

# CT REENTRY VOICES

SHARING OUR SUCCESS & HOPE

## CT STATEWIDE REENTRY COLLABORATIVE

The CT Statewide Reentry Collaborative presents its first newsletter focusing on reentry. The CT Statewide Reentry Collaborative is made up of the roundtables from Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Southeastern and Windham counties. These reentry roundtables have been working for the past several years to identify and address needs and gaps in services for individuals returning home from incarceration. Each roundtable is a collaboration of state and local organizations working together to provide resources and create opportunities to make our communities safer. This collaboration is a grassroots effort and it has been working to improve communication with Department of Correction, utilize local higher education resources, create resource guides, host local employment and resource fairs, and generate collaboration to foster change in each community. We hope you will join us in our efforts to make communities safer while providing second chances to individuals returning home from incarceration.



## CALLING ON REENTRY SURVIVORS

We all know that the reentry process will work better with more job opportunities and more reentry success stories. There are employers who look for and want to hire motivated individuals. Successful reentry and the advocacy it creates, will stimulate more success stories. Knowing and working with individuals who have successfully re-entered and are contributing to society will create a major change in attitudes on the inside and the outside, on both sides of the razor wire. We have the opportunity to promote this change through a new initiative, People of the Month Reentry Survivors Success Stories.

We invite individuals (or their families) who have successfully negotiated the reentry process and gained personal satisfaction in this achievement to contribute. We respect your desire for some privacy. We do not need to know the crime, time served or number of incarcerations. Rather, we are interested in the reentry story, success of the reentry and the resources you as an individual utilized in the process, what works and what doesn't work. A success story should be limited to about 500 words. Do not worry about spelling or sentence structure because all stories submitted will be reviewed and corrected as needed. The stories, if accepted, will be published. Stories can be submitted directly on our website or by e-mail to [reentrysurvivors@gmail.com](mailto:reentrysurvivors@gmail.com).

Your story can make a real difference in changing attitudes, reducing incarceration and recidivism rates, and creating more opportunities for employment and changing lives.

## BRIDGEPORT COLLABORATIVE

## WILLIE'S JOURNEY

I'm Willie H. and after release from prison, I received some information about New England Tractor Trailer Training School. I discovered that ATR will help me with some expenses. I enrolled with ATR and received a monthly bus pass and a check for admissions to NETTTS totaling \$700.

The Step Up Program was brought to my attention. I met with Ms. Carmen Neives, who walked me through the process. I received a grant worth \$12,500.

What I need people to know is this: My desire to do something different with my life opened the door for many opportunities. It's about having a vision for change. My job at Blasé (when I left) gave me outstanding references. NETTTS gave a reference of my accountability and integrity that I choose to be identified by and not my inmate number. Because of this I was hired by a very prosperous local trucking company even though I had a criminal history.

I've also gained successes in my home, marriage, church, community and relationships with individuals. If you lack skills, seek outlets that are available to help you. Follow your dreams. See how it is possible to fulfill all of them. God Bless.



"Seek to do what most aren't willing to do now, so that you will be able to do what most can't do later"

## A BETTER ME

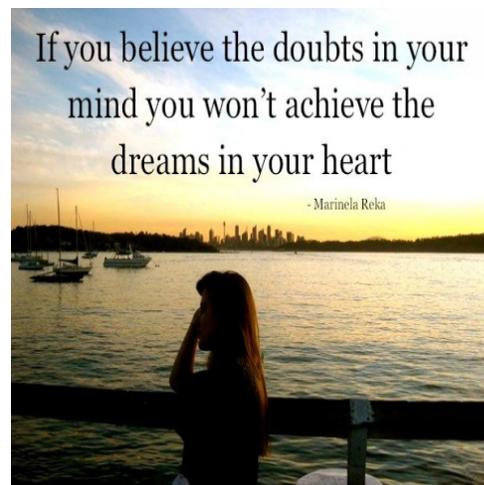
I was recently asked by my dear friend and mentor Kathy Taylor to write my "success" story as it pertained to being an ex-offender which forced my ADD brain to focus on the past ten years and on how much my life has changed.

