack of coordination between the variety of government, community and faith-based organizations that presently provide some form of services to the reentering population.

The office oversees several areas of responsibility. First is Programmatic Services, which includes employment and training contracts. Two contracts, for \$500,000 each, were awarded to Towards Employment and the Cuyahoga County/City of Cleveland's Workforce Development Program. An additional \$287,000 was designated for a Neighborhood Reentry Resource Center which will service formerly

Also, the Cuyahoga County Reentry Court, a specialized docket presided over by Judge Nancy Margaret Russo, was allocated \$21,485 from the Office of Reentry to address the needs of offenders transitioning from prison back to the community.

incarcerated men and women information and resources in a comfortable, supportive, welcoming and secure environment.

"This center will provide a vital link in a chain of resources that will ensure that formerly incarcerated persons have the opportunity to reestablish and strengthen ties with family and friends, support their children, contribute to the community and learn new skills that will enable them to live productive and positive lives," said Vazquez. The Request for Proposals was released on September 28, 2009 and proposals are due back on October 21, 2009. Following review and award, the center is expected to open on Feb. 1, 2010.

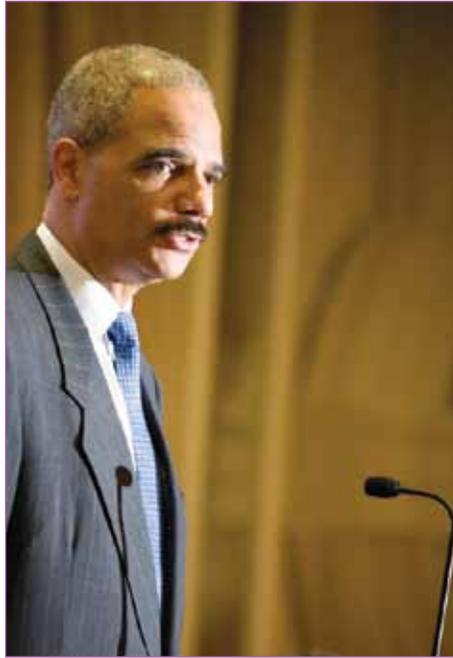
Annual Report continued on pg. 5

Attorney General Eric Holder's Speech at the 2009 American Bar Association Convention

Part Three of a Six-Part Series

We will not focus exclusively on incarceration as the most effective means of protecting public safety. For although spending on prison construction continues to increase, public safety is not continuing to improve. Crime rates appear to have reached a plateau beyond which they no longer decline in response to increases in incarceration. Indeed, since 2003, spending on incarceration has continued to rise, but crime rates have flattened.

But there is another reason to consider new law enforcement



strategies: simple dollars and cents, and the principle of diminishing marginal returns. Every state in the Union is trying to trim budgets. States and localities are laying off teachers, cutting back on public health, and canceling after-school programs for our children. But in almost all cases, spending on prisons continues to rise. This is unsustainable economically. Many jurisdictions simply cannot afford the monetary costs of focusing exclusively on incarceration.

Holder continued on pg. 5

Grassroots from pg. 1

Attendees included social service providers, members of the faith-based community and government agencies — All seeking to add to their skills and network with like-minded individuals.

The Deputy Director of the Office of Policy and Reentry for the Ohio Department of Correction and Rehabilitation (ODRC), Edward Rhine, set the tone for the all-day event by outlining the reentry challenges faced by Ohio as well as other states, and encouraged stakeholders to work in a collaborative manner to meet those challenges.

Cuyahoga County Reentry Court Judge Nancy Margaret Russo energized the audience with candid

comments regarding the successes (as well as the few failures) she has seen while presiding over the Reentry Court. She commented that many judges, fearful of having their name and photo appear in the newspaper associated with a negative episode relating to someone on their docket, take the “safe and easy way” of simply locking everyone up. Bridget Harper, an outreach worker for a VISTA program, stated “If judges are more concerned with reelection than dispensing justice, then maybe we should take a serious look at appointing judges like some other states do, otherwise we’ll never see a reduction in prison populations.”

