



Documentary on Reentry Begins Filming

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Voices from Behind Bars

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(from l. to r.) Cuyahoga County Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones, Manager of the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry Luis Vazquez, Edward Little, Reentry Consultant, and William M. Denhian, Chief Executive Officer of the Board of Cuyahoga County Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services. (Credit: Village Television)

“The Path to Successful Prisoner Reentry” documentary filming took place in early August at the studio of Village Television in Cleveland. Cuyahoga County Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones served as the moderator for the panel discussions that were focused on the subject of prisoner reentry and its implications.




(from l. to r.) Cuyahoga County Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones, Terry Collins, Director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, Charles See, Executive Director of Cleveland Community Reentry, and Phil Nunes, Vice-President of Oriana House. (Credit: Village Television)

When completed, the two-hour documentary, which is being funded via a grant from Oriana House, will give viewers a comprehensive look at the subject of prisoner reentry and hopefully serve as a springboard for a continuing half-hour weekly program focused on the subject.

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September Events & Services

1st Annual Freedom Festival

 The Mate Masie Reentry Store, located at the Cleveland UMADAOP headquarters at 1215 E. 79th St., will host its 1st Annual Freedom Festival on Friday, Sept. 25, 2009 from 11 am to 4 pm.

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Northeast Ohio Reentry Coalition to Host Conference

By James Walker

The inaugural reentry development conference of the Northeast Ohio Reentry Coalition (NORC), to take place at MetroHealth Medical Center's Scott Auditorium on September 29th, will bring together an unprecedented roster of reentry

stakeholders locally, from around the state, and from as far away as Chicago. Confirmed speakers and contributors include: Ed Rhine, Deputy Director, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) – Office of Policy and Offender Reentry;

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The Fiscal Crisis in Corrections: Rethinking Policies and Practices *Part One of a Five-Part Series*

By Christine S. Scott-Hayward, The Vera Institute

States across the United States are facing the worst fiscal crisis in years. Declining revenues are forcing cuts across virtually all government functions, including corrections, which for many years had been considered off limits. The budgets of at least 22 state departments of corrections have been cut for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, and even those whose budgets have not been cut are reducing expenditures in certain areas. This report, drawing on a survey of enacted FY2010 state

budgets and recent legislation, looks at how officials are responding to these reductions and how others are mobilizing to find efficiencies and savings. Most of the activity is occurring in three areas:

Operating Efficiencies: Though many state corrections departments squeezed out efficiencies during the last recession, they are trying to eke out even more savings now. States are reducing healthcare services or joining in purchasing agreements to lower the cost of inmate pharmaceuticals. Many states have reduced corrections staff, instituted hiring

freezes, reduced salaries or benefits, and/or eliminated pay increases. Others are consolidating facilities or halting planned expansions. Still others are eliminating or downsizing some programs.

Recidivism Reduction Strategies: High rates of failure among people on probation and parole are a significant driver of prison populations and costs in most states. To cut down on new offenses and the incarceration of rule violators, several states are strengthening their community corrections systems.

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The format for the documentary is four half-hour segments that featured experts with in-depth knowledge of the area they were addressing, and all of the dozen individuals appearing on camera felt there was so much more to be said on their particular subjects. The filming now moves into three of Ohio's correctional institutions as prisoners talk frankly in regards to their hopes, fears, and aspirations as they begin to make plans to navigate their own reentry journeys.

The filming day began with Ronnie Dunn, PhD, of Cleveland State's Levine College of Urban Affairs, Kathy Farkas, PhD, of Case Western's Mandel School of



Social Science, and Edward Little, a reentry consultant who does work with the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry. The trio set the tone for the day by delving incisively into the history of incarceration in America, beginning immediately after the conclusion of the Civil War. Responding to questions from Commissioner Jones, in layman's terms they explained how prisons were used to enforce slavery under

another guise in the south, and how the political and socio-economic climate allowed for incarceration to become the accepted tool for social control of the newly freed African-American population.

The next panel is comprised of Shakyra Diaz of the ACLU, Dennis Terez, the U.S. Public Defender for the Northern District of Ohio, and James Hardiman, an attorney in private practice, who has been deeply involved with issues of fairness within the criminal justice system. They explained how laws were (and still are being) enacted that result in America being the world leader in incarceration.