The definition of "success" varies from person to person and can change with the advent of life's circumstances. For some, the measure of success is gauged by the acquisition of material possessions throughout a life span. "Bigger, better, faster, more" is an expression I loath because I have never defined a person's success by the size of their wallet.

In August 2007, my path to a successful life was permanently altered. At that time, I was battling heroin addiction and committed a series of bank robberies to support my habit. Those twelve days in August changed my life; forever and for the better. I couldn't continue on the way I was going because it is true when they say "jails, institutions or death" are the only options for an addict. I've had brushes with all three. While I was in York CI, I made a conscious decision to change my life.. I used any and all the programs to become the "better me" and I never gave up. I still face challenges today but I deal with them differently because I am different. I've learned that when God closes the door on something, it's usually for the best and I shouldn't be afraid to use the window He left open. - Cynthia C.

If you believe the doubts in your mind you won't achieve the dreams in your heart

- Marinela Reka



## BRIDGEPORT COLLABORATIVE

## HOLLIE'S STORY

Born in Providence, Rhode Island, **Hollie P.** recounted her earliest memories of life in Killingly, CT with joy. Mom, dad and an older sister shared Hollie's adventures with chickens, pigs, goats and horses. However, all was not idyllic for the family. Life with dad, a long time alcoholic and drug addict that Hollie labels "*a garbage disposal type of guy*," offered the lessons one learns from a parent's addiction and a family breakup.

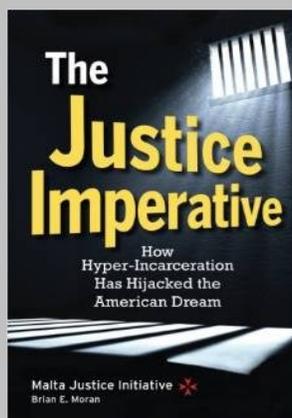
Hollie, a full-fledged "*badass*" by junior high, smoked cigarettes and pot and drank plenty of alcohol. Cutting class, leaving early, skipping school altogether, fighting—all manner of rebellious behavior led to suspensions in high school. Shortly after graduation and following the death of her father, Hollie's world spiraled out of control and into further drug abuse, including heroin addiction. Homelessness, prostitution, and a series of criminal convictions ensued.

Always in the background, Hollie's family responded with love and support. An ultimate survivor, Hollie has acquired a CT Section 8 apartment three minutes from her parents and regained custody of her son. After completing Hartford STRIVE and placing first in her Certified Nurse Aide class at Tunxis Community College, Hollie works two jobs: one at Community Solutions, Inc. as a Human Services Worker and the second as a Home Care Aide with the CT Visiting Nurse Association.

At Career Resources/STRIVE we are proud of Hollie and her accomplishments. Despite every obstacle, she never gave up on the dream to have a better life for herself and her son. Great work Hollie!!!

## MALTA JUSTICE INITIATIVE

A dedicated group of professionals from the fields of law, academia, business, religion and corrections took a unique approach to the problem of mass incarceration in Connecticut and the United States. They wrote a book--together. And they want to share their findings with you. Hear from one of the authors how this process took place, what concerns you should have as a citizen and taxpayer--where is your money going? what is it doing? are communities safer? are we being smart on crime or simply paying lip service to being "tough" on crime? If you belong to a civic organization, a fraternal organization, a faith community or a book club at which you would like a presentation, please contact below.