The conference ended with a Q &

A session led by NORC Executive Director Curtis B. Scruggs. Most of the attendees were still in their seats at the end of a long day, asking incisive questions. One woman asked why it seems that movement has been slow in terms of getting reentry programs off the ground, and Luis Vasquez, the Director of Cuyahoga County’s Office of Reentry responded by saying that the groundwork for programs had to be properly laid, but now that some funding is in place, things should be moving faster. “I take this turnout as a sign that the community at-large is vitally interested in reentry,” said Scruggs.

Grassroots continued on pg. 5

Voices from pg. 1

One note, the purpose of this feature is to allow incarcerated individuals an opportunity to tell us about what they are doing with their lives, and their hopes and dreams for a better life after prison. We will not print stories from people who are still attempting to fight their case, nor do we provide legal advice or assistance.

James Gimenz

James Gimenz is currently incarcerated at the Grafton Correctional Institute. James writes: Unable to see the forest for the trees, I stumbled oblivious from one mind altering experience to another. Somehow, I was able to achieve a degree of success in various careers, mainly because I enjoyed working hard. What to do after work became my greatest challenge however. Eventually, substance abuse took me from an occasional dabbler, to a full blown addict in the early 1990's. Still, I hid my ability to be honest with myself and others. Today, I know I am responsible for treating my addiction, and it is no excuse for criminal behavior of any kind.

Upon arrival in prison, I got active in every good program. Worked and continue to work the 12 steps. Most importantly, I study and live my faith in God. Through appeals denied, loved one's who've died, rebuked and forgotten in the sweet by and by; I have survived

and even prospered. I have attended Ashland University for the last 3 years, and contingent upon my parole early next year, have been accepted as a student at Cleveland State University. My desire is to work in the reentry field to help others discover there is indeed life after prison. My life is better now, and the best is yet to come.

James Rensel

James Rensel is currently incarcerated at the Southeastern Correctional Institution. In his letter, James writes: I am a grateful recovering alcoholic/addict and I have been clean and sober for 16 years. I am now working and continuing to work a structured and effective recovery and faith based program. I did my first 10 years at the Lima Correctional facility where I completed a residential substance abuse program, a computer aided drafting program, and attained an Associate of Arts degree in Business Administration, graduating Magna Cum Laude. I was a part of the group conscience and the steering committee. I did presentations on relapse prevention for John Hall, the Recovery Services Coordinator whom I worked for and with for 10 years. In short, I was and continue to be a leader in recovery. Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced. It is remarkable what and how a

person can change when they apply themselves. I am a living example of that. I would not ever make the same choices I made before.

Lexie McDorman

Lexie McDorman is currently incarcerated at the Ohio Reformatory for Women. Lexie writes: I am currently serving a 34 year sentence for vehicular assault and aggravated vehicular assault. I am presently in my sixth month of treatment, and fully understand now the importance of getting all the help you can, taking advantage of all the programs in prison, and developing a support system for your reentry into society. The tapestry program is amazing. It helps attack the behaviors that led me to using drugs and alcohol. Through the 13 month tapestry process, women are able to focus on themselves, what led them to use drugs, and the underlying issues that made them continue to use. The program teaches participants to be members of a therapeutic community utilizing tools to deal with everyday issues.

I can't tell you enough about how this program has changed my life, and the lives of the women around me. I've witnessed the transformation of hurt, drug addicted women to strong self confident women. Thank God I am no longer using, but thanks to the tapestry program for helping me save my life.

Edited by Quiana Wilder.

5 • Reentry Journal

Annual Report from pg. 2

Additionally, the Greater Cleveland Integrated Reentry Project (GCIRP), which was featured on last month's cover (an update of this organization's activities can be found on page 2) was funded by Cuyahoga County Department of Justice Affairs Office of Reentry,

United Way, The Cleveland Foundation and the Gund Foundation to provide intensive services to a group of 440 formerly incarcerated persons over a period of three years.