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

Part One of a Six-Part Series

Good afternoon. I want to thank the American Bar Association's House of Delegates for providing me with this opportunity to join all of you here today. It's a special honor to address the House of Delegates and it's a particular pleasure to do so in the presence of so many friends and colleagues.

Throughout my professional career, whether as a prosecutor, a judge, a lawyer in private practice, or now, as Attorney General, it has been clear to me that the ABA and its members are committed to the



notion that the pursuit of justice requires more than a single-minded pursuit of victory before the courts. Rather, as officers of the courts, you have been mindful of your obligations to seek justice, while also seeking to advance your clients' interests.

As citizens, we share a common conviction that liberty depends on the equitable and impartial enforcement of the law, an ideal embodied in our founding documents.

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Hon. Nancy Margaret Russo, Judge, Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas/Reentry Court; Jimmy Tyree, Offender Workforce Specialist, United States District Court, Northern District of Ohio; Greg Landsman, Director of the Governor's Office of Faith-Based & Community Initiatives, State of Ohio; Angi Lee, ODRC Reentry Specialist; Shannon Teague, Director of the Ohio Benefit Bank; and Cara Roecker, co-author of the "Ohio Collateral Sanctions Project," an unparalleled exposition of the hundreds of statutory obstacles to employment and career success for persons convicted of felonies in Ohio.

"...NORC will be involved in several new initiatives that will focus on job creation and the housing concerns of the ex-offender population in Northeast Ohio."

CURTIS SCRUGGS
NORC Executive Director

Other notables who have agreed to contribute to a dynamic discussion of issues critical to successful prisoner reentry include: Luis Vazquez, Manager of the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry; Shakyra Diaz, Education Director of the Cleveland Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio; Charles See, Executive Director, Community Reentry; LaShon Sawyer, Senior Program Manager, Towards Employment; Laurice Kennedy-Brown, Family Development Manager, Council for Economic Opportunities in Greater Cleveland; and Mansfield Frazier, local reentry activist and

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The event will feature informational booths regarding reentry services, refreshments, and a VISTA Volunteer “Walk a Mile for Reentry.” For more information call 216-361-2033

Free Mammograms



University Hospitals will offer free mammogram screenings on three Saturdays this fall: Sept. 19, Oct. 17, and Nov. 14. Women 40-65 with little or no insurance are eligible, and might be able to qualify for free transportation. The site is Suite 1005 of the Breast Cancer Center, UH McDonald Women’s Hospital on Adelbert Rd., off of Euclid Avenue in University Circle. Call 216-844-3097 for more information.

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As lawyers, we share a duty to make that conviction a reality, a responsibility that is the foundation of our profession and a truth recognized by the ABA for more than a century.

In no aspect of our legal system is this obligation more serious than in our system of criminal justice. But too often our public debates about law enforcement policy become mired in rhetoric or recrimination, when they instead should focus on reform and on identifying innovative solutions to our common problems.

In doing so, we must move beyond the narrow parameters that have constrained our nation’s

debate about criminal justice policy over the last several decades. There is no doubt that we must be “tough on crime.” But we must also commit ourselves to being “smart on crime.” And we must realize that these approaches complement, rather than contradict, each other. In the six months that I have served as Attorney General, I have worked to advance this fundamental truth: it is time to move past politics and ideology, and to move forward to a criminal justice system that is predicated on the fact that we need it to be fair and effective. In sum, we need to adopt what works.

Next Month: Part II

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Many states began these efforts in the past few years as part of the national emphasis on helping people successfully return to the community following their release from prison. States are now bolstering both their reentry programs and community supervision programs and working to improve outcomes for people on supervision.

Release Policies: The biggest budget savings come from policy changes that impact how many people come into prison and how long they stay. Staffing typically accounts for 75 to 80 percent of corrections budgets, so substantial cost reductions can be achieved only when the

prison population shrinks enough to shutter a facility—whether a single cellblock or an entire prison. In FY2010, states looking for large cuts have turned to release policies and found that they can identify some groups of people who can be safely released after serving shorter terms behind bars.