**The Justice Imperative**

How Hyper-Incarceration Has Hijacked the American Dream

Available at

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

or

[www.thejusticeimperative.org](http://www.thejusticeimperative.org)

For more information please call:

(203) 605-1544 or email

[ktay0409@gmail.com](mailto:ktay0409@gmail.com)

## GREATER HARTFORD REENTRY COUNCIL (GHREC)

### KATIE'S MESSAGE OF HOPE

Something I dreamed of while incarcerated was release from prison but I knew nothing about changing my life. I was introduced to Counselor Sexton, who was then a phenomenal DOC reentry counselor. She offered countless opportunities for all of her participants to 'look into'. One of the programs that originally caught my attention was The Hartford Resettlement Program with CPA. I went through the process of applying, I was set up with a case worker and the rest of that story is still being written.

*"Be the change you want to see in the world" - Gandhi*

I actively participate with this program whenever possible. While still incarcerated my case manager, Julie Cianci, began formulating a plan for me, goals that I now see we will reach together. I have goals to enroll in college; Julie has gotten all my transcripts and I will be enrolling after leaving the work release program where I currently live. I have a goal for financial independence; they offered money saving classes and job reentry services. I was even sent to CT Works where I met with Joanne Shugrue, who made up a beautiful resume for me. I got out I didn't have means to buy new clothes they sent me to Dress For Success and the program offered me further assistance. The work release program offered no help with transportation which is vital to success out here. Resettlement offered bus passes when I needed them. This program doesn't just give free handouts but it sure has shown me how to achieve my goals. I am also very fortunate to have family support but the bottom line is I can attribute my success in part to the help I have received through this program. I found a safe place where I have people in my corner to help me at every step of the reentry process.

I write this because there is no other program like Hartford Resettlement. I don't know how successful I would be if I hadn't learned about this program before leaving jail. I left jail feeling worthless and incapable of much at all as I notice many other girls do too. Most return to what is comfortable drugs and crime. I understand because change is scary. It's not easy. I am currently working a part-time job, I am involved with a Trinity/Hartford Resettlement group with Judy Dworin called New Beginnings, I am involved with self-help groups, I am closer with my family, I am saving money and close to starting school, and I am becoming a person I can be proud of. I once heard "Be the change you want to see in the world," Gandhi said that. I hope that by writing this letter I can inspire other woman to get involved and be the change they want to see in their own lives.— **Katie**

### LISA'S PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF

My name is **Lisa S.** I arrived at Hartford House on 5/06/14. Since my arrival I have acquired employment, continue to further my education, reconnected with family and am involved in several programs that help me to reconnect as well as give back to the community. I am employed by Vito's by the Park as a cashier, food prep worker, server, and delivery order taker in the Express Lunch counter. I enjoy my job and all my regular customers, new and old. I am currently enrolled at Capitol Community College attending U.S. History and Art Appreciation classes. I received an A on my first test and was able to show and discuss my own artwork in Art Appreciation.

I am involved with Judy Dworin Performance Project (JDPP) which is a program that helps with healing through the arts using poetry, dance and singing. She works with the incarcerated to bring their voice out into the community. I have been involved with JDPP for eight years. On 12/8/2014, I will be performing in "In My Shoes" at the Hartford Stage. This will be my first show and I am very excited. I will perform several pieces of poetry and dances and my own choreographed solo.



I have remained focused and will continue to persevere. I am determined to achieve all my goals with God's grace and mercy and the pending arrival of my granddaughter, Ka'Liyah Ani. I am very blessed and grateful for all my accomplishments. Hard work and dedication to myself is paying off.

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## GREATER HARTFORD REENTRY COUNCIL (GHREC)

## FOURTH ANNUAL REENTRY JOB FAIR



On Wednesday, September 17, 2014, the Chrysalis Center, Inc. in collaboration with Community Partners in Action, Community Solutions, Inc., STRIDE and State of CT Department of Correction held the “Fourth Annual Greater Hartford Reentry Employment and Resource Fair” at the Hartford Marriott Downtown in Hartford, CT. This fair provided a unique opportunity for more than 150 ex-offenders to show prospective employers they were job ready. Participating in this event were more than 60 employers and resource vendors. In addition to finding employment, there was an opportunity for participants to obtain information on local schools, training programs and community organizations providing support. Individuals received information on a wide range of things such as how they could open bank accounts to the pardon process. Special guest speakers included Mayor Pedro E. Segarra, Interim DOC Commissioner Scott Semple, Peter Goia from CBIA and Camlyn Miller from Miller Foods. STRIDE had two graduates attend this event. This event gave our participants a chance to put their 30 second pitch into place and make a good first impression. It appears from some of the numbers we have received close to half of the participants obtained employment.

**SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS FOR MAKING THIS  
EVENT A HUGE SUCCESS**

**CHRYSALIS CENTER INC.  
COMMUNITY PARTNERS IN ACTION  
COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS INC.  
STRIDE**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION**

**TO ALL THE EMPLOYERS AND RESOURCE VENDORS WHO  
PARTICIPATED IN THIS YEAR’S EVENT, A SPECIAL THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION TO GIVING  
INDIVIDUALS A SECOND CHANCE**



## NEW HAVEN

## MATTHEW'S STORY

**Matthew F.** is a participant of the New Haven Reentry Service Center (NHRSC) at Easter Seals Goodwill Industries (ESGI). The Program is funded through the Second Chance Act via the CT Department of Correction.

Matt worked diligently to make positive changes to his life since his release in January 2014. He contacted his former employer and was able to secure part-time employment and continued to pursue his goal of securing stable full-time work utilizing an ESGI Employment Specialist. Eventually, he secured a full-time position, where he continues to work today.



Matthew is the first participant that NHRSC assisted with registering at the Department of Public Safety under the new law requiring anyone with weapons charges to register upon their release from incarceration. Matt was transported to Middletown and supported through the registration process.

Initially, Matt resided in a transitional setting through Parole which allowed him to save money. He purchased a scooter for transportation to and from work. He currently resides independently in an affordable apartment. ESGI supported him his efforts to maintain his sobriety. He currently attends the APT Foundation for treatment.

## UPDATES FROM NEW HAVEN ROUNDTABLE

The New Haven Roundtable continued to work to sort out its mission and better coordinate its efforts on identifying and marshalling resources and services. Under the leadership of former State Rep. William Dyson, the Roundtable sponsored information sessions and networking opportunities with D.O.C., Department of Probation/Parole, Employment and Housing service providers.

The City of New Haven revamped its Reentry program, under Mayor, Toni Harp and spearheaded by Reentry Director, Jason Bartlett, the New Haven FRESH START embarked on the following initiatives: Mentorship Program - coordinated by Consultants Justin Butler and Clifton E. Graves, Jr. with projected start date of January 2015; Housing Assistance - led by Khalfani Ijaama placed over 50 ex-offenders in emergency, transitional and permanent housing; and Employment Assistance - worked with various employers and employee assistance programs to place over 25 re-entrants.

In addition, FRESH START Staffers - Jordan Brooks and Chance B. Jackson helped coordinate the Roundtable meetings and handled the daily direct eservices of the office: ID cards, bus tokens, referral to pardon classes, etc. FRESH START/ New Haven wishes the best to Jordan Brooks who has moved on to another professional opportunity. We further note that effective November 1st, Clifton E. Graves, Jr. will serve as Coordinator of the FRESH START/New Haven Program.

FRESH START also partnered with long time direct service provider, Project M.O.R.E., in a joint clothing giveaway program geared to assist re-entrants who have interviews or jobs with appropriate attire. Gratitude to Martin Huckaby, formerly of Men's Warehouse for his invaluable assistance, as well as Morris Moreland, V.P. Project M.O.R.E. We further acknowledge the volunteer efforts of Ms. Sharyn L. Grant of Project M.O.R.E. who has helped over 15 people obtain pardons this past year alone, but has assisted over 50 begin this process.