Also, the Cuyahoga County Reentry Court, a specialized docket presided over by Judge Nancy Margaret

Russo, was allocated \$21,485 from the Office of Reentry to address the needs of offenders transitioning from prison back to the community.

The Reentry Court uses the power of judicial authority to monitor offenders and increase public safety.

Annual Report continued on pg. 6

Grassroots from pg. 3

Scruggs also adds "and by working together we can solve one of the most pressing problems in America today." The following day at the United Auto Workers Hall on Chevrolet Boulevard in Parma close to a thousand people crowded in to participate in a job fair for formerly incarcerated individuals. Michael Jones, the executive director of Breaking the Cycle organized the event which had over 30 providers, including employers,

reentry agencies, and representatives from organizations that provided information on legal issues such as child support and expungement.

Additionally, Chancellor University had a booth set up, and Cleveland Clinic provided health screenings. Jones, who is formerly incarcerated, sees this as a way to give something back. "When I got out of prison I had to work any kind of job I could find... flipping hamburgers, whatever, but I

didn't turn my nose up at that kind of work. I took it until I could do better," said Jones. And "better" is exactly what he did. He eventually landed a job working at the Chevy Plant and recently took the buy-out. "My goal now is to help others who are returning home. If they get some education and are willing to work and work hard, opportunities will be there, they just have to be ready for them."

Holder from pg. 3

To say nothing of the social costs associated with high rates of imprisonment. So what can we do to lower the crime rate further, to make American communities safer, and to get smarter on crime? We need to add new tools and new strategies to our existing efforts to fight crime. One of these strategies is to look several steps past the point where we put people in prison, and to consider what happens to those people after they leave prison and reenter society. We know that offenders who have participated in the federal

Bureau of Prisons' residential drug abuse treatment program are 16 percent less likely to be re-arrested, have their supervision revoked, and be returned to prison, than similar inmates who did not receive such treatment before their reentry into society. They are also less likely to use drugs once released. We also know that inmates who work in prison industries – which operate at no cost to the taxpayer – are 24 percent less likely to commit crimes again, than inmates who do not work in the program. The Bureau of Prisons' programs

designed to address educational deficiencies – ranging from Adult Basic Education to high school level classes – are also effective in reducing recidivism. Inmates who participate in these programs are 16 percent less likely to commit crime again compared to those who do not. And inmates who are released through halfway houses are more likely to be gainfully employed, and therefore less likely to commit crimes again, than inmates who are released from prison directly into the community.

Next Month: Part IV

Annual Report from pg. 5

The other areas under the Office of Reentry are: Contractual Services, which includes The Reentry Advocate newsletter and the Service Directory; the Greater Cleveland Reentry Strategy committees, which

includes the newly formed committees of health care, juvenile reentry; Fund Development, which includes grants and appropriations; Educational and Outreach, which includes advocacy, a TV documentary, and

legal education training.

The entire 2009 annual report can be viewed online, from the Cuyahoga County web site, at <http://ja.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/office-reentry.aspx>.

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

(Call for meeting dates and times)

The Euclid Avenue Citizen Circle Congregational Church

Kathleen Farkas
9606 Euclid Ave.
3rd Monday of every month at 7:00 pm
216.787.4900

East Cleveland

Andrea Graham
1850 Belmont Ave.
3rd Monday of every month at
5:00 pm
216.214.4254

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 and Friday of
every month at 11:30 am
216.357.2621

Mt. Pleasant

Murtis Taylor Center
Diane Coats
13411 Kinsman Ave.
1st Tuesday of every month at
6:00 pm
216.751.1085

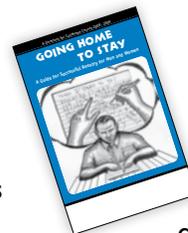


COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS:

Mansfield B. Frazier, Editor

email: MansfieldF@gmail.com
OR

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



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

call 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)

Funded by the Cuyahoga County Board of Commissioners.

The editors are always interested in additional success stories.
Please send us an email at MansfieldF@gmail.com