Given that current state budget deficits are expected to continue and possibly increase over the coming years, states will need to continue to find ways to control corrections costs. Each year, the decisions will become more difficult. Management strategies may extend operating efficiencies, but the resulting

cost savings are likely to fall short of what states will need to make ends meet. When deeper cuts are required, states will have to shift expenditures from costly prisons to far more economical investments in community corrections and confront controversial questions about which people really need to go to prison and how long they should stay. State governments are beginning to rise to the challenge of cutting corrections costs while maintaining or even boosting public safety. This paper highlights some of the innovative and creative ways they are doing so.

Next Month: A message from the Vera Center director

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They all readily agreed that being “tough on crime” has to give way to being “smart on crime,” and that state legislators have to come to terms with this new reality.

They were followed by Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections Director Terry Collins, Charles See, the Executive Director of Cleveland Community Reentry, perhaps the oldest reentry organization in the country, and Phil Nunes, the vice-president of Oriana House. Their discussion centered around the institutional environment, with particular interest being paid to community corrections since a

new facility utilizing that incarceration concept is on the drawing boards for Cuyahoga County.

Director Collins stated that the new Community Corrections Facility, which will be located near the women’s prison located on 30th and Orange Avenue, will ease crowding, conserve scarce resources, and, most importantly, help with reentry since prisoners will be serving their sentences closer to home. Commissioner Jones expressed his delight that the long overdue facility is about to break ground.

The final segment for the shooting day featured Luis

Vazquez, the Manager of the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry, Donna Kelly of Care Alliance, and William Denhian, the director of the recently combined mental health and alcohol and drug addiction boards in Cuyahoga County. Edward Little also appeared again in this segment. Together they finished up the documentary by highlighting what services are presently available in the county, what services are being planned, and what the future holds for reentry both locally and nationally. The documentary is set to air in the late fall.

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editor of Reentry Advocate. Other attendees and participants will include representatives of the local law enforcement, business, legal, and political communities.

Founded in November 2007, and led by Executive Director Curtis Scruggs, NORC has fostered collaborations with upwards of 50 reentry service providers in Northeast Ohio. “NORC will continue to work to expand its community partner base, assist grass roots organizations with capacity building, and increase its efforts to inform and educate the public with regard to reentry issues,” says Scruggs. He adds, “NORC will be involved in several new initiatives

that will focus on job creation and the housing concerns of the ex-offender population in Northeast Ohio.”

In July 2008, in partnership with the Cleveland Region of the ODRC Adult Parole Authority (APA), NORC began conducting its Successful Transition after Release (STAR) forums. “In partnering with NORC, we have been able to expand the number of resources offered to offenders coming back into the community enormously,” says Michael A. Edwards, APA Cleveland Region Reentry Coordinator. “We are able to reach more offenders by sharing our resources, contacts, and knowledge.” Scruggs says that 1,100 state

offenders attended STAR forums between July 2008 and July 2009. Edwards says, “I see APA and NORC having a very strong and positive impact together for a long, long time.”

STAR forums for area offenders released from federal prisons began in January of this year. “We have received very positive feedback from our clients, officers and judicial staff,” says Jimmy Tyree, Offender Workforce Specialist for the U.S. Federal District Court, Northern District of Ohio. “We are excited about this program and plan to extend it to other offices in the district.”

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NORC has also established an entrepreneurship class for women prisoners at Trumbull Correctional Institution (TCI) and at the Northeast Pre-Release Center (NEPRC), and has done reentry programs at Lake Erie Correctional

Institution (LaECI) and at Grafton Correctional Institution (GCI). TCI Warden Bennie Kelly lauds the partnership. "This has been a win-win opportunity for the offenders and society." Clarice Wofford, LaECI Reentry Coordinator says,

"[NORC] is giving a hand up to those who want and need a hand."

NORC is at 2295 E. 55th St. If you are a former offender and you need an appointment, or you want to volunteer for the conference, call 216-920-0140.

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 Belmore 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

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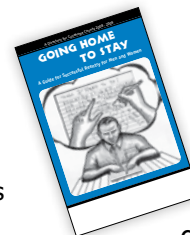


COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS:

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

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