## SOUTHEASTERN CT

## BUILDING BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT



On September 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 the Job Development Leadership Network hosted a panel discussion entitled Building Bridges to Employment. The panel was facilitated by Southeastern CT Reentry Co-Chair Kia Baird. Panelists included the Mayor of the City of Norwich, Deb Hinchey as well as human resource representatives from both CT Casinos, Director of the Public Library, Owner of a staffing agency and the president and CEO of the Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce, Tony Sheridan. Guests were also able to ask questions of Ginger Moore the newly appointed Mobility Specialist for the Eastern CT Transportation Consortium. This event proved extremely relevant as many Job Developers and Employment staff have similar questions with regards to the hiring practices and trends of businesses in CT. The discussion included hiring individuals that require reasonable accommodations and applicant screening and recruitment. The panelist spent a significant amount of time discussing their willingness to hire people with criminal histories and gave specific guidelines and tools for helping ex-offenders succeed in the interviewing process and in the work place.

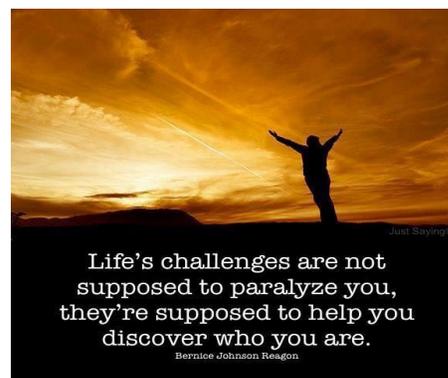
## WINDHAM COUNTY

## BOBBY'S JOURNEY

My name is **Bobby P.** and I want to tell you a brief story of my life. I was released from prison a little over a year ago after serving 23 years. Twenty five years ago, one moment of acting out of bitterness and anger cost me dearly. Over time, I have come to understand that these emotions will consume one. I have learned that life is full of difficulties, but I can't allow those moments to define who I am and what I am trying to achieve.

Upon my release, I couldn't find a job right away. I began to do volunteer work at three different places which became my job for the time being. I found that how people treat one is dependent on how one presents oneself. Since my release, I have met some wonderful people who are there to help in my difficult moments. I have been successfully discharged from the Groups, I have obtained a job, my own apartment, a car and I have begun to establish good credit.

My future looks promising. I have been given a grant to pay for a CDL license. I have already obtained a job in this field, and I am so looking forward to starting work. Once I am working, I will begin saving to buy a home. I am also looking forward to speaking at events and helping others as I have been helped. I have been truly blessed, and I want so much to be a blessing to others. So much is possible with hope and determination.



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## CT REENTRY ROUNDTABLE SCHEDULES

### BRIDGEPORT

Dan Braccio, danbraccio@ccgb.org  
 Bridgeport Parole Office  
 1052 North Avenue, Bridgeport, CT  
 3rd Thursday  
 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

### GREATER HARTFORD

Sue Gunderman, sgunderman@qvcc.edu &  
 Aileen O'Connor, aoconnor@csimail.org  
 CT Nonprofits  
 75 Charter Oak Avenue, Bldg. 1, Hartford, CT  
 1st Thursday  
 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

### NEW HAVEN

NHFreshStart1@newhavenct.net  
 Church on the Rock  
 95 Hamilton Street, New Haven, CT  
 1st Tuesday  
 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

### SOUTHEASTERN CT

Kia Baird, lbaird@csimail.org &  
 Kristin LaFemina, klafemina@csimail.org  
 Norwich American Job Center  
 113 Salem Tnpk., Norwich, CT  
 3rd Friday  
 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

### WINDHAM COUNTY

Julie Scrapchansky, jscrapchancky@qvcc.edu  
 Quinebaug Valley Community College  
 742 Upper Maple Street, Danielson, CT  
 4th Friday  
 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**If you would like more information or would like to  
 add an article for our next newsletter,  
 please contact Sue Gunderman at  
 sgunderman@qvcc.edu or (860) 932-4090**